

Inaugural address  
of

Allen M. Fletcher

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**Inaugural Message**

*Mr. President, Gentlemen of the General Assembly:*

I will at this time briefly submit to you certain suggestions that may possibly be of service to you in your present deliberations, and I will at some convenient future time communicate with you more at length.

To my mind, gentlemen, the paramount issue in the State of Vermont at this time, and the most serious matter that you have to come before you, and to consider, is intelligent legislation regarding the investments of Vermont money in the State of Vermont. And by intelligent legislation, I mean such legislation as will not interfere with our present general system of taxation, but which will give the relief without disturbing a condition which exists in this state, and which—permit me to say—differs radically from any other state in our broad land. Vermont stands alone with her system of taxation in that she has no state debt in the sense that you understand the term, further she has no general state tax and you should hesitate materially before you alter a condition which in many respects is more to the credit of this state than any other state has been able to put into effect.

I wish to speak to you for a mo relative to our court procedure and our judiciary in this state. Some six years ago a radical change was adopted—it was understood in so doing that we would economize and save money, and that we would simplify and, expedite litigation. Now, I think we have accomplished something in advancing litigation—in expediting litigation—but I do not think, gentlemen, that we have accomplished that which we should, when you take into consideration the increase in the cost to the State of Vermont for the same, and I wish to call your serious consideration to that matter. Then I would suggest if I may, that in your municipal court procedure if in your jury trials a full jury of twelve men were given—and there was no appeal from a judgment of fact, you would accomplish results, you would simplify and expedite.

I would like to call your attention to the question of conservation of water power in this state. I believe, gentlemen, the time has arrived in Vermont when a principal of state policy should be laid down, in effect this: no charters hereafter should be granted carrying with them the right of eminent domain, which did not place that corporation within the control of the Public Service Commission with the power to lay down such rules and regulations as would give the people of Vermont the first right to the use of that power, subject to fair and equitable conditions. Gentlemen, no manufacture from without this state is going to come into Vermont and locate here, if it can get the power transmitted to it cheaper than the cost of fuel to the manufacturer w the state. If your power in time is all taken up without any conservation to provide for the development of this state hereafter, I should not consider that that comes within control of good state policy. And I recommend to you that the present charters now existing in the state be amended to bring them within a distinct state policy and the interests of Vermont in a fair, right and proper way.

The, University of Vermont: The state, having given that institution its name,, having elected to really control it in effect by electing a majority of its trustees, is morally bound, in my mind, to increase its usefulness in every legitimate and proper way. Gentlemen, I feel at this time, forced to say to you that I think its medical department and its agriculture department need material assistance at your hands, and I hope it will receive it. I should like to say in conclusion this, it is a season when you hear from various sources that the interests of the state will be advanced by your early adjournment and working hard and going home. Now, there is some truth in that, but to my mind, the state's interests will be better advanced by your remaining here until such a time as you have placed Vermont in the advanced rank with its sister states, in constructive progressive legislation of a safe and sane type. You will also hear from various sources that there is not sufficient money to reach certain ends—that's all very well, gentlemen—that's good state policy — but to my mind, the only limitation you should know is this: Is it for the interests of the state, and is the state to get value received? Gentlemen, we have a system of indirect taxation, and it has worked very well in the State of Vermont, but there are worse things that might come to the state than a direct state tax of a reasonable size — and to my mind, that which you should keep before you at all times is: Can we pass an appropriation here which will really advance the interests of the state, and if so, are we getting value received?

In conclusion at this time, permit me to say that I think this is my sixth term up here—if the experience that I have gained during that time can be of any service to you personally, gentlemen, I wish you would command it. I should be glad to meet you all individually an the Executive Chamber at any time that you may desire.

Gentlemen, I thank you for you; courtesy and your attention.

The Governor having concluded his message, withdrew and the Joint Assembly dissolved,

GUY W. BAILEY,  
*Secretary of State, Clerk*