

Inaugural address  
of  
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**Friday, January 10, 1975.**  
**Inaugural Address**

Thank you Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Chief Justice, Members of the Supreme Court, Reverend Clergy, Governor Aiken, Governor Stafford, Governor Hoff, Mrs. Arthur, Members of this General Assembly and friends.

Thirty-eight years ago this very week, another man stood at the rostrum where I stand today and closed his address with these words:

“While I occupy the executive office it will not be the office of any particular group or sect, and I selfishly hope that at the end of my term it may be said that my administration was a successful one. With your help it will be. Let us forget our political differences, forget that we may not attend the same church, but remember we are all Vermonters working to promote the welfare and increase the happiness and prosperity of the people of our State. If we will do this, then I know that under the guidance of the great master of us all we shall succeed.”

Those were the words of one of the greatest Vermonters in our history, and to him, on behalf of every citizen who resides within our borders, to that man, Senator George David Aiken, I say: “Welcome home from the thankful hearts of the people to whom you have given a lifetime of unparalleled service.”

We gather at these historic proceedings at a time of serious decline in the political and economic institutions of this country.

We have gone from a period of affluence to a period of deep recession in a very short time.

And during the very same hours that we find people unable to get housing loans at banks, people dropped from payrolls, people with shorter paychecks, or no paychecks at all. At a time when political leaders need more confidence we find that the people no longer trust the politicians because the politicians failed to trust the people.

How did they fail?

For one thing, they indulged in the mistaken notion that the people of this country are not brave enough to receive or wise enough to understand the truth. How wrong they were!

The people are wiser than the politicians believe. When their highest national leaders were saying: “There is no recession . . . things will get better soon” . . . the people knew and said to one another . . . “This is not true. Things are not getting better, they are getting worse.”

The observant citizen who reads the back pages of the major newspapers knows that Arab countries and Arab money are attempting to buy up major segments of American industry not excluding defense establishments and the fuel sources that make the engines of this country run.

Yet, where is the national leader, Republican or Democrat, conservative or liberal, who will tell the people what the challenges are that must be met and what we must do to meet them.

In the back rooms and private corridors politicians will admit to one another that while we have trimmed some waste in the management of our energy resources, it is fundamentally business as usual.

If it is not done at the national level, if it is done in no state in the nation except Vermont, let us, you and I, the executive and the Legislature, spell out in no uncertain terms what our state problems are and what we must do to resolve them.

Politicians have lost touch with the people not only because they have failed to tell them the truth but also because each political party, Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals, has made errors of monumental proportions.

There is a drastic change in our political condition. Half of the populace does not want to be associated with any political party. They know that the liberals have gone wrong in believing that our troubles can be cured by more spending and more government. And they know that the conservatives have gone wrong in their preoccupation with the military, private interests and less government. The message from the people is loud and clear. That message is that the political parties of this country are losing the confidence of the

majority of our citizens.

No one really knows what lies ahead.

Will our system be fractionalized as was the case in post-war France when there was no real working together . . . no effective central leadership? Or will some other more dreary fate befall us?

Lest my intentions be mistaken for one single moment, there is time still time . . . to correct our political condition . . . but time is running out.

What can we in this small State do to improve that political climate?

The press tells us that the legislature is made up of 95 Republicans and 85 Democrats. I see 180 Vermonters.

We must labor together . . . for if we cannot . . . how can we expect the people themselves in their individual and collective capacities to cooperate in the solution of the problems before us?

If the times demonstrate anything, they demonstrate that where we can go wrong is to fail to seek the counsel of the people, to search out their views and to ask them for guidance.

If we succeed in showing this proper respect . . . then we will regain their trust and this republic will work the way it was always intended to work.

We know as realistic human beings that much, indeed most, of our fuel must come from outside our borders and that there is an interdependence between and among the people of the United States.

There are problems that we Vermonters cannot solve alone . . . some that require the cooperation of the federal government, this region, other states and people throughout the union.

But as one president once said: "Let us do the best we can with what we have where we are."

A few months ago when we made major efforts to protect our environment one cynic asked: "What are we saving the environment for?"

I will tell you what we are saving it for . . . we are saving it for times like these when many Vermonters are going back to the land.

They know the land cannot do it all but they are going to use it. They are going to grow food on it and harvest fuel from it and make jobs on it and build homes on it. And they are going to do more than that.

They are going to let 49 other states in this country and the federal government know that we will do our best to make use of what we have toward the end that no citizen will go hungry or cold or without medical care.

The real task before us is not whether we can add more to those who have much but how much we can do for those who must have more. As I will detail in my budget message, we have confronted reality here at home and charted a new course for the time.

It is a course of fiscal caution, of productivity, of making do in hard times.

But beyond that, it is a course that continues our commitments to those less able to help themselves . . . the poor, the disabled, the aged, the handicapped, the mentally ill, and the child in need of dental care.

The course we have chosen is based on hope and confidence . . . a course designed to stimulate industrial employment . . . to promote tourism . . . stimulate agriculture and to improve the economic life of our people.

The main problem in America is not a crisis of dollars. Serious though that may be, it is a crisis of the spirit.

There was a time when America had a sense of community. A feeling that we were one people facing our challenges and problems together. Some how, then we did not think of ourselves as this bloc or that group. We must recapture that spirit and adapt it to the difficulties of our times.

Mindful of the traditions of the past, we face an uncertain yet exciting future. We ask your help, we ask

your support.

We ask greater patience and a greater compassion for your fellowman. We will survive these times and we will do more than that. We will create things for the enjoyment of the spirit as well as the body. We will create within our homes a sense of belonging. An affection for one another. And beginning there, we will identify more with our neighbors, our fellow townsmen, our fellow Vermonters and our fellow Americans.

Because we are all in this together.

And working together, here and across the land, there is no obstacle that faith, intelligence, and energy cannot overcome.

In closing I leave you with these words of Walter Lippmann written shortly before America entered World War II:

“We shall turn from the soft vices in which a civilization decays. We shall return to the stern virtues by which a civilization is made. We shall do this because at long last, we know that we must, because finally we begin to see that the hard way is the only enduring way.”

Thank you.

#### **BENEDICTION**

Benediction was pronounced by Reverend Robert S. Kerr of Burlington.

#### **DISSOLUTION**

The Governor, having completed the reading of his message, was escorted to the Executive Chamber by the Committee.