

Inaugural address  
of  
John B. Page  
As it appears in the  
Journal  
of the  
House of Representatives  
Annual Session,  
1867

**Friday, October 11, 1867**  
**Inaugural Address**

*Fellow citizens of the Senate  
and House of Representatives:*

Grateful to the freemen of Vermont for the expression of their confidence in calling me to act as the Chief Magistrate of my native State, I accept the trust and assume the responsibilities of the office, with the assurance of faithful endeavors on my part, so to discharge its duties as to promote the best interests and the prosperity of the people.

By the constitution, it devolves upon me to suggest for your consideration "such business as may appear necessary to lay before the General Assembly." It could not be expected that this communication would refer to all matters that may come before you during the session, and I shall confine myself to a brief reference to some of the more important interests of the State, as gathered from the reports for the executive officers, with such recommendations as seem to be required thereon, respectfully referring you to these reports for further details.

FINANCES.

The condition of the finances should receive the careful attention of the General Assembly, with a view to economy in all departments, to diminish the burdens of taxation, and to the equal apportionment of the expenses of government upon all the property of the State.

From the Treasurer's report, with the final report of the former Treasurer, completing the fiscal year, I am able to make the following statement:

RECEIPTS.

Balance form previous year,	\$28,576 67
Balance sinking fund brought forward,	75,500 00
Collections on taxes,	569,403 81
Received form county clerks,	17,148 46
Received from judges of probate,	11,748 76
Received from temporary loan,	145,000 00
Received from all other sources,	25,302 01
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	\$872,679 71

DISBURSEMENTS.

Debentures of General Assembly:	
October session, 1866,	\$43,154 13
March session, 1867,	7,816 40
Extra pay and soldiers' allotments,	6,123 47
Organized militia, pay rolls,	4,477 00
Court orders,	47,307 03
Auditor's orders,	195,399 57
State bonds of 1871, redemmed and canceled,	168,500 00
Agricultural College fund, paid on Governor's warrant,	8,142 10
Safety fun, paid receiver Danby Bank,	6,750 00
Interest on bonds and loans,	100 898 79
Interest on taxes and discount of three per cent.,	12,297 74
Temporary loan paid,	145,000 00
Balance to credit of sinking fund for payment of bonds due 1871,	82,000 00
Balance in treasury Sept. 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1867,	44,813 48
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Total,	\$872,679 71
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FUNDED DEBT OF THE STATE.

Bonds due June 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1871,	\$707,000 00
Bonds due Dec. 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1874,	250,000 00
Bonds due Dec. 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1876,	250,000 00
Bonds due Dec. 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1878,	250,000 00
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Total,	\$1,457,000 00
Deduct balance credit sinking fund,	82,000 00
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Total funded debt,	\$1,375,000 00
The funded debt being reduced in the past two years,	\$275,000 00

LIABILITIES FOR THE CURRENT YEAR

Sundry balances in the treasury,	\$20,000 00
Interest on bonds and loans,	90,000 00
Other current expenses,	250,000 00
For sinking fund, installment on bonds,	150,000 00
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Total,	\$510,000 00

RESOURCES.

Balance in treasury and due on taxes,	\$50,027 67	
Received since close of fiscal year, on account of balance due from the United States,	58,530 31	
	-----	108,557 98
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Balance,		\$401,442 02

It seems to me sound policy to continue to apply yearly one hundred and fifty thousand dollars as a sinking fund to retire the funded debt. Should you concur in this view, and should the basis of the foregoing estimate prove correct it will be necessary to assess a tax upon the polls and ratable estate of the inhabitants of the State, that will realize to the treasury four hundred thousand dollars. It will be noticed that this sum is nearly one hundred and seventy thousand dollars less than was raised by tax last annual session.

REGISTERED LOANS.

Coupon State bonds belonging to the Agricultural College fund, to the amount of one hundred and thirty-three thousand and five hundred dollars, are deposited with the State Treasurer. These bonds are negotiable, and, under the law, are to be held for years to come. For greater security, I recommend that authority be granted to cancel these bonds, and any other that may be returned to the treasury for that purpose, and to issue certificates in the form of the registered loan of the United States, inscribing the credit on the books in the offices of the Treasurer and Secretary of State.

COLLECTION OF TAXES.

From observation and experience I am satisfied that our system of collecting taxes can be much simplified and improved. I recommend that the existing laws on that subject be so modified as to require the selectmen, or other proper officers, of each town or city, to include in the same rate-bill all taxes, whether state, county, town, or otherwise, duly certified to them as voted and assessed in any year, and that such rate-bill be committed for collection to the first constable, or collector of taxes, in each town or city, who should pay the amount, when collected, to the respective treasurer of the state, county, city, town, district or village, according to the nature of

the taxes. The expenses of collecting might thereby be materially diminished, and tax-payers would be saved the annoyance of numerous calls from different collectors during the same year.

#### ORGANIZED MILITIA.

The present law regulating the organized militia is wholly inadequate to provide an efficient force that can be relied upon in case of need, and your attention is directed to the sensible remarks upon this subject in the report of the Adjutant and Inspector General. Some portion of the public property in possession of the militia is reported in bad condition, and without more vitality in our militia system, it would seem necessary that this property should be collected and placed in safe keeping under the care of a proper officer. The signs of the times indicate that we, as prudent men, should not wholly lay aside our arms, but rather emulate the example of the old Bay State in 1861, and be prepared for any emergency.

#### EDUCATION.

Under the act of the last annual session, normal schools have been established in each of the congressional districts. They cannot but prove useful in providing our common schools a better educated class of teachers, thus raising the general standard of education among the people, which is one of the first duties of the State. I commend this subject to your liberal consideration.

#### BANK COMMISSIONER.

The duties of bank commissioner during the past year have been almost nominal. I recommend that the office be abolished, and that some other State officer be authorized to perform such acts as may hereafter be required in this department.

#### STATE PRISON

Until within a few years our State Prison has been self sustaining, but owing to the high prices of clothing and provisions, with no corresponding increase of income, it has become necessary to draw upon the treasury considerable sums to meet the deficiency. During the past year, ten thousand four hundred twenty-seven dollars and five cents have been required for this purpose. Turning to the neighboring states I find that their prisons are a source of income, and it behooves us to inquire what can be done to place our prison on a paying basis. The enactment of a law has been suggested, requiring the directors to advertise for proposals for new contracts at least six months before the expiration of existing contracts for the labor of the inmates. It has been thought that this, with the adoption of a better system of discipline, would bring about the desired results. The superintendent is of the opinion, in which I concur, that additional provision should be made for the female convicts. At present it is almost impossible to maintain any discipline in this department for want of proper accommodations.

#### REFORM SCHOOL.

The establishment of a school for the reformation of juvenile offenders having become our policy, provision for its necessities the coming year should be made at this session.

It is my belief that great good is being done in elevating our wayward youth, and preparing them for useful and honorable lives, and I am convinced that a familiarity with the operations of the Vermont Reform School would commend it to your sympathy and support. For information on the subject, you are referred to the interesting reports of the trustees and superintendent.

#### RESOURCES OF THE STATE.

The resources of the State, as developed in its agriculture, its manufactures, its quarries, and its mines, merit and should receive, your careful attention. The legislation on these subjects should be such as to secure to our people the greatest advantages from these sources, by inducing the influx of capital for extending our manufactures, opening and working our quarries and mines, and increasing our railroad facilities.

In most particulars, our laws compare favorably with those of other states in these respects. In some of their provisions, however, I shall have occasion to indicate reforms which seem to me to be needed.

Vermont is pre-eminently an agricultural State, having thirteen-twentieths of its four millions of acres under improvement, and we have cause of gratitude to the Giver of all things for the abundant harvests that have rewarded the labors of our husbandmen during the year.

The increased value of the real and personal estate in Vermont, from 1850 to 1860, as given in the census, was little over thirty millions of dollars, and this upon a gold basis. Of this sum twenty-eight millions was in the increased value of the real estate. Had we statistics to the present time, they would show a still larger rate of increase. This large advance can only be ascribed to the system of railroads, put in operation during that period, opening to producers easy communication with markets before inaccessible. Take up our iron rails and you reduce the value of our farms and quarries more than the entire cost of the roads. Those within a few miles of our railroads derive the most benefit from them. Therefore the opening of new roads to accommodate more remote sections would aid largely in developing the resources of the State.

When we turn to our manufacturing and mechanical industries we find that, with superior facilities, in many respects we are far behind our sister states of New England. At the taking of the last census we had only fifteen hundred establishments, using an aggregate capital of nearly ten millions and employing a little over ten thousand persons, with sixteen millions of dollars in annual products, while our neighbors on the other side of the Connecticut river show results three times as great. It cannot with truth be claimed that they hold a more favorable position, or have superior a natural advantages; but when we look on their legislation, we find that they encourage manufactures by the exemption of new establishment from taxation, and by other wise laws throw about them the fostering care of the State. In this connection, permit me to repeat the recommendations of former executives on the subject of attachment of property on mesne process, and particularly to call your attention to that part of our system which gives priority to the first attaching creditor. If we would keep pace with our sister states in the development of our abundant resources, we must see that we are not behind them in providing for a just and equitable distribution among all creditors, of the assets of any debtor, who by the risks attendant on new enterprises, or from any other cause, finds himself unable to meet his obligations.

Capital comes to us less freely, and credit is less readily accorded in other states to our citizens, than it would be if the capitalist or the creditor were sure that in case of any inability to pay in full, he could rely on sharing alike with other creditors instead of seeing his property applied to full payment of another's debt, and himself left with no part of his just due. A reformation of our laws in this respect seems to be demanded. Now "our sons seek in other states that protection and fostering care over their industry which they fail to find at home," and to this law on our statute book is largely to be attributed the fact that during the last decade our ratio of increase of population was less than that of any state of the Union.

#### OUR COUNTRY.

It is hardly necessary at this time to allude to the part taken by Vermont in the late rebellion. We have reason to be proud of her record. Here we stand equal with any of our sister states.

Let us not be deprived of the fruits of our sacrifice of men and money by executive interference, and by the removal from official position of men of firm and consistent loyalty and patriotism. Let us see that the cause which we gave the lives of our sons to establish is henceforth maintained, and that we receive the benefit of our sacrifices in the permanent establishment of this Union on principles of justice and equal rights; and to that end let us "urge Congress to act bravely and thoroughly in the adoption of whatever measures may be requisite for the establishment of peace and prosperity throughout the whole country."

It is no time now to take a step backward, but "advance the whole line," hold the positions we have won, and with our fathers declare and maintain that "all men are equally free and independent, and have certain natural, inherent and inalienable rights, among which are the enjoying and defending life and liberty, acquiring, possessing and protecting property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety."

Finally, let us remember that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," and that all our labors are "nothing worth" without the direction of that Infinite Wisdom whose guidance I invoke in all your deliberations.

JOHN B. PAGE.

EXECUTIVE CHAMBER,  
Montpelier, October 11, 1867 }  
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