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CABINET QUALIFICATIONS

by Gouverneur Morris

Cabinet Qualifications

TO determine who should be appointed Minister either of the Finances, of War, of the Marine, or of Foreign Affairs, may be difficult; but it may not be so difficult to determine the qualities requisite for each of these departments, and having thereby established a rule, the proper persons will be more easily ascertained. These qualities will be classed under the different heads of genius, temper, knowledge, education, principles, manners, and circumstances.

Our Minister of the Finances should have a strong understanding, be persevering, industrious, and severe in exacting from all a rigid compliance with their duty. He should possess a knowledge of mankind, and of the culture and commerce, produce and resources, temper and manners of the different States; habituated to business on the most extensive scale, particularly that which is usually denominated money matters; and, therefore, not only a regular-bred merchant, but one who has been long and deeply engaged in that profession. At the same time, he should be practically acquainted with our political affairs, and the management of public business; warmly and thoroughly attached to America, not bigoted to any particular State; and his attachment founded not on whim, caprice, resentment, or a weak compliance with the current of opinion, but on a manly and rational conviction of the benefits of independence, his manners plain and simple, sincere and honest, his morals pure, his integrity unblemished; and he should enjoy general credit and reputation, both at home and abroad.

Our Minister of War should have a mind penetrating, clear, methodical, comprehensive, joined with a firm and indefatigable spirit. He should be thoroughly acquainted with the soldiery, know the resources of the country, be most intimately informed of the geography of America, and the means of marching and subsisting armies in every part of it. He should be taken from the army, and have acted at some time or other as a quartermaster-general, if not as a commander in a separate department. He should be attached to the civil head of the empire, and not envious of the glory of others, but ambitious of honest fame; his manners those of a generous soldier, and not of an intriguing politician; disagreeable to no considerable body or denomination of men, and by all means agreeable to the commander-in-chief.

A Minister of the Marine should be a man of plain good-sense, and a good economist, firm but not harsh; well acquainted with sea affairs, such as the construction, fitting, and victualling of ships, the conduct and manoeuvre on a cruise and in action, the nautical face of the earth, and maritime phenomena. He should also know the temper, manners, and disposition of sailors; for all

which purposes it is proper, that he should have been bred to that business, and have followed it, in peace and in war, in a military and commercial capacity. His principles and manners should be absolutely republican, and his circumstances not indigent.

A Minister of Foreign Affairs should have a genius quick, lively, penetrating; should write on all occasions with clearness and perspicuity; be capable of expressing his sentiments with dignity, and conveying strong sense and argument in easy and agreeable diction; his temper mild, cool, and placid; festive, insinuating, and pliant, yet obstinate; communicative, and yet reserved. He should know the human face and heart, and the connections between them; should be versed in the laws of nature and nations, and not ignorant of the civil and municipal law; should be acquainted with the history of Europe, and with the interests, views, commerce, and productions of the commercial and maritime powers; should know the interests and commerce of America, understand the French and Spanish languages, at least the former, and be skilled in the modes and forms of public business; a man educated more in the world, than in the closet, that by use, as well as by nature, he may give proper attention to great objects, and have proper contempt for small ones. He should be attached to the independence of America, and the alliance with France, as the great pillars of our politics and this attachment should not be slight and accidental, but regular, consistent, and founded in strong conviction. His manners gentle and polite; above all things honest, and least of all things avaricious. His circumstances and connections should be such, as to give solid pledges for his fidelity; and he should by no means be disagreeable to the Prince, with whom we are in alliance, his Ministers, or subjects.

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