

Excerpts from GEORGE WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

Friends, and Fellow-Citizens:

(1) The period for a new election of a Citizen, to **Administer** the **Executive** government of the United States, being not far distant, and the time actually arrived, when your thoughts must be employed in **designating** the person, who is to be clothed with that important trust, it appears to me proper, especially as it may **conduce** to a more distinct expression of the public voice, that I should now **apprise** you of the **resolution** I have formed, to decline being considered among the number of those, out of whom a choice is to be made.

(2) I beg you, at the same time, to do me the justice to be assured, that this resolution has not been taken without a strict regard to all the considerations **appertaining** to the relation, which binds a dutiful citizen to his country, and that, in withdrawing the tender of service which silence in my situation might imply, I am influenced by no **diminution** of **zeal** for your future interest, no **deficiency** of grateful respect for your past kindness; but am supported by a full **conviction** that the step is **compatible** with both.

(7) Here, perhaps, I ought to stop. But a **solicitude** for your **welfare**, which cannot end but with my life, and the **apprehension** of danger, natural to that solicitude, urge me on an occasion like the present to offer to your solemn **contemplation**, and to recommend to your frequent review, some sentiments which are the result of much reflection, of no inconsiderable observation, and which appear to me all important to the permanency of your **felicity** as a People. These will be offered to you with the more freedom, as you can only see in them the disinterested warnings of a parting friend, who can possibly have no personal motive to **bias** his counsel. Nor can I forget, as an encouragement to it, your **indulgent** reception of my sentiments on a former and not dissimilar occasion.

(9) The Unity of Government which constitutes you one people is also now dear to you. It is justly so; for it is a main pillar in the **edifice** of your real independence, the support of your **tranquility** at home, your peace abroad, of your safety, of your prosperity, of that very liberty which you so highly prize. But as it is easy to foresee that from different causes and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many **artifices** employed, to weaken in your minds the **conviction** of this truth; as this is the point in your political fortress against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively (though often **covertly** and **insidiously**) directed, it is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national union to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment to it; accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as the **palladium** of your political safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can in any event be abandoned; and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to **alienate** any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts.

(12) The North, in an **unrestrained intercourse** with the South, protected by the equal laws of a common government, finds in the productions of the latter great additional resources of **maritime** and commercial enterprise and precious materials of manufacturing industry. The South, in the same intercourse, benefiting by the agency of the North, sees its agriculture grow and its commerce expand. Turning partly into its own channels the seamen of the North, it finds its particular navigation **invigorated**; and while it contributes, in different ways, to nourish and increase the general mass of the national navigation, it looks forward to the protection of a maritime strength, to which itself is unequally adapted. The East, in a like intercourse with the West, already finds and, in the progressive improvement of interior communications, by land and water, will more and more find a valuable vent for the commodities which it brings from abroad, or manufactures at home. The West derives from the East supplies requisite to its growth and comfort, and what is perhaps of still greater consequence, it must of necessity owe the secure enjoyment of indispensable outlets for its own productions to the weight, influence, and the future maritime strength of the Atlantic side of the union, directed by an

indissoluble community of interest as one nation. Any other tenure by which the West can hold this essential advantage, whether derived from its own separate strength or from an **apostate** and unnatural connection with any foreign power, must be **intrinsically precarious**.

(13) While, then, every part of our country thus feels an immediate and particular interest in union, all the parts combined cannot fail to find in the united mass of means and efforts greater strength, greater resource, proportionably greater security from external danger, a less frequent interruption of their peace by foreign nations; and, what is of inestimable value, they must derive from union an **exemption** from those broils and wars between themselves, which so frequently afflict neighboring countries not tied together by the same government--which their own rivalships alone would be sufficient to produce, but which opposite foreign alliances, attachments, and intrigues would stimulate and embitter. Hence likewise they will avoid the necessity of those overgrown military establishments which under any form of government are **inauspicious** to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty: in this sense it is that your union ought to be considered as a main prop of your liberty, and that the love of the one ought to endear to you the preservation of the other.

(15) In contemplating the causes which may disturb our Union, it occurs as matter of serious concern that any ground should have been furnished for characterizing parties by geographical **discriminations**--northern and southern, Atlantic, and western -- whence designing men may endeavor to excite a belief that there is a real difference of local interests and views. One of the **expedients** of party to acquire influence within particular districts is to misrepresent the opinions and aims of other districts. You cannot shield yourselves too much against the jealousies and heart burnings which spring from these misrepresentations; they tend to render alien to each other those who ought to be bound together by **fraternal** affection. The inhabitants of our Western country have lately had a useful lesson on this head. They have seen in the negotiation by the Executive and in the unanimous ratification by the Senate of the treaty with **Spain**, and in the universal satisfaction at that event throughout the United States, a decisive proof how unfounded were the suspicions **propagated** among them of a policy in the General Government and in the **Atlantic States** unfriendly to their interests in regard to the **Mississippi**; they have been witnesses to the formation of two treaties--that with **Great Britain** and that with Spain--which secure to them everything that they could desire in respect to our foreign relations toward confirming their prosperity. Will it not be their wisdom to rely for the preservation of these advantages on the union by which they were procured? Will they not henceforth be deaf to those advisers, if such there are, who would sever them from their brethren and connect them with aliens?

(16) To the **efficacy** and permanency of your union a government for the whole is indispensable. No alliances, however strict, between the parts can be an adequate substitute. They must inevitably experience the **infractions** and interruptions which all alliances in all times have experienced. Sensible of this momentous truth, you have improved upon your first essay by the adoption of a Constitution of Government better calculated than your former for an intimate union and for the **efficacious** management of your common concerns. This Government, the offspring of our own choice, uninfluenced and unawed, adopted upon full investigation and mature deliberation, completely free in its principles, in the distribution of its powers, uniting security with energy, and containing within itself a provision for its own amendment, has a just claim to your confidence and your support. Respect for its authority, compliance with its laws, **acquiescence** in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true liberty. The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their constitutions of government. But the constitution which at any time exists until changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people is sacredly **obligatory** upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish government presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government.

(22) The alternate **domination** of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge natural to party **dissension**, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful **despotism**. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent

despotism. The disorders and miseries which result, gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and **repose** in the absolute power of an individual; and, sooner or later, the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this **disposition** to the purpose of his own elevation on the ruins of public liberty.

(24) It serves always to distract the public councils, and enfeeble the public administration. It agitates the community with ill founded jealousies and false alarms; kindles the animosity of one part against another; **foments** occasional riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which finds a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passions. Thus the policy and the will of one country are subjected to the policy and will of another.

(25) There is an opinion that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the administration of the government, and serve to keep alive the spirit of liberty. This within certain limits is probably true; and in governments of a monarchical cast, patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favor, upon the spirit of party. But in those of the popular character, in governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged. From their natural tendency, it is certain there will always be enough of that spirit for every **salutary** purpose. And there being constant danger of excess, the effort ought to be, by force of public opinion, to **mitigate** and **assuage** it. A fire not to be quenched, it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent it bursting into a flame, lest instead of warming, it should **consume**.

(30) As a very important source of strength and security, cherish public credit. One method of preserving it is to use it as sparingly as possible; avoiding occasions of expense by **cultivating** peace, but remembering also that timely **disbursements** to prepare for danger frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it; avoiding likewise the **accumulation** of debt, not only by shunning occasions of expense, but by vigorous exertions in time of peace to discharge the debts, which unavoidable wars may have occasioned, not ungenerously throwing upon **posterity** the burden which we ourselves ought to bear. The execution of these maxims belongs to your representatives, but it is necessary that public opinion should cooperate. To facilitate to them the performance of their duty, it is essential that you should practically bear in mind, that towards the payment of debts there must be revenue; that to have revenue there must be taxes; that no taxes can be devised which are not more or less inconvenient and unpleasant; that the **intrinsic** embarrassment inseparable from the selection of the proper objects (which is always a choice of difficulties), ought to be a decisive **motive** for a **candid** construction of the conduct of the government in making it, and for a spirit of acquiescence in the measures for obtaining revenue, which the public **exigencies** may at any time dictate.

(31) Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and morality **enjoin** this conduct, and can it be that good policy does not equally enjoin it? It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and, at no distant period, a great nation, to give to mankind the **magnanimous** and too **novel** example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt but, in the course of time and things, the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary advantages which might be lost by a steady adherence to it; can it be that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue? The experiment, at least, is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human nature. Alas! is it rendered impossible by its **vices**?

(34) As avenues to foreign influence in innumerable ways, such attachments are particularly alarming to the truly enlightened and independent patriot. How many opportunities do they afford to **tamper** with domestic factions, to practice the arts of **seduction**, to mislead public opinion, to influence or awe the public councils! Such an attachment of a small or weak, towards a great and powerful nation, dooms the former to be the **satellite** of the latter.

(40) It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliance with any portion of the foreign world; so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it; for let me not be understood as capable of **patronizing infidelity** to existing engagements. I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than private affairs,

that honesty is always the best policy. I repeat it, therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But in my opinion, it is unnecessary, and would be unwise to extend them.

(47) The considerations, which respect the right to hold this conduct, it is not necessary on this occasion to detail. I will only observe, that, according to my understanding of the matter, that right, so far from being denied by any of the Belligerent Powers, has been virtually admitted by all.

(48) The duty of holding a neutral conduct may be inferred, without any thing more, from the obligation which justice and humanity impose on every nation, in cases in which it is free to act, to maintain *involute* the relations of peace and amity towards other nations.

(49) The inducements of interest for observing that conduct will best be referred to your own reflections and experience. With me, a *predominant* motive has been to endeavour to gain time to our country to settle and mature its yet recent institutions, and to progress without interruption to that degree of strength and consistency, which is necessary to give it, humanly speaking, the command of its own fortunes.

(50) Though in reviewing the *incidents* of my administration, I am unconscious of intentional error, I am nevertheless too sensible of my defects not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors. Whatever they may be, I fervently beseech the Almighty to *avert* or *mitigate* the evils to which they may tend. I shall also carry with me the hope that my country will never cease to view them with indulgence; and that, after forty-five years of my life dedicated to its service, with an upright zeal, the faults of *incompetent* abilities will be *consigned* to *oblivion*, as myself must soon be to the mansions of rest.

(51) Relying on its kindness in this as in other things, and *actuated* by that *fervent* love towards it, which is so natural to a man who views in it the native soil of himself and his *progenitors* for several generations; I anticipate with pleasing expectation that retreat in which I promise myself to realize without *alloy*, the sweet enjoyment of partaking, in the midst of my fellow citizens, the *benign* influence of good laws under a free government--the ever favorite object of my heart, and the happy reward, as I trust, of our mutual cares, labors and dangers.

George Washington