

Appendix.

Thomas Jefferson, a Great American

EXTENSION OF REMARKS OF

HON. ROBERT F. WAGNER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Friday, April 21 (legislative day of
Wednesday, April 12), 1944

Mr. WAGNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the Appendix of the Record a very able address on the subject Thomas Jefferson, a Great American, delivered by the Honorable Robert H. Jackson, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, before the Virginia State Society, at Washington, D. C., on April 13, 1944.

There being no objection, the address was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

When Colonel Halsey invited me to join you in observing the birthday of Thomas Jefferson, he said he would like to know what would be said to Virginians about Jefferson by a Yankee—with the usual prefix. This was a challenge no Yankee could decline with honor.

I can say that it was New Yorkers, under the leadership of his great rival, Alexander Hamilton, who broke the deadlocked election of 1800 and made Mr. Jefferson President. They could choose between Aaron Burr, a fellow New Yorker, about whose character they had doubts, and the Virginian, to whom they were opposed politically, but whose character they respected. So they threw their support to the forthright Virginian. We still take great pride in that act. Never before, nor since, have a man's adversaries purposely elected him President. Other Presidents have had some help from their enemies, but it was not intentional.

It was the high character of the man that captivated even his rivals and left an imperishable impression on American history. He was pitted against the severest competition. Not only did able men from the North, such as Hamilton, Franklin, and Adams—measure their talents against his, but Virginia itself provided such contemporaries as Washington, Madison, Mason, Henry, Monroe, and many others in whose company it would be hard for any man to distinguish himself. However, we appreciate the true stature of Jefferson the more when we stand him beside the other strong men of his time.

We must not yield to the temptation to deal with Jefferson merely by labels or to oversimplify his contribution to our country. His mind was one of the most comprehensive and complex in our annals. His experience touched American life in every possible aspect.

We all learned in school about Jefferson the statesman; author of the Declaration of Independence, our first Secretary of State, and the third President of the young Republic. Although preeminently a man of peace, as commander in chief he sent the American Navy to the coasts of north Africa to clean out the pirates who were preying upon our commerce. He saw that even in his day the world could be made safe for peaceful pur-

suits only if someone took the burden of destroying the parasites who would live by violence and oppression of others. Older nations had bought their peace with the pirates. By standing up and refusing to pay tribute to lawlessness, Mr. Jefferson won world-wide respect for our flag and brought a new security into the commerce of the world.

At home he was the author of so many reforms that his election was called "the revolution of 1800," especially by those who did not like it. We know him also as the author of a great variety of state papers ranging from the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom to the Kentucky Resolutions. He was the master of the executive department of the Government for many critical years. He powerfully influenced the legislative department also. As Vice President he presided over the Senate and he wrote the Parliamentary Manual which still guides congressional procedures. And he did not neglect the judicial department. He expressed positive and not entirely complimentary views about the Supreme Court of his day. He advised that every justice write his own separate judgment in every case. To join in a single opinion, he thought, lessened the sense of individual responsibility. At least in this respect his ideas have gained ground in the Court. We could also speak at length of his influence on foreign policy, both in his own and later days; and his services as a diplomat, so helpful to the cause of the Colonies during the Revolution and to the young Republic in gaining recognition.

Jefferson was a brilliant man, to be sure, but he also brought to the Presidency experience—experience in national and in foreign affairs which made him sure-footed when it was necessary to lead the country on dangerous paths. Apprenticeship as Vice President and as Secretary of State taught him the pitfalls which an administration must avoid both at home and abroad.

Moreover, Jefferson's public service rested on a most varied experience in the practical affairs of life and a versatile intellectual interest. It was a very shrewd and business-like Mr. Jefferson who made the largest real estate deal in the history of the country; and like many another businessman, he took some chances with the law to get Louisiana Territory for the United States. He was an architect of merit and an inventor of many useful things, as a trip to Monticello demonstrates.

Despite this practical turn of mind he also was among the first philosophers of his day. He dealt with ancient and modern philosophies and religions and discussed confidently what he called the nonsense of Plato. Then there was Jefferson the educator, founder of the University of Virginia, who laid out its campus, designed its beautiful buildings, prescribed its regulations. He foresaw an American language a century before Mencken.

From his books he turned to farming. He was diligent in searching foreign countries for products that would grow in America, introduced many new plants, and was a pioneer in scientific agriculture. He set forth views on scientific subjects such as natural history and survey, studied methods to measure the velocity of rivers and to find the longitude of the place at land without a timekeeper. He wrote about musical vibrations and corresponded with Robert Fulton about the use of submarines for defense—this in 1807. He was also something of an economist, wrote a prospectus on political economy, a plan for

reducing the circulating medium, advised standards for weights and measures, for coinage and currency, and had a plan for cheap wine as a substitute for whisky.

Withal he was a human being who loved the society of fellow humans. Essays of his have been preserved on such subjects as conduct and manners and rules of etiquette in Washington.

I have not begun to call the list of subjects that engaged his attention. There is even attributed to him a poem which includes this verse:

"I stole a kiss the other day,
And trust me, nought but truth I say,
The fragrant breath of blooming May
Was not so sweet as Peggy."

So this was Mr. Jefferson—preeminently a civilized man. He touched life from the grass roots of practical existence to the outer reaches of the most abstract philosophy and speculation. But he tested theories by their effects on the lives of men; he never tried to make life over to square with any set of theories. He saw our America as made up of many tongues and many minds and welcomed any contributions these could make to our total national culture. He saw, too, that from disparity of talent and industry and opportunity men would occupy different stations in life. But he thought the country rich enough so that no useful station in life need be a degraded one and, while standards of living would vary to suit taste and circumstance, none need be below the level of dignity and comfort. He loved the charm and peace of the countryside and the individualism and independence of country living. He never mistook bigness for goodness, either in Government or out of it.

Jefferson was the eternal enemy of the totalitarian and authoritarian systems of government of his time. Then they took the form of monarchy. Divine right of a King to rule other men was the fascism of that day. Jefferson rejected utterly the whole basis of dictatorial government. The majestic words of the Declaration of Independence swept throughout the world. For nearly a century and a half the world-wide trend was to do away with arbitrary rulers and to reshape government to make it rest on the consent of the governed, to put it in the hands of the people.

We in our time have witnessed a weird revival of authoritarian government in Europe. It is not under hereditary monarchs but under aggressive adventurers who became self-made dictators. They scorn and ridicule the teachings of Jefferson and in their countries persecute believers in the democracy he founded. They want to exterminate the Jeffersonian teaching from the earth. They know that no man and no people can admire both a Jefferson and a Hitler.

Mr. Jefferson with our young Navy taught the pirate government of Tripoli that democracy is not weakness, that freedom is not decay. It falls to our lot to bring the same lesson home to those who united to attack us. They dared to do so because they think that a free people will be a divided people; that because we govern ourselves no one can force the inconvenience and sacrifice of war upon us and we will not shoulder them ourselves.

The issue comes to just this: whether Mr. Jefferson or Mr. Hitler has sized us up best. The answer is no longer in doubt. Not only Virginians, but Yankees as well, and all our countrymen and lovers of freedom the world over fight today under the banner of Thomas

Jefferson. Under it and by reason of it we will shatter to bits this new and ugly authoritarianism. Let us observe this anniversary by dedicating ourselves to the rebirth of the spirit of Thomas Jefferson.
