

Inaugural address

of

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Inaugural Address

My Fellow Vermonters:

Four years ago, when I first stood before you as Governor, I suggested that we pause to reassess our strengths and weaknesses as a state...that we inventory our resources and needs... that we set realistic priorities for the future.

We charted a course and have moved ahead.

I need not detail our progress here. You know it well. It is a matter of pride to us all.

Yet, the pace of change is such that our progress as a state must be greatly accelerated. We must be ever mindful of our responsibilities not only to ourselves but also to future generations of Vermonters.

We assemble again today to reaffirm the power and authority of free choice in our society. We must address ourselves again to the task of providing direction to the great changes taking place in our state.

The world today demands that we do more than reaffirm our past efforts and rededicate ourselves to the public good.

These times demand continuing reappraisal of our collective objectives as well as of our individual goals.

The forces at work in our state and nation demand that we reexamine the very goals we espouse as a society.

We find our system of values under constant challenge. The law of the jungle – the survival of the fittest – is being replaced by a new humanism which tempers the laissez faire of the human spirit.

We must act today to meet more than mere needs for survival. We have the resources and the talents to plan and work for more than minimum standards. We address ourselves today to creating the conditions for a full life. We now must create policies more on the basis of achieving what we can become than on the basis of what is necessary to merely catch up or keep pace with the world.

In Vermont we have recently capitalized upon this new concern for the common good. This is evidenced by the increasingly active role of religion in community affairs.

It is illustrated by the new awareness of the private sector of the economy that its social responsibilities extend far beyond the cold calculation of a balance sheet. Indeed, our businesses today increasingly weigh economic profit and loss on a social scale. Our academic community no longer screens itself from the human condition with an ivy curtain.

Society has put man into fresh focus within the context of a world community.

This fact alone makes it incumbent upon us to move beyond the myths of the past—myths that we all know are honored in public by those same persons who discredit them in private.

Token action is no more appropriate today than are token words.

Ours is the task to match rhetoric with responsibility and debate with deeds.

We have yet to do many things that must be done if Vermont is to maintain its new rank among our more progressive states. We have yet to do other things that must be done if Vermont's progress is to be meaningful for those who come after us.

Ours is a small state with tremendous and as yet relatively untapped and unspoiled natural resources. Our population remains relatively small although expanding in numbers and talents.

This is at once our continuing challenge and our immediate opportunity.

The challenge will always be with us. But time is running out on our opportunity to blend present resources into future possibilities for an ideal society.

The voters of Vermont have demonstrated their desire to fill in the details of the dream of a better life—a life where every man is provided the means to realize fully his potential and to exploit fully his leisure time.

Vermont has historically been a byway, politically as well as geographically.

This is no longer true. And, despite our respect for the past, we cannot act as though it is still true.

Each day we are more and more threatened by the ever sprawling cities and suburbs to the north and south of us. Our lakes, rivers and streams are increasingly objects of new exploitation.

Just as Vermont was once a corridor for the French and Indians, for the early pioneers seeking new freedom and living space, Vermont today is a corridor, but less for the movement of people than for new population, new commerce and new industry.

Full recognition of the pressures of this population surge must be incorporated in our attack on the problems of Vermont today and for the future.

Ours is the task of meeting today's needs with the vision and foresight required to guide future development at the same time.

To do this realistically, we must break with those social and political vestiges of the past that no longer serve the realities of the present and the known potential of the future.

The progress of the past several years has given us a new base from which to view the future. But, progress is relative and today's vision of our advance has added new dimensions to tomorrow's needs.

We have talked for years about the absolute necessity for updating our state constitution.

It has been found to be in conflict with the supreme law of the land. Yet, efforts to convene a constitutional convention to unshackle us from the long outmoded and ignored covenants failed because a few persons of faint heart but staunch purpose desired time to procrastinate.

Our actions must be considered and deliberated. But, we can no longer afford to cloak delay in the guise of deliberation.

We must act with courage and determination if Vermont is to realize its unlimited potential as a showcase for social and political advance.

Constitutional reform is needed now. It is proposed again as a prelude to the reorganization of state government I will recommend at a special session in 1968.

This is not a recommendation of change for the mere sake of change. Neither is it a threat to our basic institutions.

It is a proposal to revamp and reshape our public resources and instruments of government so that they may be focused more directly on the problems of our people. Government must function efficiently as an administrative instrument if it is to be effective as an agency for social reform.

We have demonstrated in many areas—particularly in the realm of natural resources—that the traditional organization of state executive agencies is inadequate. It does not permit us to deal effectively and efficiently with the challenge of protecting our physical environment and enhancing its usefulness to our citizens.

The same is true in the areas of our human resources. We are concerned with total man and his total environment.

The articulation of this problem was the concern of the early 1960's. Its solution is the challenge we now face. Our opportunity diminishes with each day of delay.

The forward thrust of this program for Vermont and its people has three times been endorsed by the electorate.

It is our duty to keep faith with the people and to build upon the advances of the past several years.

The details of this program will be debated as they should be. Alternatives may be proposed. But, no man or group of men can ignore the necessity for action and action now.

Nor can we permit petty partisanship to stand between Vermont and its destiny.

Dramatic evidence of our determination to accept responsibilities would be given by prompt approval of the proposed reforms of our social welfare program.

This proposal already has been approved by the Legislative Council. I see it as more than merely increasing public services and streamlining the administration of public programs. I see it also as a symbol of Vermont's determination to cast off the mantle of provincialism and of our willingness to shape our institutions for effective action.

Just as we act to meet immediate human needs in the areas of health and welfare, we must build for the future.

Education remains the keystone of our long term advance as a state. No area of public endeavor is of greater importance in our efforts to provide for a quality environment and for personal excellence.

We have made great strides in improving Vermont's educational system. These programs of material aid to education must be continued and expanded. I will therefore recommend significant increases in state financing for our schools and colleges.

This is not enough, however. We must further strengthen our programs to enrich the quality of education.

Re-districting is underway and requires continued effort. The State Department of Education is being strengthened and improved. Here again, emphasis must be placed on the human equation, on innovation and increased assistance to the personnel guiding the intellectual development of our young people.

At the same time we strengthen our internal educational programs, we should act to buttress the state's position in relation to the federal government. I can think of no more effective way of protecting the state's control over educational priorities than full legislative participation in the Education Compact.

Such action would again demonstrate our willingness to utilize all available resources to meet our responsibilities to our young citizens.

I would like to depart from my prepared text here to say that no one believes in the federal system more than I do. But here again I think the key word is state responsibility. Unless we demonstrate the capacity and the willingness to meet our problems, the drift to federal controls will continue.

This same theme of conserving our resources and providing for their maximum benefit to our people is reflected in our continued effort to protect and enhance Vermont's great wealth of natural resources.

Legislation will be introduced to implement recommendations that reflect two years of study and planning in this area. Corridors of scenic beauty along our highways and also along our streams demand public protection. Land use must be controlled if we are to prove our true concern for the beauties of Vermont.

Natural areas, parks, stream improvement and pollution control and other elements of a greatly expanded public recreation program require legislative attention and increased state support.

These activities promoting orderly development of our natural resources and recreational potential are but one aspect of our complex economy.

Our record breaking economic development demands continued attention to promotion of a strong industrial base for a healthy balance.

This can be encouraged through additional liberalization of loan guarantees under the Vermont Industrial Building Authority and through a program of industrial parks.

Additional aids to manufacturing and industry would be futile without concurrent action to increase our minimum wage schedule and to expand and bolster allied compensation and unemployment programs.

We need, too, to strengthen the public's role in the maintenance of industrial peace through a labor relations act.

Vermont cannot afford to penalize persons for living and working in the state. We are at a stage in our economic development where we have to compete for skilled labor just as we compete for new employment opportunities. This fact is above and beyond the moral question of assuring all citizens adequate return for

his or her skills and talents without discrimination on the job or in regard to housing.

The state must meet its own responsibility to its employees through a new classification plan and significant salary increases to its own personnel at the same time it acts to protect those in the private sector.

These programs to enhance living and working conditions in our state can be augmented and expedited through expanded and more efficient services to local communities.

But here again, we must not lose sight of our ultimate objective of extending these services to our citizens through agencies that command the resources necessary to do the job well.

Certainly, all the citizens of the state will share the benefits of increased aid to regional planning and to regional development programs, with those living in the participating towns and cities.

Our own experience has demonstrated the value of this regional approach just as we know the benefits to be derived from district courts with full-time judges. This court re-organization should be fully implemented and the same principle should be applied to our present system of state's attorneys.

Again, the theme is action now to assure that Vermont meets its responsibilities to its citizens so that they in turn can more fully realize their individual potential for a creative and constructive life.

Ours is the opportunity to build our community to unique specifications before we face the necessity of having to tear down vast areas of urban blight and decay.

Ours is the opportunity to protect our wealth of rivers, mountains, forests and lakes rather than having to restore or replace them because of uncontrolled exploitation.

Ours is the opportunity for controlled growth and planned development.

Recognition of this opportunity, however, is not enough. We must meet our responsibility for constructive action.

This, then, is the broad sweep of the task we face together. The lines of attack are more fully detailed in legislation proposed for your approval and in special messages I plan to present to you from time to time. Tax reform, use of the general fund operating surplus, are among the topics I plan to treat in detail in this manner.

I am convinced that with divine guidance and by working together in our concern for the future of Vermont, we can and we will demonstrate the courage and the wisdom to utilize our resources and our talents to enrich and elevate the lives of our citizens.

I am confident that together we will weave the vision of our people into the fabric of our community life. With imagination and initiative, I am certain we can raise the quality of the lives of our citizens so that Vermont is the hallmark of progress for New England and the total U.S.