

Farewell address  
of  
John E. Weeks  
As it appears in the  
Journal  
of the  
Joint Assembly  
1931

**Thursday, January 8, 1931**  
**Farewell Address**

*Members of the General Assembly:*

Following a traditional custom with retiring governors, I now have the honor to submit to you, as members of the General Assembly of 1931, certain facts and information relative to important matters connected with the administration of our state government during the past four years.

I believe this custom is a commendable one because it provides the only method of presenting a detailed recital of the activities during my stewardship, together with some observations resulting from experiences encountered in the performance of my duties as governor. It is possible, too, that from a recital of facts there may be something gleaned which will aid you in your future deliberations.

**AGRICULTURE**

We can all agree that agriculture forms the fundamental basis of our livelihood as a state. Without it we could not prosper. In the promotion of our farming resources our dairy interests constitute a vitally important factor. In per capita earning power the Vermont cow leads those of every state in the Union. Consulting with the commissioner of agriculture recently I learned that in the tuberculosis eradication work the department is faced with the most serious situation that has developed since the work was inaugurated. While figures show that the department has tested more cattle during the present biennial period than in any other two years of activity, it is at present impossible to meet the demand placed upon it in the work of eradication. The department is without funds necessary to continue the service in new fields.

At present there are 10,000 cattle on the waiting list for test under the accredited herd plan and 68,000 for the test under the area plan. The inability of the department to comply with the requests that are daily coming into the office for new tests is a matter of serious economic importance to our dairymen, and if not obviated will eventually have a detrimental effect on Vermont's dairy industry.

Farmers are finding it increasingly difficult to dispose of their surplus stock if untested, and still more serious is the fact that several milk firms purchasing in the State are already refusing to pay the usual premiums on grade "A" product unless it is from tested cows. In some localities even state creameries have notified their patrons they will not accept their milk unless it is from tuberculin tested herds. These facts offer overwhelming evidence of what the results will be to the farmer unless present conditions are relieved. Naturally, our farming interests are demanding consideration in their dilemma, and rightfully so, since dairy products constitute the chief items of remuneration, and an income upon which the farmer depends to meet the expenses of his business.

Vermont can well boast of her fine herds of cattle, and as a dairy state should demonstrate a healthy growth each year. The last survey shows a total of 407,000 cattle, representing registered herds and grades. In 1926 there were 8,690 herds with a total of 146,381 cattle under State and Federal supervision, and of the above number 75,230 were officially accredited. In 1930 we had 12,856 herds and 245,496 cattle under such supervision and 160,578 were accredited. This is an increase over four years of 4,166 herds and 99,115 cattle, and an increase in accredited herds of 85,348 cattle.

**AREA TEST**

These statistics show that slightly over 60 per cent of our herds are tuberculin tested and bring the State face to face with this problem—should we continue the work as it has been done from year to year, or should we meet the emergency and clean up the remaining 40 per cent with greater dispatch? The farmer is emphatic in his demand for quicker results than can obtain under the present method and personally I feel that the demand is just. I hope that a special appropriation may be made available to be used immediately, or before July 1, 1931, so that the work of tuberculosis eradication may go forward. If you should deem it feasible to make such appropriation \$100,000, the Federal government will grant a like amount for this use. If this is not done, the money set aside for Vermont will revert back to the National treasury.

## FORESTRY

The forests of Vermont are a valuable asset inasmuch as they embrace nearly two-thirds of the State's area. They are valuable not alone for the production of timber but for serving as a home for game, birds and animals, and for the beneficial effects upon climate and soil preservation. The forests of Vermont supply annually 425,000,000 board feet of lumber, pulp, excelsior and fuel wood. The lumber manufactories in Vermont furnish employment to about 8,000 persons with an additional 2,000 men in the woods. The aggregate annual pay roll is over \$7,000,000.

The first state forest program was adopted in 1909. To date 38,000 acres have been acquired--3774 acres by gifts and the balance by purchase. Since January, 1927, 7500 acres have been added. On these lands, there have been approximately 2,870,000 trees planted, or enough to reforest 2500 acres. A conservative estimate of the increase in timber values on the state lands would be something over \$200,000. In addition to this asset, we might add the scenic value, which cannot be measured in dollars. The forestry and woodworking committee of the Vermont Commission on Country Life has recommended the acquisition of 100,000 acres during the next ten years. Money spent in the purchase and improvement of state forests is not an improvident expenditure but a sound investment.

The state nursery to date has supplied approximately eighteen million trees which have been used to reforest waste or idle lands, seven millions of this number having been planted during my administrations.

## TOWN FORESTS

In April last, I called attention through the press to the advisability of the towns and cities taking action regarding municipal forests, believing it to be a sound business proposition for most towns to acquire forests. The cost is small and the possibilities for returns unlimited. Eleven towns responded to this appeal.

As an example of those possibilities, I will cite one town which in 1900 purchased 10 acres of land for a town forest. This area has been gradually increased until that town now owns 752 acres for a total purchase price of \$8,800. Since 1923, logs and cord wood from the forest have been sold amounting to \$12,179.26. And it is estimated that 600,000 feet of marketable "B" lumber and 2500 cords of wood are now standing. In addition, there is a good stand of growing timber together with about 330 acres of forest planting.

## FOREST FIRE PREVENTION

Resources representing such monetary and scenic value should be given every possible protection, and to this end the laws should be so amended that the governor could by proclamation, or otherwise, regulate more effectively hunting and fishing during periods of excessive drought to aid in the preservation of our forests.

## AVIATION

The rapid progress made in the development of aviation throughout the United States presents a challenge to Vermont to meet the needs of a growing industry and keep pace with our sister states in the march of progress.

A very creditable beginning has been made and many landing fields located which are well adapted to aviation purposes, and when further improved they will provide safe and adequate facilities for those who come to the State by aircraft.

Three new fields with hangars have been developed during the present administration. They are at White River Junction, Montpelier-Barre and Swanton. An airport has been opened at Middlebury and a private field at Manchester although no hangars have yet been provided at either port. Other landing fields in the State are the emergency ports at Derby and Windsor and there are five others whose origin is of earlier date.

Aircraft registration reveals that in 1929 there were 14 resident and non-resident planes registered, and in 1930 there were 31. Pilot's licenses numbered 17 in 1929, and 47 in 1930.

Vermont manifests a growing interest in the promotion of aviation and an air-mindedness which augurs well for future development in the State. It is likewise apparent that cities, villages, towns and counties must meet the needs of the times by providing proper facilities for the accommodation of aircraft and the dispatch of air transport as rapidly as is feasible.

## EDUCATION

Vermont ranks high in intelligence and leadership among the states of the Union. To thoroughness in early training we must largely attribute the enviable position we hold as a commonwealth. We have made notable progress educationally, especially in recent years during which time the systems inaugurated and maintained for the instruction of our youth have resulted in promoting efficiency and establishing a standardization of methods and equipment so essential to success in the conduct of schools.

A determined effort by the Legislature of 1927 to provide better rural schools, better buildings, better equipment and better teachers has had a most beneficial effect upon both pupils and parents. The influence of this effort has proved to be a vital factor in stimulating and promoting educational progress in all sections of our State.

The total number of schoolhouses in 1926 was 1118, and of this number only 242 were qualified as standard or superior schools at that time. In 1927 the standard and superior buildings had increased to 283; in 1928 to 413; in 1929 to 454; and during the past year the number has grown to 628, which represents an increase of over 50 per cent in the past four years.

One of the gratifying features connected with the work accomplished has been the standardization of rural school properties, and the spirit of cooperation between the state department of education and the authorities in the communities where the rural schools are located. Once conditions surrounding the rural school are bettered, that school becomes a source of pride and in many ways an important community center from which most helpful influences radiate.

Education fosters respect for sterling principles and for local self-government. Money spent judiciously for educational facilities never fails to pay good dividends. Vermont believes in making that investment, and by providing increased facilities has shown her willingness to meet the challenge.

## FISH AND GAME

Primarily and essentially, Vermont is rural in her physical characteristics. Many valleys made fertile by the gentle flow of clear-running streams, and beautiful lakes teeming with fish of many varieties provide a veritable pleasure ground, not only for our own sportsmen, but for many visitors from other states as well. For this reason and for the remunerative returns accruing from these natural resources, the work of the fish and game department assumes an important aspect.

This department functions solely with funds which its own activities yield. No appropriation is made in addition to its own departmental receipts.

When the present commissioner assumed office in 1929, he faced a deficit of \$18,000. By exercising rigid economy in administration and by curtailing every expense possible, this indebtedness was entirely wiped out on July 1, 1930. The unfriendly feeling and antagonism which many sportsmen manifested in the early history of the department has largely disappeared owing to the promotion of a better understanding between the wardens, the public and the department.

## FLOOD CONTROL

The subject of flood control has been given exhaustive study since the catastrophe of 1927, with a view to instituting possible prevention against a recurrence of such disasters with the consequent loss of life and valuable property. The investigation of the committee has shown clearly enough that flood protection for Vermont must rely fundamentally upon storage-power reservoir systems. At the present time there is no working basis for carrying out such projects and assessing their benefits. I believe this matter deserves the careful consideration of the Legislature.

## HIGHWAYS

The progress attained in highway construction marks a real achievement. On January 6, 1927, my message suggested a definite highway policy whereby 40 miles of paved road could be built annually, as well as provision made for the necessary bridge construction and an improved system of secondary roads, if the

Legislature would authorize the plan and furnish the required funds. The funds were provided; the plan, in its main essentials, was adopted and the work started early in the spring of 1927. The program was vigorously pursued until the flood of November 3, 1927 forced a temporary suspension of activities. By reason of that catastrophe the State was confronted with a tremendous problem of restoration and financing. But Vermont did not hesitate. In a one-day special session of the Legislature the State authorized its first peace-time bond issue, appropriating, for rehabilitation purposes, \$8,500,000, of which \$8,000,000 was for the use of the state highway board in the reconstruction of highways and bridges. Under the act the highway department was given authority to repair, reconstruct, replace or relocate public highways and bridges destroyed or damaged by the flood. The department immediately began this great undertaking, and soon, under its vigorous efforts, the highways and bridges were made passable for temporary travel. The work of emergency repairs and the plans for permanent replacements went forward without interruption and with remarkable dispatch. To aid in this great plan of reconstruction, Congress appropriated \$2,654,000 to match state funds in rebuilding devastated highways and bridges throughout the State.

The gigantic task which faced the highway department on November 5, 1927, may be realized when one learns that 1,479 bridges have been repaired or rebuilt at a cost of \$6,236,317.39, not to mention the stupendous expense required to restore the highways proper. The books have been closed in this reconstruction work and the money was expended as judiciously as was possible in so extensive an undertaking. It is gratifying to note that with all the added work thrust upon the highway department because of the flood emergency, the regular hard surface program was continued as authorized before the flood.

The people of Vermont have won the admiration of the press and the country for their pluck, courage, initiative and industry in the restoration of our highway system.

The highway program of hard surface construction, as approved and adopted in 1927, has been continued with highly gratifying results during the four years just closed, and a total of approximately 225 miles of pavement built. In no year has the State failed to exceed the original 40 mile proposal. For instance, in 1927, 48.4 miles of hard surface were built; in 1928, 57.4 miles; in 1929, 64.8; and during the year just closed 55 miles were constructed. This is an average of over 55 miles per year and, to my mind, constitutes a record in which the State may take just pride. It is likewise pleasing to note that one contractor who has handled highway building projects in seven different states has publicly stated that in his opinion Vermont stands first in the quality of concrete construction used upon the roads.

I would also add that the total mileage of hard surface might have been increased by several miles this year but for the fact that a considerable amount of money was expended for grading and foundation work on projects in preparation for hard surfacing later on. This preparatory work will obviously lessen the final cost of paving the projects. With the completion this fall of 1.8 miles of concrete road between Montpelier and Middlesex, there is now a continuous stretch of hard surface, practically all cement, from East Barre, East Montpelier and Northfield, via Montpelier, to Burlington, thence north to the Canadian line and south to Middlebury.

Merely citing a few of the larger hard surface projects as examples of the work accomplished, I will mention a stretch of 35.6 miles between the Massachusetts line and Manchester on Route 7; 30.9 miles between Wells River and Lyndonville on Route 5; 23.8 miles between Brattleboro and Bellows Falls, and 23 miles between Ascutney and White River Junction. In addition, there are smaller units aggregating 112 miles.

And while these paving projects have been completed, the State has not underestimated the importance of the secondary road system which has been adequately maintained, and improved in many sections. As a matter of fact the secondary roads are in better condition than at any time in the history of the State.

While I take especial pride in presenting this analysis of our highway progress, I am not unmindful of the influences which made the achievement possible. I want to go on record before this body and representative group of people with the statement that the credit is due, first, to the citizens of the State, whose progressive spirit manifested itself in legislative action and made possible the necessary appropriations for such a program; secondly, to the contractors who have rendered full cooperation and excellent service in fulfilling the provisions of their contracts. And finally, I want to voice commendation of the highway department for its unflinching loyalty and excellent work during my administration. Through its splendid efforts the impressive achievements

outlined above were made possible, and a notable stride made toward the desired goal in our highway development.

It seems entirely fitting at this time to pause for a moment out of respect for the late commissioner of highways, Stoddard B. Gates, whose rare judgment, unflinching loyalty and guiding hand have played so conspicuous a part in Vermont's highway development.

#### FLOOD BONDS

It is worthy of note to mention the fact that with all the progress that has been made in the pursuit of the hard surface road program, the flood bond indebtedness has been reduced \$850,000 during the past two years.

#### CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

Another important step in the development of our highway transportation system during the past four years is the completion of the Champlain bridge which joins, with a solid and enduring link, the two states of New York and Vermont, and stands as a majestic example of engineering and construction.

It will be recalled that in my first message to the Assembly in 1927, attention was called to the proposed bridge across Champlain and its important bearing upon highway traffic and commerce. The bridge was erected by the joint efforts of the two states in accordance with authority granted by the respective legislatures, and the opening was marked by fitting ceremonies.

The success of the structure as an artery of transportation has exceeded even the fondest hopes of its most enthusiastic advocates. It was estimated by the joint bridge commission that the revenues for the first year of operation would be \$52,500 whereas the actual receipts were \$84,124.60, including the five days in August immediately following the opening of the bridge in 1929. Thus the first year's revenues exceeded the estimated returns by over \$31,000, which attests to the utilitarian value and popularity of the bridge, and likewise to the wisdom of the policy of spanning Champlain with an interstate bridge.

#### STATE INSTITUTIONS

Since the flood of 1927, the hospital for the insane at Waterbury has been rebuilt in many ways owing to the excessive damage caused by water at that eventful time. Repairs were made to every building, and with a new barn and outbuilding and a new herd of cattle, the institution today is exemplary in many details.

We are confronted, however, with the necessity of providing accommodations for a constantly growing population. A tentative survey made recently shows the total number of patients to be 918, an increase of 100 since 1924. With every bed occupied at the present time, the institution will face an embarrassing situation for adequate accommodations within the next two years unless provision is made for the increasing population. I, therefore, suggest that this matter receive your serious consideration.

Another matter for concern at Waterbury is the fire hazard. Should a conflagration break out at the institution, the loss of life might be appalling because of lack of adequate fire prevention. I believe that one of the most humane acts possible would be the installation of a modern sprinkle system throughout the buildings of the institution. Adequate fire protection is a precaution we owe the helpless and unfortunate people confined there.

A dormitory has been added to the group of buildings at the Brandon school during the present administration which adds much to the efficiency and usefulness of the plant. I would call attention to the necessity for hospital accommodations at Brandon. The capacity of this institution is 300 girls and boys, and in case of epidemics it is practically impossible to properly care for the inmates. This is unquestionably a pressing need as all the other state institutions have infirmary accommodations. I would also suggest the advisability of a suitable residence for the superintendent of the school.

Another imperative need at this time is an adequate appropriation for a new heating unit at the Pittsford sanatorium, one of such capacity as will serve for both the sanatorium and the new infirmary and supplanting that in the sanatorium proper, which has become inadequate and obsolete. I might say in this connection that an

appropriation for this work at Pittsford would allow the completion of improvements which a previous appropriation contemplated but was insufficient to cover.

The condition of the physical plants at all the institutions is excellent and the character of the supervision and operation of a very high order.

### SOLDIERS' HOME

Certainly we all have a kindly feeling toward the Vermont Soldiers' Home at Bennington, as it provides a haven for those who in time of war and strife offered their lives in defense of the country they loved. The inadequacy of the buildings and accommodations was never so apparent as it is at present. Some repairs and changes in the buildings should be made, not only for the comfort of the old soldiers, but as a good business proposition in the maintenance of state property. The entire plant is of wooden construction and has become much impaired by age and use. I trust you will give the condition and needs of this institution careful consideration.

### PUBLICITY

The most rapidly developing resource of this State—in fact, in all three of the northern New England States—in reaching the proportions of “big business”, has come to be known as the recreational industry in which many million dollars of new money are received for service rendered and satisfaction given to those who come to us as tourists, vacationists and summer residents. Since no state surpasses our own in appeal to these guests, the only limit to their patronage is that imposed by ignorance of what the Green Mountain State has to offer. In this connection I commend the work of the state publicity bureau whose message through the various mediums of advertising and other forms of publicity has reached so far and served so well. The success it has achieved, in spite of limited funds, is only a measure of what might be accomplished as more adequate appropriations are provided.

### TOURIST CAMPS

The marked improvement in our highway system, and the consequent development of our recreational resources, has resulted in a mushroom growth of countless tourist and roadside camps, popularly known as over-night cabins.

Attractively located, adequately appointed and properly conducted these camps are highly desirable for the State, as they offer tourists and campers unusual opportunities to enjoy Vermont's scenic beauties to the fullest. Their widespread and rapid growth, however, presents certain problems for the State, problems of physical health and moral welfare.

I believe there are elements of danger in allowing these overnight camps to continue without some sort of control and supervision. Operators of tourists resorts should be required to meet definite standards affecting sanitation and equipment, as well as to provide all possible protection against moral laxity on the part of some who might impose upon camp owners and abuse the broad privileges that are theirs at the present time. As it is now, no restrictions whatever are placed upon camp owners in the operation of their resorts, such as are demanded from regularly licensed hostelries.

Regulatory and precautionary measures are plainly in order for the protection of the camp owner as well as for the public good.

### PUBLIC UTILITY RATES

As a result of the expenditure of \$5,000.00 appropriated by Joint Resolution No. 222 of 1929, authorizing the investigation of electric rates, the Public Service Commission has been able to cause a reduction in such rates, largely confined to residential service, which is conservatively estimated at an annual saving of \$145,000.00 based on the same amount of electricity consumed under the old rates for the year preceding.

Because of the success of this undertaking, I recommend that the appropriation to this commission be continued in order to permit further studies being made regarding present sound values of utility property and

the cost of service to the consumer, all to the end that further reductions in electric and gas rates may be accomplished.

## TAXATION

In my legislative message two years ago I referred to the advisability of the authorization of a special tax commission whose duties should be to make a report based on a searching study of our tax problems, together with recommendations for a general revision of the laws.

Such a commission was duly appointed in accordance with a joint resolution adopted by the last Legislature, and the fruits of their study are before you.

This commission performed its duties well. Hours of painstaking study were put into the effort by the members and the report is exhaustive and comprehensive. I hope the findings will be given the serious consideration they merit and that they may form the basis of legislative action in practical revision of our tax laws.

## JOHN CARROLL HOLLAND

Last September a serious accident occurred on the State House grounds which I feel deserves special mention. Mr. John C. Holland, an employee since January 20, 1930, while working on the building, fell from the roof to the pavement below, a distance of 30 feet, causing an injury which has required hospital care continuously until Christmas when he was removed to his home. This injury was so serious it will incapacitate him for service many months more. The State does not carry compensation insurance on employees except those employed in road work under the highway department. Mr. Holland's service was valuable to the State, and his ability, his energy and pluck made him a most worthy employee. The administration has furnished every aid possible. The case is, however, a meritorious one and should receive further consideration.

## FRANK L. GREENE

Sorrow—deep, genuine sorrow—spread over Vermont at the untimely passing of our beloved senior senator, Frank L. Greene, whose death, coming upon us so unexpectedly, saddened the festive holiday season for hosts of devoted friends.

Senator Greene's death is a distinct loss to our State. A staunch Republican and a staunch Vermonter, he represented our people with unflinching loyalty and outstanding ability. Patriot, soldier, publicist, statesman, equipped with rare intellect and supported by an indomitable courage, Frank Greene was loved, respected and honored by his colleagues in Washington, as well as by the "folks" at home. His friends were legion; his attainments myriad; his friendship genuine; his devotion constant.

The name of Frank Greene will always remain a cherished memory with the people of Vermont.

## CONCLUSION

You, as members of the General Assembly, are honored in being the chosen representatives of the people. Your duties to home, community and State are well defined. Ever keep in mind the best interests of the State in your deliberations. Preserve undefiled the heritage which falls to you from your forefathers, those courageous forebears who established the fundamentals of our present statehood. Today it is my privilege to hand over the important trust of governor to a worthy successor. I bespeak for him the same encouragement and loyal cooperation that have been mine to possess for the past four years.

And now, God speed you in your worthy efforts.

JOHN E. WEEKS.

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

RAWSON C. MYRICK,  
*Secretary of State, Clerk.*