

**GOVERNOR JOHNSTON'S
SPEECH ON AMERICAN AFFAIRS,
ON THE ADDRESS IN ANSWER
TO THE KING'S SPEECH, 1776**

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Governor Johnston's speech on American affairs, on the Address in answer to the King's speech, 1776 by George Johnstone

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GEORGE JOHNSTONE

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AMERICAN AFFAIRS.



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SPEECH


ON

AMERICAN AFFAIRS,

ON THE

ADDRESS in answer to the King's
Speech.

1776.

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*"Justum, et tenacem propositi virum
Non civium ardor prava jubentium
Non vultus instantis tyranni
Mente quatit solida."*

Hor. lib. iii, Ode 3,

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Gov. JOHNSTONS* SPEECH

ON THE

Address in Answer to the King's Speech.



THE speech of the honourable baronet who spoke last,† is very much like that we have heard from the throne, full of assumed false facts, and general undefined axioms. The Americans, Sir, maintain, That the power of giving and granting their own money, by their own free and voluntary consent, is the only security they can retain for the just administration of government, at so great a distance from the seat of empire;

* A younger son of the family of Westerhall in Dumfriesshire, some time of his Majesty's navy, and late governor of West Florida.

† Sir Adam Ferguson.

that it is the main spring, in their several establishments, upon which the meeting and power of their several assemblies, depend; from whence the singular prosperity of the British colonies, above all others on the face of the earth, have flowed. They admit you have the power of limiting the means by which they may acquire property; but they deny you the power of disposing of this property after it is so acquired. In his Majesty's speech many general undefined axioms prevail: "To be a subject of Great Britain, with all its consequences, is to be the freest member of any civil society in the known world." All America with one voice agree in this truth; their writings and their actions proclaim their belief; but they maintain, as I assert in their behalf, that one of the unalienable consequences of that situation, is the giving and granting of aids for the support of government, according to the exigency that shall appear to their own understanding; and that to tax them in an assembly where they have no representatives, and by men who have no interest in the subsidy they impose, is contrary to the spirit of the British constitution, and, in its consequences, must deprive them of all the essential rights of a British subject. Another essential right of a British subject is trial by a jury. Has not this been abrogated in many cases by the late acts of parliament, and totally

destroyed in all civil causes in the extensive province of Quebec? The writ of *Habeas corpus* is another essential right of a British subject: has not this also been done away? I forbear to enumerate the other oppressive proceedings, contrary to the whole tenor of our government; dissolving of charters, without evidence, trial, or forfeiture; laws to deny the natural gifts of the elements, confounding the innocent with the guilty; because, when once the three great pillars of the British constitution are removed, taxing without representatives, trial without jury, imprisonment without relief by writ of *Habeas corpus*, the whole must necessarily fall into confusion, and the rest is not worth contending for. The people in America wisely foresee the suppression of all their rights, in the train of those iniquitous innovations. They perceive, that every thing which is dear to a freeman is at stake; and they are willing, as becomes the children of their ancestors, to put all to the risk, and sacrifice their lives and fortunes, rather than give up the liberty of a subject of Great Britain, with all its *consequences*.

The honourable baronet has concluded his speech with another reason for inducing us to join in the coercive measures proposed by the address, which is still more extraordinary, saying, "Whether we succeed or not, may be uncertain; but if we fail, we shall even then be no worse