

[Martin Van Buren]

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CONSIDERATIONS

IN FAVOUR OF THE APPOINTMENT OF

RUFUS KING,

To the Senate of the United States.

SUBMITTED TO THE

Republican Members of the Legislature

OF THE

STATE OF NEW-YORK.

By one of their Colleagues.

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To the Republican Members,
Of the Legislature of the State of New-York.



A FELLOW Member, who knows, and is personally known to most of you,—who has, from his infancy, taken a deep interest in the honour and prosperity of the party to which you belong, and who, if he has ever erred in his labours to promote its best interest, has erred from defect of judgment, and not from a want of devotion to the cause,—ventures to address you on the subject of the choice of a Senator to represent this state in the legislature of the Union.

The state of parties, the character and standing of the most prominent candidate for your favour, the general aspect of political affairs, and a variety of concurring circumstances, render the subject one of conceded delicacy, and not entirely free from difficulty.

It is, notwithstanding, one on which it will be our duty soon to act ; and all experience demonstrates, that nothing is so well calculated to lead to a judicious exercise of power, as a free, frank, and unrestrained discussion of the subjects of it ; and nothing, certainly, better comports with the character, or is more congenial to the feelings of freemen, than that those discussions should be attended with all possible publicity. It is with those convictions, and upon the impulse of such feelings, that this examination is undertaken.

When this question was presented to the legislature at their last session, the names of several of our friends, who are rich in the esteem and confidence of republicans, were spoken of, and one was actually voted for to fill the existing vacancy. It is satisfactorily ascertained that all those gentlemen, for reasons which it is unnecessary here to state, but which are of a nature reflecting upon them the highest honour, which evince an entire devotion to our cause, and entitle them to a continuance of our best opinion, are unwilling to be regarded as candidates for the station, and desirous that our attention should be directed to another quarter.

In consequence of the general understanding, which has obtained, as to the views of the gentlemen of whom I have spoken, and other causes, the only name which has, for some time past, been held up to public view, and occupied the public mind, as connected with the subject, is that of RUFUS KING,—in whose favour there has been, apparently, a spontaneous, and, certainly, a very extensive expression of public sentiment.

Having learnt, from experience, to place almost implicit confidence in the general justice and ultimate wisdom of the predominant sentiments of the republican party, I have felt it my duty scrupulously to observe the indication of these sentiments on this interesting subject,—and I am entirely satisfied that I am not mistaken when I say, that the republicans of the state think and feel that the support of Mr. KING, at this time, would be an act honourable to themselves, advantageous to the

country, and just to him,—and that the only reluctance which they have to a public avowal of their sentiments in his favour, arises from the commendable apprehension that their determination to support him, under existing circumstances, might subject them to the suspicion of having become a party to a political bargain,—to one of those sinister commutations of principle for power,—which they think common with their adversaries, and against which they have remonstrated with becoming spirit.

I have no hesitation in declaring my sentiments to be in unison with those which I believe generally to prevail among the republicans of the state ; and I cannot but avow my conviction that this apprehension, which evinces an honourable solicitude to avoid even the imputation of the errors of their opponents, is without adequate cause, and can be fully obviated.

Although the rule may, possibly, in some instances be carried too far, it is certainly true, that the conduct of public men, who were in active life, or in a situation to be so, during the last war, has been, and will, unavoidably, long continue to be the test of their claims to public confidence and support.

The federalists of that day may justly, and, by the historian of the time, will probably be divided into three classes ;—the first, consisting of those who, influenced by strong predilections for the enemy, and instigated by the most envenomed malignity against the administration of their own government, adopting “ rule or ruin,” for their motto,

exercised an industry and perseverance worthy of a better cause, to paralyze the arms of their own government, and encourage the hopes of the foe.

The second class was composed of a very numerous and respectable portion, who, inured to opposition, and heated by collision, were poorly qualified to judge dispassionately of the measures of government,—who, deeming the declaration of war impolitic in the then state of the country, and not as well satisfied, as subsequent reflection has rendered them, of its justice and indispensable necessity;—deceived too by appearances, and the bold and confident denunciations of their leaders of the first class, into a belief that their own government was partial to France,—averse to peace with Britain,—were, from the causes I have enumerated, aided by that strong desire to supplant their political opponents, common to all parties, induced to make all the opposition to government which they could, within the pale of the constitution, lawfully venture.

In the third class, are included all those who, entertaining a correct sense of their country's rights, a lively sensibility for her wrongs, and a suitable spirit to defend the former, and redress the latter,—who, rising superior to the prejudices and passions of those with whom they once acted, threw down the weapons of party warfare, and enrolled themselves under the banners of their country.

Those whom I have first designated, displayed their principles, and gave earnest of their designs, by assisting at, or abetting, the ever memorable

convention at Hartford, and those preceding efforts of factious opposition, which were connected with it. The rising indignation of the American people, however, retarded the execution of their designs until peace put an end to their prosecution. Their labours led to the same results with those of their *prototypes* of the revolution,—and, as their motives were less pure, and their conduct less excusable, they have reaped a more abundant harvest of public obloquy and disgrace.

Many of those included in the second class, whatever may have been the extent of their delusion at the moment, and however strong the infatuation by which they were blinded, would, at all times, have shrunk from the abandonment of the acknowledged interests of their country,—and have, subsequently, embraced every opportunity to testify their devotion to the public interest. There is, moreover, good reason to believe, that they will all, in due season, be found to have embarked in the same cause with the republicans of the state, and of the union. Nor have we failed, and, I hope, we never shall fail, in becoming liberality of sentiment, towards that portion of our fellow citizens;—or in exercising that respectful deference for the freedom of opinion, which should ever characterize the conduct of men, who, actuated by pure motives themselves, are sensible of “the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated when reason is left free to combat it.”

As to the merits of that description of federalists, who are embraced in the third class, there has not been, nor can there ever be a diversity of opi-

nion among us,—if we look back to that period which, a second time, “tried men’s souls,” as the proudest of our lives, they also have reason to exult in the recollection of the parts they respectively acted in those interesting scenes.

It is true, they have not the merit of advising to the commencement of the war,—a war by which the fame, the honour, and the true interests of our common country, have been so much advanced ; but that circumstance alone ought not to impair their claims to the respect and confidence of their fellow citizens.

It was fully compensated by the alacrity with which they lent their aid to an administration which had so recently been the object of their warmest opposition, the moment they found the question to be between their own country and a foreign foe. They acted, as it had been fondly hoped the whole American people would have acted :—Nor were the administrations of the general and state governments, at the close of the war, backward in bestowing the proudest testimonials of their approbation and respect, on those whose conduct had been thus meritorious.

It is true, that, in so doing, they have in some instances been deceived and disappointed, in selecting, for high public stations, men who have not that stamina of character they were supposed to possess ; but who, rendered giddy by their sudden elevation, and forgetful of the sources of that power by which they ascended, will soon fall, with the master spirit in whose legion they are enrolled, “never to rise again.”

These are circumstances, however, which can, at most, produce a transient regret, for the folly and weakness of these infatuated men. Such consequences are not always to be avoided; but they are susceptible of easy and prompt correction. They do not tend, in the least, to impair the high credit which is justly due to the republicans of the state and union, for the course they adopted in regard to the persons now in question. That course had for its object, not the particular benefit of these individuals only; but was meant to exemplify the general justice of our policy to them,—and to shew the rest of our countrymen, that whilst we loudly and inexorably condemned the remissness of a portion of our fellow citizens, in discharging the great duties they owed to their country, we dealt out justice with an even hand, and were as ready to applaud as to condemn.

There has been, however, one exception in this liberal policy, and it is an exception of no ordinary character. It exists in the person of Rufus King.

The dark cloud which overspread our political horizon, in the fall of 1814, struck, with dismay and terror, some of the firmest of our patriots. The disasters which had befallen us, the difficulties which beset, and the dangers which threatened our country from every quarter,—have made impressions too durable to be soon effaced. The causes which jeopardize, and the exertions which preserve, the liberties of a nation, can never, while she is worthy of their enjoyment, cease to be a subject of the keenest solicitude, and most grateful recollection of her sons. These memorable events will long

continue to occupy the minds, and employ the pens, of our ablest and best men.

While enjoying a season of peace to which the nations of Europe are strangers; while advancing in wealth, population, and grandeur, with a rapidity without a parallel in the history of civilized man; while our individual happiness and prosperity kept pace with that of our beloved country, and all combined to render us the envy and admiration of the world—In those halcyon days, when we knew war but by its distant echo, and the advantages our country derived from the sanguinary conflicts of Europe—We felt that, that country was not only strong in its physical force, but inexhaustible in its resources, and safe in the patriotic devotion of all her citizens. To have then expressed a doubt that the first open attack upon our liberties would nerve every arm and rouse every breast in the nation, that we should ever witness an attempt to subvert the republic, and not rally round its government and tender our persons and our fortunes for its defence, would have been ridiculed and despised as the sinister forebodings of disaffection. But to have supposed, that while the land of our birth, the soil which had been crimsoned by the blood and consecrated by the ashes of our fathers, was polluted by the hostile tread of an invading foe; that at such a moment our government would not only be in want of men and money, but that a portion of our citizens would be found brooding over the destruction of our constitution, and plotting against the exertions of our government, could not fail to excite

the warmest feelings of indignation and resentment in the bosom of every American.

The events of that memorable period awoke us, however, from those flattering dreams, and dissipated those dangerous delusions. When we expected to have found ourselves united, we were a divided people; when the exigencies of the country demanded all her resources, both of men and money, her public coffers were kept empty and her armies unrecruited, by the ruthless efforts of faction. In the language of him who is most entitled to our gratitude, and the first object of our affections—"Our eastern brethren, blinded by a momentary infatuation of party zeal, not only withheld their support, but threatened serious resistance to the constitutional arm; a well appointed veteran army, aided by a strong naval force, was pressing upon our Champlain frontier, the Ontario squadron was in danger of an attack, in Sacket's Harbour, from another combined land and naval armament; the lately victorious, but now suffering, army of Niagara was pent up in Fort Erie by the British forces in that quarter; the city of New-York was menaced with invasion; the Capitol of the Union was smoking in ruins: and to give the deepest shade to the gloomy aspect of our affairs, and add to the difficulty of their redemption, the national government was literally penniless."

At this momentous crisis, which applied the touchstone to the hearts of men, when many of the stoutest were appalled and the weak despaired of the republic—Mr. King was neither idle nor dismayed.

His love of country dispelled his attachments to party—In terms of the warmest solicitude and in strains of the most impassioned eloquence, he remonstrated in his correspondence with the leaders of the opposition in this state and in the east, on the folly, the madness, and the mischief, of their course; he contributed largely of his means to the loans to government—he infused confidence into the desponding, and laboured to divest the timid of their fears—he sought Governor Tompkins, to whom, from the warmth of his devotion to his country's cause, and from the plenitude of his responsibility rather than of his powers, every eye was directed, and to him Mr. King communicated the patriotic ardour with which he was himself animated.

The purport and object of his interesting interview with the Governor, is thus described by the latter: “Venerable and patriotic citizens, such as Col. Rutgers, Col Willett, Gov. Wolcott, Mr. King and others, animated me to the greatest efforts; the latter gentleman, in an interview with me, was peculiarly impressive—he said ‘that the time had arrived when every good citizen was bound to put his all at the requisition of government—that he was ready to do this; that the people of the state of New-York would and must hold me personally responsible for its safety.’ I acquainted him with the difficulties under which I had struggled for the two preceding years, the various instances in which I had been already compelled to act without law or legislative indemnity, and urged, that if I should once more exert myself to meet all the emergencies and pecunia-

“ry difficulties with which we were pressed, I must
 “inevitably ruin myself. “Well, sir, (added he,
 “with that enthusiasm which genius lends to pat-
 “riotism,) what is the ruin of an individual com-
 “pared with the safety of the republic? If you are
 “ruined, you will have the consolation of enjoying
 “the gratitude of your fellow citizens; but you
 “must trust to the magnanimity and justice of your
 “country, you must transcend the law, you must
 “save this city and state from the danger with
 “which they are menaced, you must ruin yourself
 “if it becomes necessary, and I pledge you my
 “honour that I will support you in whatever you
 “do.” Having done all in his power to induce to
 exertions at home, Mr. King repaired to his post in
 the senate of the United States, and in that body
 zealously supported the prominent measures of the
 administration to sustain the country in the severe
 struggle in which she was engaged. He embraced
 every suitable opportunity to keep Governor Tomp-
 kins, (with whom he maintained a regular corre-
 spondence,) advised of every fact and circumstance
 which might be supposed to have a bearing on the
 conduct of the war, its prosecution by the enemy,
 and the probability of its continuance or termi-
 nation.

The advantages which resulted from the part
 which Mr. King then took, were by no means incon-
 siderable; it served to encourage Gov. Tompkins
 to persevere in his exertions,—exertions which re-
 dounded so much to the honour of the state, and
 so essentially advanced the interests of the nation.
 It served to induce the corporation of New-York,

and some of the banks, who were then in the adverse interest, to comply with the requests of Gov. Tompkins, and make their respective loans to the government, on receiving his private responsibility, and public securities, for their repayment. It served, moreover, in some degree to retard the unwearied efforts of opposition, by developing their motives, and bringing shame on their measures.

Such was the conduct of Mr. King, in the times of which I have spoken, and such are his first claims on republican confidence and support. Were these claims connected with an affair of private interest, I might feel myself at liberty to reason on their urgency,—but relating as they do, to the discharge of a public duty,—and addressed, as they are, to the favour of a party with whose liberality, with whose magnanimity, with whose proud and generous feelings, I have been so long, and so well acquainted—discussion would be worse than useless. I know nothing of the republican character,—nothing of the views and sentiments of men, with whom I have been so closely allied,—if a consideration of the facts and circumstances I have detailed, has not already led to a spontaneous and united wish to support Mr. King for the senate, if that support can be given without subjecting them to the suspicions they so justly deprecate. That it can, I hope to demonstrate; but before I do so, I must solicit a farther continuance of your indulgence, whilst I respectfully submit to your consideration, additional reasons why his appointment, at this time, would be politic and just; and whilst, too, I obviate some of the objections which honest

men may apprehend, and which will, doubtless, be suggested by faction.

His talents, his integrity, and fitness for the station, are not questioned. There are, however, circumstances in his life and character, so intimately connected with this question, as to entitle them to particular consideration and remark.

The struggle which gave birth to our nation, must ever be regarded as one of the most important and interesting eras the world has ever witnessed. From the deplorable results of similar attempts in Europe,—and from the still unprepared state of the human mind for the reception of freedom in that quarter of the globe,—there is reason to believe that an opportunity will not again occur, nor will the materials be again found, in the course of ages, for an effort equally glorious and successful. In proportion to the sublimity of the conception, the severity of the suffering, and the energy of the exertions which produced our revolution, were the characters of the men who achieved it.

History records no event which called into action a race of statesmen, equal in all the splendid virtues which adorn and give celebrity to the human character,—and it is a fact, honourable to our nature, that of the long list of patriots and sages, who, at the hazard of all that was dear to man, signed the Declaration of Independence,—and of those who framed the great charter of our liberties, there has not been one who, in after life, has fallen from the eminence to which, by his connection with those events, he was raised; or, in the least, impaired the character he thus acquired. Those,

whom the ravages of time have yet spared to their country, are, every where, honoured and respected,—and those whose deaths we deplore, who are now numbered with “the spirits of just men made perfect,”—have descended to the tomb, accompanied by a Nation’s tears, and blessed with a Nation’s gratitude.

It is, certainly, true, that in the various contests for power, which are past, revolutionary merit has not always commanded that deference, and received that support, which might have been reasonably expected, and perhaps justly claimed. It is not my intention to call in question the propriety of the course which has, at various times, been pursued in regard to them. There, doubtless, have been occasions when the preferences which have been given to others, were both just and proper; but it has always been a favourite sentiment of my heart, that, all other things equal, the merit of which I am speaking, ought to give a decided preference to its possessor. I cannot but think that this sentiment is common to us all, and that the desire to testify our gratitude, by availing ourselves of the experience and fidelity of the men of the revolution, as far as it can be done with safety and with honour, is as universal as it is just.

Mr. King not only took an active part in the closing scenes of the revolution, but he was a member of the convention which framed the constitution of our general government, and one of the committee to whom the final draft of it was referred.

The number of those who now represent the states in the senate of the Union,—who performed conspicuous parts in the early transactions of our government,—who were conversant with the views of the men of that day, and the design of their measures,—and whose qualifications enable them to enter actively into the discussions of the present time, is but small ; and *Mr. King, will, if appointed, be the only member of the senate, who assisted in the formation of our constitution.*

But these are not the only considerations in favour of this measure. The most important and intricate of our foreign relations are, and have been, with the government of Great Britain ;—it is with her that our commercial intercourse is the most extensive ; she has the most reason to envy our wide spreading commerce,—and with her our collisions are, of course, the most frequent and interesting.

As early as the year 1796, Mr. King was appointed, by General Washington, minister to the court of St. James. He represented our government at that court during the last year of that truly great and good man's administration,—throughout that of Mr. Adams,—and such was his understanding of, and his attention to, the great and leading interests of the country, that notwithstanding the party violence of the times, he was continued by the illustrious head and founder of our party, Mr. Jefferson, for the first two years of his administration, and until Mr. King solicited his own recall. With the exception of a single case, growing out of individual concerns, and of limited operation, the merits of

which are before the public, and have been amply discussed,—the great duties of his station were discharged in a manner highly satisfactory to all classes of his fellow citizens. I know well the fears which existed in the minds of many honest men in the country, that his long residence in England had impressed him with undue partialities for that nation; a belief which, doubtless, derived much force from the mutual crimination and recrimination, of “French influence,” and “British influence,” common to the times, and, in a great degree, springing from the overheated agitations of party. I claim no exemption from their influence,—but whatever may have been the feelings or prejudices of that early period, his recent and splendid exertions in the senate of the United States, to improve our navigation laws, and to protect our commercial rights and interests, against the encroachments of the British government;—the success which has attended those exertions;—the wisdom which was displayed in their adoption,—and the strong interest they have excited in Great Britain;—the patriotic course he pursued in our recent contest with that power;—the general tenor of his political conduct for the last five years, and the fact, *that he has secured, and enjoys, the full confidence of the men who compose the present administration of the general government,* and who have had the best possible opportunity to judge of his motives and his conduct, and in whose integrity and discernment we may safely repose :—These, together with other circumstances, have satisfied me, that the unfavourable impressions which, in that respect, in

common with the great body of the republicans of the state, I have heretofore indulged against him, were unjust and unfounded, and as such, I cheerfully dismiss them.

The great advantage which would, probably, be derived to the state and the union, from the appointment of a statesman, who, to splendid talents, adds such collateral advantages, and whose views are in unison with those of the general government, must be obvious to you, and cannot fail to receive at your hands, all the weight to which they are so justly entitled.

I have deplored the violence of party, and lamented the injurious consequences which have resulted from its indulgence : It is possible that I am not entirely free from the infirmity I condemn, and I fear that what I am about to state, may tend to impress that belief. I know, however, of but one true course in such matters, and that is, to avow, with frankness, sentiments which are entertained with sincerity, and trust to their justice for their success.

Sensible, as I am, of the great merits of Mr. King, and of the advantages which would probably result from his appointment, still, did I believe that he was opposed to us in the present controversy between the republican party and Mr. Clinton and his followers ; could I even suppose that he looked with indifference on the struggle of the great body of our citizens, to extricate themselves from an influence which has so long pressed upon this state, and under which she can never acquire her true elevation in the union, *I have no hesitation in saying.*

that, in either of these cases, I would promptly and zealously oppose his appointment. However much I might deplore the necessity which should lead to this measure, I could not doubt as to its propriety. The reasons which would, under such circumstances, I trust, justify my conduct, are numerous, and, to my mind, satisfactory. As this, however, is but the expression of my individual sentiments, and stated only as explanatory of my own views, and is not expected to influence others, I do not feel myself called upon to enter into a discussion of the subject. The proof, too, would lead to a discussion of the merits and demerits of the official conduct of our prominent men, and excite feelings which it is desirable to keep, as far as practicable, distinct from this examination.

There is, however, no room for apprehension upon this subject. *Mr. King, and his friends, all who have a respect for, and are influenced by his opinion, are decidedly and unequivocally opposed to the re-election of Mr. Clinton ; their views are, and their conduct will be, in unison with that of the republicans of the state and union. There is no doubt of it.* I put my request to you to unite in his support on that ground, and when in this I shall appear to be mistaken, I shall have done.

Mr. King, it is ~~true~~ has not thought proper to solicit your favour with an exposition of his opinions on this head, and I have not a doubt that the commendable delicacy which, (while the question of his appointment was pending,) he has observed on this subject, will, as it ought, command your decided approbation. Political professions are easily

made, and, it is unfortunately true, too, often as easily disregarded : We have been so frequently deceived by them that it is time to examine deeper into the pretensions of political men, before we extend to them our confidence and support. There are safer tests. *We should place more reliance on the solidity of their characters, and the course of their political lives, than on the flippancy of their professions.* If, during a long life, we find that their political conduct has been open and frank ; if they have steered clear of the petty intrigues of the hour ; if their political sentiments have been honestly entertained, and firmly supported ;—they will be sure neither to deceive you, or suffer you to deceive yourselves in regard to their future conduct.

Whilst, however, on the one hand, there had been no officious display of his sentiments, there has not on the other been the least wish on the part of Mr. King, or his immediate friends, to conceal them. When recently it was said to have been stated, by a gentleman high in the confidence of the executive, that Mr. King had expressed an opinion favourable to the re-election of Gov. Clinton, and injurious to the motives of his opponents, *Mr. King caused the unfounded assertion to be promptly, publicly and unequivocally contradicted.*

At the last session of the legislature, his son, John A. King, Esq. representing the county of Queens in the Assembly, although the appointment of senator was then pending, voted with the republican members against the appointment of Gen. German as speaker ; and although the republican members opposed the appointment of his father, and notwith-

standing it was well understood that they meant to do so, he acted throughout the session in concert with our friends, in opposition to that portion of the house, consisting both of federalists and republicans, who attached themselves to the fortunes of Mr. Clinton. When the bill for the adjustment of Gov. Tompkins' accounts was pending before that house, and on its passage, while some were induced by circumstances altogether selfish to give it a cold and insincere support, and while others seized the opportunity it presented to disgorge their venom and visit their private griefs upon him, who was at once the object of their fears and of their hate, Mr. King zealously and efficiently supported the measure. He showed that he, at least, was capable of rising superior to the feelings and prejudices which the habit of political opposition is so apt to engender, and of extending justice to all to whom justice might be due.

It is not my design, and it would be in some measure foreign to the purpose of this address, to enter into the discussion of the propriety of that act; the time may come when it will be otherwise, and when its justice (if that has not been already done) will be most amply and fully vindicated from all the aspersions which have, or may hereafter, be cast upon it. I cannot, however, refrain from observing, that the part which Mr. John A. King took in its support, and the manner in which that support was yielded, deserved and commanded the respect and warm affection of the numerous friends of the Vice President, and of all who admire justice and magnanimity in public life.

It may, and probably will, be said by those whose interest it is to misrepresent our motives and our conduct, that if such be the merits of Mr. King—if you are sincere in those declarations, why have you not supported him before? Why did you not do so last winter? *But who is to ask these questions?* By whom are we to be called to an account on this subject? *It certainly will not be by Mr. Clinton or his friends.* They will not venture, it is hoped, to put the interrogatories. The intrigues of the last few years cannot surely have made such ravages, that *they* could, in view of their own conduct, question our consistency in this particular, without being covered with the blush of conscious shame.

The truth is, there are many cogent and convincing reasons which might be given, if it were necessary, or even proper, why the support of Mr. King for the senate will, at the ensuing meeting of the legislature, better comport with the honour and duty of the republican members, than at the last session; one, or at most two, of which I will state.

It is well known, that there were circumstances attending the last appointment of Mr. King, which produced much excitement among the republicans of the state. It was loudly and confidently charged, by one who is now foremost in the support of Mr. Clinton, that Mr. King's appointment was the result of one of those profligate interchanges of public favour for private ends, between men possessing different political sentiments, which are so justly odious to the people: that it was matured by, and carried into effect through the instrumentality of, those who stood highest in Mr. Clinton's confidence!

and certain leading members of the federal party. After the lapse of six years, a state of parties was again presented in some respects similar to that which then existed. The same party who claimed Mr. King as their leader, again held in their hands the balance of power.

Mr. King, it is true, had never been charged with a participation in the improper views which were alledged to have governed the measures of that day: but his general absence from the state for years past, at those seasons when political concerns are most the subject of discussion, and his almost entire abstraction from state politics, had prevented as near a view of his real feelings towards the men by whose apostacy from the duty they owed and had promised to their party, his first appointment was effected as was desirable. The real state of his feelings in this particular was justly deemed important by our friends, and his absence from the state last winter precluded explanation.

Under these circumstances, we selected one of our old and tried friends as the object of our support, and thereby abstained from a course as to which we had not the necessary information to enable us to act with safety to ourselves and justice to our constituents.

The state of parties, too, rendered it reasonably certain, that without the acquiescence of our friends, there would be no choice, and the situation of things admitted of a continuance of the vacancy, without great public prejudice, until the ensuing session. Thus an opportunity was afforded to the republican members, not only to defer a final deci-

sion on the question until the wishes of the people could be known on the subject—(at all times an object of solicitude with them, a sentiment just and proper in itself, and one which it is hoped they will always revere, notwithstanding the jeers of the political upstarts of the day,) but also to wait for a subsequent developement which would either confirm their doubts or remove the cause of them.

That opportunity has since been afforded, and the course which has been pursued by Mr. King, and his immediate friends, has most clearly shown, that if there were improper intrigues in 1812 connected with his appointment, *they originated in other sources than his wishes*; that he has not now nor ever had any thing in common with those who were engaged in them, but that on the contrary, his sentiments and opinions, on all subjects connected with the interest and honour of the state, are such as to have excited the esteem and confidence of the people at large.

An explanation upon this point, however, is purely gratuitous, and will be pursued no farther. Although Mr. King would do high honour to the office, he is not the only man in the state who would discharge its duties with credit and usefulness; he has no peculiar personal claims to our support; his distinguished merits would render his appointment in all respects proper, but they establish no exclusive claim; our support of him, as a party, will, if he receives it, be spontaneous, and must be as disinterested and as free from all sinister inducements as it is spontaneous. Nor, as a party, are we in any sense responsible to any man or any set of men for

giving or withholding it. *It is given or withheld, as the republicans of the state desire, and the time when and the circumstances under which it ought to be done, are for them alone to determine.*

A few words more, on the only remaining subject which I have proposed to examine, and I close an appeal which has already been extended farther than was contemplated, or may, perhaps, be proper. It is certainly very extensively believed, that our legislative halls have in repeated instances been made the theatres of the most exceptionable and unprincipled political bargains and coalitions; of coalitions in which men acted, not from the honest dictates of their consciences and with a single eye to the public interests, but from the unworthy motives of personal aggrandizement, not only disconnected with the public good, but in many instances in direct hostility against it. It is equally true, that in proportion as those charges have been credited abroad, the character of our state has sunk in the estimation of our sister states. It is not my intention, at this time, to enter into an investigation of the truth of these charges. It will, doubtless, *soon* become necessary to probe them, as well as other transactions of a deeper cast, and still more injurious in their effects upon our public character, to their inmost recesses: to separate the innocent from the guilty; to vindicate the great body of our citizens from the charge of participating in the profligacy of the few, and to give rest to that perturbed spirit which now haunts the scenes of former moral and political debaucheries—to the end, that this great and otherwise flourishing state

may no longer be retarded in her march to that respectability and influence to which she is so eminently entitled. But of this hereafter.

It is, as I have already stated, apprehended by several honest men, whose devotion to the republican cause, and whose good opinion I hold in the highest regard, that the support of Mr. King, at this time, might expose us to the suspicion of being influenced in our determination by the single view of securing the co-operation of a sufficient number of federal members to effect the various legislative objects at the next session, for which parties generally, as it is natural they should, feel considerable solicitude.

This is the matter fairly and plainly stated. Now, strong as my desire is that we should confer on Mr. King our support; sensible as I am of the tendency of such a measure, to repel and put to shame the volumes of calumny and scurrility which have been heaped on us, by those who deceive themselves with the hopes of breaking down the free spirit of a great party, and grateful as I know it would be to the feelings of distinguished republicans in our sister states—still, if I believed there was adequate cause for such apprehensions, *I would on that ground forego its adoption.* For it is not so important that we succeed soon, as it is that, when we do so, we proceed in a manner the most unexceptionable. But I know well that those fears are groundless.

Our party, in the first place, is not liable to suspicions of this kind. We have throughout sustained a character which has, and will continue, to ex-

empt us from them. We are not a "*personal party*." We have no individuals amongst us, who claim and exercise the right of stipulating for our acts,—nothing is done for us, that is not done by the will of the majority, and which is not well understood to be in unison with the general sentiments, and consonant to the wishes of the people. With a party so organised, and thus acting,—motives so justly deprecated can seldom, if ever, operate,—and, of course, the suspicion of their existence is not likely to arise. Again—it is by no means certain, that the *republican* members will not constitute a majority of the house. It is well known that the number of those who have already avowed their determination to pursue the path of principle, falls but a very few, if any, short of the number requisite to decide for themselves the questions to which I have alluded. I never will believe, until speculation is silenced by fact, that amongst the republican members elect, called Clintonians, (many of whom, whatever may have been the diversity of opinion between them and their party, are, nevertheless, regarded as men of principle,) a sufficient number will be found willing, by separating from their brethren, to defeat the regular operations of their party, and thereby destroy their own future usefulness. If the republican members form a majority of the legislature, all difficulty on the score of the apprehensions and suspicions I have adverted to, will be obviated, and the course I propose, derive new interest from the circumstances under which it is adopted.

But suppose, that, in this reasonable expectation, we are disappointed, where can be the grounds for this injurious imputation, when you openly avow, as I hope you will, your determination to vote for *Mr. King*, on the distinct and sole ground of his individual merits, without condition or stipulation of any kind,—and that, unless you are disappointed in him, you will support him, whether a single federalist vote with you or not. In that case, there could certainly be no cause to suspect your motives, and it would be fastidiousness in the extreme, to fear it.

Should the support of *Mr. King* be decided on by us, I know that none of our friends will hesitate in yielding their cheerful acquiescence to such explanations; but that, on the contrary, they will, with one voice, require them. Such explanations will be consistent with the true interests of the party, and can lead to nothing which you can have great reason to regret. For, admitting for a moment, that the federal members, *en masse*, could, from any motive, or upon any consideration, be induced to vote for *Mr. Clinton's speaker*, and *Mr. Clinton's council*, and that we are thereby defeated in the election of republicans to those stations,—suppose it possible that the many proud and honourable men, who are to be found in that delegation, could be induced, once more, to forget what they, for some time past, have felt and acknowledged,—to shut their eyes to that state of humiliation to which, by the intrigues of their leaders, their party has been reduced,—that they can look back without shame and mortification, to the proud character that party sustained while under the

guidance of *Schuyler, Hamilton, King, Troup, Van Vechten, Henry*, and others, compared with that to which it has been reduced by the *low contrivance and wretched expedients* of those who now seek to govern their opinions, and *undertake* for their conduct;—suppose that, after having been again and again disappointed and deceived, they will once more consent to be *used* by Mr. Clinton; to become “hewers of wood and drawers of water,” for him and his coadjutors:—Admit all this, and what then? One more appeal to the people, and the political atmosphere will be wholly purified. Of what consequence is it to republicans, whether they have the council of appointment twelve months sooner or later? They have, I hope, no mere cormorants for office among them,—men who would do a bad, or omit the performance of a good action, for the sake of place or preferment. No,—I know they have not, or if they have, the number of such is small indeed.

At the commencement of the present administration, most of the offices in the state were filled by republicans. The anathemas of power, and the omnipotence of the council, have been, for years, held up to their view by its minions, and fulminated over their heads. *Yet I know of no clear instance, in which any one of them has shrunk from the great duty which bound him to his honour, his party, and his country.* With such men, we have nothing to fear,—they must succeed. In fact, the tools of administration are, at this moment, every where recoiling with shame and confusion, from the observation of

that virtue which they could not seduce, and that firmness which they could not shake.

I must not, however, for a moment be understood as believing, or supposing it possible, that a very respectable proportion of the federal members can, by any means, be brought to pursue the course which has been spoken of. I entertain no such impression; on the contrary, I should think that *that degeneracy which could brook it, is by no means universal*; that there is enough of the spirit which once actuated the party left to prevent it: to think otherwise would be to hold them light indeed. Such is not my estimate of them, for whatever may be our impression of some of them, there is reason to believe that there are those who will show you, by their conduct on this occasion, that they are deserving of your esteem, your respect, and your confidence. On former occasions, such examples have been found amongst them, and if they are wanting now, let our conduct, nevertheless, be distinguished by liberality, justice, patriotism.

But I have done—I have endeavoured to satisfy you that Mr. King has claims on the gratitude of the people, for being useful and faithful when thousands were found wanting; that he is eminently qualified for the station which he has already so honourably filled; that great advantage would result to our country from his reappointment; that he may now be elected by us with honour to ourselves and credit to our party. My reasons are submitted with deference and respect for your judgment. I strenuously opposed his appointment last winter—I am ready to support him at the next. What

little interest I have, and the small influence I enjoy, will be cheerfully employed to promote the measure. I repeat, my reasons are before you—examine for yourselves, and when you have deliberated, act openly and freely, and above all be
 “JUST AND FEAR NOT.”

A Republican Member of the Legislature.

December, 1819.