

Inaugural address  
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Philip H. Hoff

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**Inaugural Address**

I think things are just a little bit different here today than they were for about the last 109 years and I am reminded of being in New Hampshire recently when Governor King spoke. At that particular time he mentioned something about being Daniel in the Lion's Den and I kind of appreciated that remark, and I kind of appreciated what he had to say that followed, and what he said, in essence, was this – that we would get along just fine. I am looking forward to being with you for the months ahead and I think we *will* get along just fine.

Lieutenant Governor Foote, Mr. Speaker, Members of the General Assembly, the Supreme Court, fellow Vermonters:

I am here today because the people of Vermont have clearly voiced a desire for a bold departure in meeting the pressing problems that face our state. Vermonters have called for change, and their votes have made me the symbol of this demand for a new and fresh approach in the conduct of State affairs.

It is not mere caprice that led the people of this State to place the Office of Governor in the hands of a Democrat for the first time in more than a century. I am here only because the subtle workings of a society in transition last fall finally broke 109 years of tradition and habit.

This break with the past has great meaning, and its significance must be clearly understood. No one should mistake the purpose of our people to challenge the past, evaluate old concepts, and to find solutions, no matter how unpopular, to the host of crucial problems that have placed Vermont at a critical point in its history.

I solemnly accept the responsibility of leadership in this challenge.

This is the time to speak the truth in simple and direct terms. And the truth requires that we look closely and dispassionately at ourselves.

We must not be complacent and blind to the corrosive forces which are working on the structure of our society. We must not let these forces determine our destiny. Rather, we must recognize them and control them so the future of this State can be faced with confidence.

We have all grown familiar with old things that have with time mistakenly become valued as rich traditions. Here in Vermont we have many of these old traditions, systems and institutions which have seized control of our thought and actions. These old things have been treasured as the rich legacy of an honorable past, but if we look at them with a critical eye and an open mind in this time of change, many of them will be seen in their true light. This legacy of the past has created the crisis we must now face.

The crisis we face today is one of obsolescence. Many of our old ways of doing things no longer serve as useful and valuable tools in the efficient handling of our public affairs. In fact, they thwart and hold us back in our search for a better future.

In too many areas we have disregarded the revolutionary changes that have swept across our State and Nation. Our proud rural regions that for so long supplied the lifeblood of Vermont have been allowed to fall victims to new forces that have drained their capacity for growth. In the shadow of our beautiful Green Mountains many of our communities face a future of stagnation and decay.

The land no longer provides as many jobs as it once did, and Vermonters have been forced to move from the farms to our larger communities, or to leave our State in search of opportunity. But opportunity can once again be found in Vermont if we but recognize our potential and have the courage to cast aside those old ways that force us to squander our resources.

For too long we have blindly attempted to maintain the old order in these new times, and it has been this costly effort to defend and preserve the past that has sapped much of our strength and stifled our development.

For too long we have paid homage to the lame argument that by keeping the old ways we can more strongly preserve the independence of our smaller communities. The truth is our towns have not retained their traditional independence of spirit and action.

That cherished heritage has in reality been blown away by the winds of changing times. As the population in our smaller towns has dwindled, their financial plight has increased. Their once proud independence has been replaced by a servile dependency on offerings from State Government. This has lulled our towns and dulled their appetite for action. The Vermont traditions of independence, resourcefulness and initiative must be renewed and revitalized for these are basic strengths. But they have been eroded by our desperate effort to cling to old ways that are now outmoded.

The people of Vermont have clearly said they do not want to continue with the old ways, and if we fail to respond to the forces at work in our society we face a bleak future.

I therefore call upon the members of this forty-seventh Biennial Session of the General Assembly to join me in preparing a solid foundation for a bold departure from the past.

To achieve that end I call for your cooperation to meet with me once again during our terms of office in an adjourned Session.

At that time I shall present to you a detailed course of action that will enable us to steer a more meaningful course for the future.

In the months before our next meeting, I shall call upon members of the General Assembly and other distinguished Vermonters to assist me in clearly delineating the problems of our State and in defining solutions. We shall explore together those problems that are plaguing us in the areas of education, health, welfare, transportation, development, protection, public finance, and governmental organization. When we meet here again we shall act together to transform proposed solutions into programs of action.

A detailed review of all of the problems in these areas would serve no purpose here. The mention of a few of the more crucial problem areas will be sufficient.

The children and youth of Vermont are entitled to equality of opportunity to develop their abilities and to exercise real choice in objectives. We will deny them their opportunities and we will bankrupt ourselves in costly patchwork measures, if we do not redesign and coordinate our school system including institutions of higher education.

Our present road system has reached a point of absurdity. Our assignment of responsibility for reconstruction and maintenance of secondary and local roads must be reexamined in terms of the modern realities of daily travel and living, the needs of our people for integrated road facilities, and the demands of our major highways. We must recognize that our ability to develop and move forward is not only dependent upon better means of communication between various areas of the State but better means of communication with our neighboring States.

Nothing is more important than development of our economy. There is a growing recognition that for many areas of the State this development can be accomplished only on a regional basis to permit effective utilization of available talent and resources. Despite this recognition we remain poorly organized on the State and local level, to give dynamic impetus in efforts to create new and better job opportunities.

We must understand the basic factors that are shaping our economy, do a better job in fostering the growth and effective management of our many assets, and find the means of coordinating the many activities in this vast field. State and regional planning therefore will be given full support and direction from the Executive Office and will be a central function in this overall program of review, assessment, and projection.

In problems of State and local taxation and finance, there are two interlocking questions. In State finance, we must determine our ability to pay for the response to needs, and within this capacity to pay, where we want to put emphasis. This involves questions of selectivity and priorities. A look at the local level also raises

questions about local resources, about our system of appraising real estate, and about our difficulty in measuring relative capacity to support local services.

We must recognize the interdependence of towns, one with another and with the State. We cannot ignore the health of any one unit, because what affects one affects us all.

We must examine carefully our governmental structure both State and local and recognize the costly impact of this structure on Government finance. The recent Commission to Study State Government confined its attention largely to the field of executive organization and management. Its bipartisan effort and the bipartisan response represent only a beginning of what needs to be done. For example, there continue to be many separate agencies operating in the field of mental health and many separate agencies operating in the field of resource management and development. We must face the fact, however unpleasant, that there is a costly excess of Government on the local level.

We must, we will, find the way to enable our communities to grow and flourish once again and to check the drifting course of our economy. Now is the time to determine where we are and where we are going. Our objective in this bold departure is to assess and utilize all our human and natural resources to measure our capacity for growth, and to define the best and most efficient course for promoting development of the entire State.

I am sure you are all aware that at the time that I campaigned for Governor of this State that I talked a great deal about increased state aid to education, and at that time it was felt that there would be available for increased programs in all areas somewhere between \$6 and \$7 million dollars. And when I came to the budget hearings I discovered that there was \$6 and \$7 million dollars but frankly that it was already committed. I then had a choice. I had a choice to increase taxes in some area to provide the necessary increase in state aid to education or I could let it drop, and I looked upon it as a promise. But then when I looked at the prospect of raising additional revenue -- and I think that we all know that it would have had to have been substantial -- I had to consider the fact that if I did this, was I going to be perpetuating a basic evil, and as much as I disliked doing so, I had to consider the cold, hard fact that in all probability I would have been projecting and continuing a basic evil, and that it wouldn't have solved the basic problem at all. And then I had to look to other areas of local government, and I find the same is true of them as well, and I talk particularly about our road system. There is great waste in our local road system, I dislike saying so, I know it's not a popular thing to say, but it is nevertheless the cold, hard truth.

And ladies and gentlemen, we have reached a point in the history of the State of Vermont where we are going to have to face up to these situations. And if you will think about them, and think about them hard, I think you will recognize that this cuts across virtually every area of local government. On the State level, I must say that I am extremely concerned about the drifting course of our economy. For example, I bring to your attention the whole question of bonding. Virtually every person that I talk to who is knowledgeable in this field agrees that we have about reached the limit of our bonding and we have not faced up to a couple of other factors that I think we've passed over too easily. For example, I talk about Federal programs. We have been awfully anxious to match these Federal programs and yet in a very real sense what's happened here is this has committed us to courses of action which, if we had thought about them seriously and forgotten about the State Aid we might not well have followed.

We are a small state. We are limited in numbers of people and yet we are trying to provide essentially the same services that are carried on in states twice, and many, many times our size, and it is terribly expensive and we have limited resources, and the time has come that we just cannot allow ourselves to continue to drift in this way. And what I am trying to say is this: the time has come to sit down and take a good look at ourselves and try to analyze who we are, what we are, what we have in the way of possible revenues that we can raise and still make Vermont an attractive place to live, and once recognizing this, proceed ahead, putting our emphasis on the most needed programs and from there on down. What's happened here in the past, in my opinion -- and I feel very strongly that this is correct -- is that we have not been selective in those things that we would do, and of recent years we've used bonding as a means of getting around it.

Now I'm well aware that there are going to be many people who are going to say, "Well, this is just another study program." Ladies and gentlemen, this is not just another study program, because the problems I am talking about we are going to meet. We are going to have to meet them, unless we want to bankrupt this State. The solutions are not easy and they fly in the face of tradition. I don't like particularly to do this and I'm well aware that it won't make me a popular person, but the time has come to face up to these questions and we will face up to these questions, but I don't want to be in the position of plunging into solutions in areas which have existed for hundreds of years without being mighty sure that we know what we're doing.

In the meantime, of course, our Government must continue to function. To that end I will present to you later this month a budget for the next fiscal year only that will permit our State to move ahead to the very limits of its current ability. I trust you will act swiftly and with a spirit of cooperation in this proposed course of events. We need not improvise during this first meeting of the 1963 General Assembly and we should conserve our energies and our innovations until we meet here again. The full authority vested in the executive office will be used to the utmost in this bold departure and to assist those of you who agree that new ways should be pursued in laying the foundation for the revival of our beloved State.

We cannot afford to pursue the old ways any longer. The risk is too great. True, there are hazards along the way of any new endeavor. But there is also the challenge of opportunity in participating in a great leap forward.

New methods have always been resisted by the timid and by the vested interests. We have too long accepted the belief we cannot change with the times. We have for too long heard only the cries about the risk involved in change. We now must lift our eyes to the opportunities that are within our grasp if we only have the courage to reach out for them.

I have no fear the differences in our political affiliations will hold us from the task at hand. On this day of dedication we know in our minds and hearts that our business is no mere business of politics.

A former Governor of the State said:

"Whatever may be our party preferences, and however strongly we may adhere to the principles we profess, the legislation required for the domestic Government of the State, does not ordinarily involve our political opinions or excite the asperity of party controversy."

These words by Governor John S. Robinson, the last Democratic Governor of Vermont, in his bid for harmony are as pertinent today as they were a century ago.

Our State has faced hours of decision in its past. On each occasion this decision has been met by leadership of candor and vitality. And that leadership has always had the support of the people which is so essential to success.

The people of Vermont have every right to expect us to provide the necessary cooperative leadership in the days ahead, and I pledge my best effort to provide the leadership these times require.

A proud past deserves a proud future, and with the courage the times demand of us, we will forge a future that will see this proud State rally and surge forward.

We can gain strength from our past to embark on this venture and successfully meet the challenges that face us.

With God's help, we will have the courage, the imagination and the will to begin this venture now.