

Farewell address  
of  
Redfield Proctor, Jr.  
As it appears in the  
Journal  
of the  
Joint Assembly  
1925

**Thursday, January 8, 1925**  
**Farewell Address**

*Members of the General Assembly:*

It is customary for the Governor, at the close of his term, to give a brief review of affairs during his administration. To this I shall add a few recommendations which the experiences of the past two years suggest as proper.

**STATE TAX**

By the Legislature of 1923 the appropriations were so reduced that it was possible to cut the direct State Tax from forty cents for the year 1922 to twenty-five cents for the year 1923, and ten cents more, or to fifteen cents for the year 1924. If the budget as recently prepared by the Commissioner of Finance is adopted, it appears that it will not be necessary to levy any State Tax for either year of the coming biennial period. Because of the new system, the budget is ready for presentation to you at the opening of the session. All too frequently the estimates and appropriation bills have not been ready until very near the end of the session. I recommend your earnest and favorable consideration of the budget report.

**COMPARATIVE EXPENSES**

I quote a few paragraphs from the report of the Commissioner of Finance:

“The net cost of maintenance of government the last fiscal year is \$197,111.16 less than the previous year, notwithstanding the highway maintenance, exclusive of permanent work, cost \$333,545.79 more than the year before.

“There was \$190,500.41 more put into new construction last year than was the previous year.

“The state bonded indebtedness was reduced \$115,000 last year against \$62,000 the previous year.

“The total expenditures on highways for both maintenance and permanent work were \$615,331.21 more the last fiscal year than they were the previous year.

“The combined net cost to the state of all institutions in the Public Welfare Department, including state beneficiaries and tuberculosis persons, was \$48,334.74 less the last fiscal year than the previous one.

“In the year ending June 30, 1923, the total expenditures of the state for all purposes were \$80,017.55 more than the total receipts, and in the year ending June 30, 1924, the receipts were \$336,570.66 more than the total disbursements, or a gain in comparison of \$416,588.21.”

This shows an increase of income for the last fiscal year as compared with that ending June 30, 1923, of 21 2/3%, and a decrease in expenses of 5 2/3%, all of which shows a healthy and satisfactory condition of the treasury.

**APPROPRIATIONS**

Though many appropriations were substantially reduced by the action of the last Legislature, none of these reductions have resulted disastrously or proved of serious inconvenience or embarrassment. The reduction each year in the appropriations to the colleges by an amount equal to 10% of the appropriations for the last few years prior to 1923, is fair, and does not cause serious hardships or curtailment. This further annual reduction should be continued. The Administration of Justice has, for many years, cost more than the appropriations. The expenses connected with this work are difficult to control. The courts must function, the law-enforcement officers must be paid, and the prisoners must be fed. I think certain expenditures in this work can properly be reduced. But, aside from this one oft-repeated overrunning of the appropriation, few of the departments exceeded the sums allotted to them, none seriously so, and the end of the first fiscal year of the biennial period, the second year of which does not end until next June.

The case of the Department of Public Welfare, which includes all of the State institutions, is worthy of special note. This department did not use any of the \$75,000 Contingent Fund provided for it, keeping well

within the total of its appropriations. The Contingent Fund, which for some years has totaled \$100,000, was, by the last Legislature, divided, \$75,000 being designated for the Department of Public Welfare, and \$25,000 left to be used as the Governor might direct. This provision should be changed, the total remaining the same, with \$50,000 first available for this department, the other \$50,000 to be used as the Governor may deem best, including any balance not needed by the Public Welfare Department.

### ECONOMY

Economy is a fact, not a theory. We can be economical if we will, but very few of us are ever so unless we determine to be, and vigilantly and consistently stick to that determination. Expenses always tend to increase ahead of income and to some the sight of a few dollars of surplus is a great incentive to extravagance. The necessity for economy is imperative. We are suffering under a heavy burden of taxation, Federal, State and local, and this burden must be reduced if we are to insure our continued prosperity. The President and the Secretary of the Treasury have called the importance of tax reduction to the attention of Congress in language that cannot be misunderstood. I call it to your attention as being of fundamental importance. We may well learn and live in accordance with the principles of thrift and economy preached and practiced by Calvin Coolidge.

### HIGHWAYS

The board of three in charge of the highway work has improved far preferable to the one-man system. During the last two years the work of this department has been more extensive and a considerable portion of it more permanent in its nature. For the six years beginning with 1917, and ending with 1922, the State spent \$1,252,780 to match the money offered by the National Government for so-called Federal road work. Since January 1923, the sum so spent was \$964,000.

These figures include bridge work coming under the Federal Aid requirements, for which Federal money was actually used. The impression all too frequently held that we are losing Federal Aid money because of a failure to appropriate State funds to match it is quite without foundation. At the present time there is less than \$440,000 Federal Aid money available for Vermont which has not been actually taken up either in jobs completed or put under construction. This unused balance is about \$170,000 less than it was two years ago, and by the terms of the Federal appropriation bill this \$440,000 remains available to us for two years that is through 1926. Though more Federal money will undoubtedly be made available, we certainly have not failed to take advantage of the money offered. It is of interest to note that during the last biennial period approximately only one-third of the money spent for Federal construction has been for gravel roads. Somewhat over 46% has been spent for hard surface roads, and approximately 20% for bridges. In 1923, the State spent \$129,000 for the laying of dust and in 1924, \$194,000. During the last two years 18.8 miles of hard surface road have been put under construction. The district system of supervision and the present patrol system both give good satisfaction, the latter including 2157 miles within its operations during 1924. The mileage of patrolled roads should be gradually increased.

### GASOLINE TAX

The Legislature of 1923 levied a tax of one cent per gallon on gasoline. 1924 is the first full calendar year this tax has existed. For the twelve months November 1, 1923 to November 1, 1924, the amount collected was \$225,962. I believe the experience of the last two years warrants the increase of this tax to two cents per gallon, which undoubtedly will amount to a half million dollars of income for highways.

### EDUCATION

In my message of two years ago I made few specific recommendations regarding educational matters. Several rather drastic bills were considered at that session of the Legislature, the result being some quite extensive changes in our educational laws, including the provisions for the Board of Education itself. These changes have, however, resulted in much less actual change in our school system than might have been expected. To a large degree the towns are in supervisory districts with groupings quite similar to those of previous years, with the exception that a considerable number of towns are operating under the so-called superintendent-principal arrangement. There are defects in the present law, but experimenting with our schools

is serious, and too frequent radical changes in the system is sure to be disastrous. With the Chairman of the State Board of Education I have visited over two hundred one-room rural schools, including some in all counties in the State. Although we saw discouraging things, we saw much that was encouraging. Two things were strongly impressed upon my mind. There has been marked improvement in the schoolhouses in the past few years and a great deal that still needs to be done could easily be, and at very little expense, if the local people were sufficiently interested to do it. Our children deserve our best attention and first interest. But do they always receive it? The schools in some sections do not indicate that they do. The teacher—her ability and personality—make or fail to make a good school. She is more important than all the rest put together. We should make the maximum of effort to provide and keep good teachers in our schools.

#### CASTLETON SCHOOL

The old normal school building at Castleton, which has been used for teacher-training purposes, burned early last January. After careful investigation of the work of and need for this school, the Emergency Board authorized the expenditure of \$100,000 for a new building, which is now nearing completion. It will provide sleeping quarters for twenty-six girls, for the principal and some of the teaching staff; also an office, parlor, library, classrooms, temporary dining room and kitchen. It will still be necessary to rent extensive quarters, particularly for sleeping rooms. I strongly recommend the necessary appropriation by this Legislature to provide for the erection of a second building to complete the school plant, this building to include adequate kitchen, dining room and storerooms, and rooms for the rest of the pupils and teaching staff. The rooms in the present new building temporarily used as a dining room and kitchen would then be available as a laboratory and assembly hall-gymnasium, for which uses they were designed and are much needed. The school now numbers over one-hundred, and excellent work is being done with very good spirit. Vermont schools absolutely need these teachers.

#### STATE POLICE

The automobile has brought to us new problems, but particularly in connection with law enforcement. I do not refer wholly to the enforcement of the prohibition or automobile laws. The automobile affords an easy and quick means of escape for all thieves, a quicker get-away after the commitment of any sort of crime. Effective co-operation between the law-enforcement officers of the various towns is sometimes difficult to obtain quickly, with unfortunate results.

State police have proved to be very effective elsewhere. I have been impressed by the work of this force in Massachusetts, which I have investigated somewhat. This has proved particularly helpful in the rural districts as a protection to the farmers and other residents of these areas, and I believe such a force would prove so here. It should be small at first, and very carefully selected as to its personnel. Its duties should include not only the enforcement of the automobile laws, but the enforcement of all State laws, and for this reason it should be placed under the control of the Attorney General or the Governor. I am not prepared to recommend to you the organization of such a force at this time, but the subject is worthy of your consideration. I am convinced, however, that in the near future such a force will be the most helpful agent in the solution of many of our law-enforcement problems.

#### STATE INSTITUTIONS

At the State Prison and House of Correction for men at Windsor a fire necessitated the rebuilding of the upper portion of one wing, resulting in an improved assembly hall and chapel. An old wooden building included within the walls by an extension two years ago, was found wholly unfit for remodeling as a shop, and a thoroughly well designed and constructed addition to the existing shop was made possible by an authorization for the expenditure of \$35,000 by the Emergency Board. This building is now occupied, and its use amply justifies its erection.

At the Hospital for the Insane at Waterbury, work on a building previously authorized as a receiving ward and ward for the treatment of certain of the more hopeful cases has progressed, but the building is not yet ready for use. There have been no additional buildings erected either at the school for Feeble-minded at Brandon or at the Industrial School at Vergennes.

The Special Commission provided by No. 141 of the Acts of 1923 to consider the future of the Women's Prison at Rutland, first sought a buyer for this entire plant, with the thought of building a new and more suitably designed prison on near-by land already owned by the State. No purchaser at an approximately fair price could be found, and the Commission, after careful study, decided to remodel the present building. This work has progressed during the last few months and the remodeled portion will soon be ready for use, though some of the work, particularly on the roofs, cannot be completed until warm weather. The result will be a convenient, adequate plant for the State's needs, though not designed as a new modern prison for women would be.

The School for Feeble-minded is overcrowded. There is a certain class of cases there quite capable of self-support, if properly supervised and guarded. Experience in other states has shown that small colonies of these unfortunates can be established in centers where sufficient work of a nature that they can well do is available to profitably occupy them. To be more specific, twelve to twenty of the older girls or women can be cared for and supervised by one or two attendants in an ordinary dwelling house of sufficient size, going out to do housework or certain kinds of factory work by the day, returning to the house for the night and also for meals, if their work permits. These colonies, as they are called, can easily be made self-supporting, and I recommend the establishment of such a colony of selected inmates from our Brandon school somewhere where work suitable for them can be found. Rutland seems a desirable location for such a colony.

### FORESTRY

There are vast areas of land in Vermont far more suitable for the growing of trees than for farm crops or grazing. Funds should be made available for the purchase, when possible, of tracts of land to be added to our State forests. The use of money in this way is not an expenditure, but an investment, and the sums so used need not be large, as considerable areas of such land can, for time to time, be acquired at reasonable prices. The State has received one substantial gift this past year—Mount Philo in Ferrisburg—from Mrs. Frances W. Humphreys, long a summer resident there.

### EMERGENCY BOARD

The limit of the amount expended in any one year by the Emergency Board now placed at \$100,000 should not include money received from insurance on buildings or property of the State damaged or destroyed by fire. I recommend that the law be amended to so provide.

### AUTOMOBILE LICENSES

The issuing of licenses to run automobiles should be more carefully guarded. The fee system for paying the examiner is wrong in principle. If any of this work is to be done on the fee basis, the amount the examiner gets for the examination if he passes the applicant should be paid him just the same if the applicant fails. This amount the applicant may reasonably be asked to pay for being examined, without regard to the result. There should be more regulation and control over motor busses and heavy trucks and I recommend a much higher registration fee on both busses and trucks. The talk of which we have heard so much, that the so-called income from automobiles, that is, the income from the registering and licensing of automobiles and chauffeurs, and the income from the gasoline tax, has not been expended on highways, is wholly untrue, and no one with interest to investigate the matter can retain such an impression.

### CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

Since the last session of the General Assembly, an amendment to Section 13 of Chapter 2 of the Constitution, providing "that the General Assembly shall have power to regulate by law the mode of filling all vacancies in the House of Representatives which shall happen by death, resignation or otherwise", has been ratified and adopted by the freemen of the State. Appropriate legislation should be enacted early in this session so that in the event of a vacancy in the House, it may be promptly filled and no town be without a representative.

### COMMITTEE ROOMS AND OFFICES

The State House and Library building afford adequate Office quarters for the State officers, and will doubtless continue to for some years to come. During the period of the Legislature, however, it is necessary to

provide committee rooms. These should be in this building, which means that certain departments must temporarily find quarters elsewhere. The National Life Insurance Company desires to sell its old building, a portion of which was rented by the State during the last session of the Legislature and is now again so rented. The officers of the Company have interviewed me, but have not indicated the sale price. They tell me the building stands in the Grand List at \$75,000. I have looked the building over with the Sergeant-at-Arms and I do not recommend its purchase. Adequate and comfortable committee rooms can be provided in the rear of the Capitol at a much smaller initial cost than the probable purchase price of this building, and the heating and care of rooms so located would cost much less. The additional rooms would not be needed except during the session of the Legislature, and therefore would not need to be heated or cared for except during that period. When the Legislature feels that additional quarters should be provided, I recommend that they be constructed in the rear of and in connection with this building.

#### HOURS OF WORK AT THE STATE HOUSE

Two years ago the daily working period for the State's office employees was with many actually little over seven hours. An attempt to enforce an eight-hour day of actual work met with opposition from both clerks in subordinate and superior positions. Petitions were presented to, and delegations waited upon, the Governor. Many have continued to come late or leave early, in some offices supported by those higher up. Therefore it seemed best to install time clocks. I leave it to you if eight hours is an unreasonably long day of actual work for the State of Vermont to ask of its employees, paid from the public treasury.

#### DEPARTMENT REORGANIZATION

The Legislature of 1923 made extensive changes in the administrative departments which have proved very helpful and desirable, resulting in an annual saving of \$35,000 in pay roll alone. There has been little criticism of these consolidations and none that in my judgment justifies any changes at this time. The present law amply provides proper and efficient administration for every department. Many of the provisions thereof have been in actual operation only eighteen months—certainly not sufficient time to give them a fair trial or warrant any suggestion of any radical change.

#### SENATOR GREENE

The people of Vermont have great reason to rejoice over the return to his duties of our senior Senator, the Honorable Frank L. Greene. His recovery from a very serious and most distressing accident has been remarkable. No citizen of Vermont is to-day more needed in a public position than he is in the one he holds. Brave, honest and strong, he has grown with the years of service and his State and Nation are proud of him. Let us earnestly hope that he may be spared in health and strength to serve many years in his high office.

#### CONCLUSION

In closing I would impress upon you the serious consideration that should be given to all appropriations before they are actually granted. You are the trustees of the people's money. The Constitution provides that "no money shall be drawn out of the Treasury unless first appropriated by act of Legislation". Whatever the source of income, whether it be less or more, and without regard to presumable increases therein, appropriations for all work, should be definite and specific. As stated in a retiring message of more than forty years ago, we are in the main a well regulated State. The evils that exist in our government are more often the consequence of too hasty and too much legislation, then too little.

Compared with other states, our record for prudence and economy is good. With a people intelligent, honest and frugal, largely free from the extremes of wealth and poverty, self-reliant, beyond the average homogeneous in blood, faith and character, proud of their State, lovers of their Country and of law and order, where can you find less government required? Your work is not a question of party but of good citizenship and common honesty, and should be done with the single purpose of what is for the best interest of the State as a whole.

REDFIELD PROCTOR.

The Governor, having concluded the reading of his message, was escorted to the Executive Chamber by the committees appointed by the Chair, and the Joint Assembly dissolved.

MILLWARD C. TAFT,  
*Secretary of the Senate, Clerk.*