

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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ACTS AND RESOLVES
AS PASSED BY THE
Eighty-ninth and Ninetieth
Legislatures

OF THE
STATE OF MAINE

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GOVERNOR SEWALL'S

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF GOVERNOR SUMNER SEWALL

JANUARY 2, 1941

Mr. President and Members of the 90th Legislature:

The people of Maine have placed in you and in me their confidence and their hope for a responsive, efficient, and honest state government during the next two years. I am sure that we are all keenly aware of the responsibility that this confidence entails.

In order to justify and maintain it, we must recognize openly, face squarely and solve satisfactorily the problems which have been entrusted to us. The people of our state expect of you and of me a candid statement of each problem as we see it, together with an honest, reasonable and understandable answer. If we work steadfastly toward this objective, I am confident that the people will support our actions.

Economy

There is one thought paramount today in the minds of the people of Maine. That thought is economy. I do not believe that our citizens regard economy as necessarily meaning a reduction of total expenditures. They recognize that they have demanded new and expanded governmental services, for which they are willing to pay. At the same time, I believe that they very properly expect to receive a full dollar's worth of governmental service for every governmental dollar spent. In the last analysis, wise economy means intelligent spending.

I fully appreciate the responsibilities which are mine in administering with economy. Knowing most of you individually, as I do, through my service in both this House and the Senate, I am sure that you will carry out your legislative responsibilities to this end. By such cooperation at our respective tasks, real economy can be achieved.

For my part, I recognize that my administration must live within the appropriations which you may, in your wisdom, make available.

For your part, I ask that you appropriate sufficient funds with which my administration reasonably may be expected to meet the needs of our people.

In any event, there will be no overdraft in this administration. If it later appears that our needs cannot be met by appropriations made at this session, I shall call you in special session to give further consideration to the

problems as they then may exist. To expend funds without appropriation is to usurp the power to tax, which the Constitution has vested solely in you, and there I intend it shall remain.

Old Age Assistance

During recent years, the human and economic needs of our people have demanded increasing attention. In cooperation with the Federal government, we have undertaken vast new projects in addition to the long established normal functions of state government. The structure which we have built to meet these emergencies now merits careful re-examination.

In our democratic form of government, we must be sure that our laws are truly democratic. Governmental aid for one citizen must be available to all who suffer an equal need.

I therefore commend to your particular attention our present old age assistance program. From the beginning, we have recognized in law the obligation to provide for our needy aged, but we have failed to implement our law with appropriations sufficient for just administration. To be true, this problem will tend to diminish as the federal old age insurance program expands, but until the federal pension becomes sufficient to alleviate human distress among our aged, it is clearly the duty of the State, in cooperation with the Federal Government, to see to it that no needy aged person suffers.

Vocational Education

In our zeal to provide adequately for the needy aged, let us not overlook our equal obligation to prepare our young people for happy, efficient and useful lives. We must remember that upon our youth will rest the obligation of keeping democracy alive. Our government must therefore be a vital and inspiring force in their lives and be moulded to serve their needs, if they are to be willing to fight to preserve it.

Our system of education must advance in step with the demands of a changing society and economy. The re-awakened national need for skilled workers makes it important that we place more emphasis on vocational training, through which our young people can develop the natural aptitudes which have made Maine famous as a reservoir of skilled and able workers. We should encourage and help our youth to re-discover the happiness, dignity and reward of working with the hands.

By practical recognition of present economic demands, we will prepare our young people to meet adequately the social demands of the future. By

vocational training they will better meet the tasks of their productive years and provide for well merited security in later years.

Labor

Between these two groups, the old and the young, are the workers who must produce the wealth to support all these governmental services. Certainly the welfare of this great group in the middle is our most vital concern. For Maine to go forward, our workers must have the opportunity to make a reasonable living under satisfactory conditions.

To this end we have undertaken unemployment insurance, the re-employment services, workmen's compensation and industrial safety programs. Both legislative and administrative efforts will be required of us during this session to perfect such undertakings.

These, it seems to me, are the outstanding human needs which must be recognized if our government is to be truly responsive.

Normal Functions of Government

We must also take care that our normal governmental services continue to respond properly to the needs which they were created to serve. The conservation, development and use of our natural resources have long been major responsibilities of our state government. The well-being of our fishermen, our farmers, our workers, our industries, and our commerce depend in large measure on the intelligent administration of these services, in accordance with wise provisions of law. The prudent investment of public funds in these resources is sound and profitable.

I commend to your consideration a continuing development of the wealth of our marine and inland fisheries and game which provide a living for so many thousands of our citizens and are instrumental in attracting so many other thousands to our State. The conservation of our forests and our soil so that they may be of the fullest economic use to us and to our children requires broad and intelligent study.

The vital importance of a safe and adequate highway system requires your attention to the problems of planning, financing, constructing and maintaining a system which will meet the needs of our citizens and prove inviting to our visitors.

These, as I see it, are the major problems which we must solve satisfactorily if Maine is to fulfill her obligation in our struggle to achieve national well-being.

National Defense

The extraordinary problems presented by a war-inflamed world demand also that we do our part in the national effort for defense.

Through emergency legislation and appropriations we have already started important works. In close cooperation with the Federal Government, our airport program and other developments serving the immediate needs of defense should be carried through to completion at the earliest possible moment. Provision for replacing in some measure the National Guard units called to federal service will demand your earnest consideration. This fast-changing pattern of national defense needs will undoubtedly require that I supplement these thoughts in later messages to you. Whatever emergency may arise, I am sure that Maine will play her traditional role of doing her share and more for the national security.

Efficiency in Government

The increasing burden on our taxpayers, created by these many governmental services, now makes efficiency in government more important than ever. We must be persistently alert that no part of the taxpayers' dollar be unnecessarily diverted from the true purpose for which it was paid. We must keep ever in mind that these dollars have come to the state through the toil and sacrifice of the people of Maine.

There are certain long-standing situations in our state government which I believe you should consider changing in the interest of efficiency.

Inordinately low salaries, whether paid to department heads or other state employees, breed inefficiency in government just as in private enterprise. I commend to your consideration the thought that certain salary increases and pay adjustments, judiciously distributed, will prove an economy in the long run.

A clearer separation of the State Personnel Board from the Governor and Council would lead to increased efficiency. The detailed administration of the state personnel law should be made, in fact as well as in theory, independent of the pleasure of the Governor and Council. Amendment of the personnel law so as to attract into state service each year a limited number of the graduating classes of our Maine colleges might well deserve your study.

By constitutional or statutory provision, the Attorney-General, the Secretary of State, the Treasurer of State, the Commissioner of Agriculture, and the State Auditor are elected by the Legislature. It is entirely right that the State Auditor be so elected, as it is his duty to audit and report to you the accuracy, legality and propriety of administrative expenditures.

The others, however, like all other department heads, seem more logically now to come within the province of the Governor, since he must rely on them for advice and assistance in carrying out his policies, and since he is, in the final analysis, held accountable for their administrative actions. For these reasons, I suggest that you consider the advisability of making these positions appointive by the Governor.

I hope that in your search for greater efficiency you will study the possible advantages of extending the two-year term of Governor to a single term of four years. By such action, a Governor would be able to spend more time administering the affairs of state according to law and less time seeking election to that or some other office.

If this suggestion is followed, it may also be wise to consider the desirability of having the state election occur in years other than those in which the President is elected. The purpose of this change would be to give state matters the separate consideration they deserve.

Through the years the Executive Council has been given duties and powers by legislative enactment which were neither foreseen nor provided for in the Constitution. This extension of the Council beyond the framework of its fundamental authority has led to inefficiency and confusion in the administration of state affairs. This confusion has extended to the Council itself. By extra-legal orders this advisory body has not only assumed executive functions, but has also encroached upon the powers of the Legislature. I therefore recommend that you take whatever action you find wise and necessary to return the Executive Council to its original constitutional function as an advisory and confirming body.

Honesty

To respond in full measure to all these human and economic needs, our government must have the fundamental quality of simple honesty. This means not only honesty in money, but honesty in thinking. In all our functions, let us proceed by open, frank and straightforward methods.

Our citizens are entitled to know the truth concerning the government which belongs to them. They cannot assist us without knowing the truth, and you and I need their assistance. Through the channels of a free press and radio the people of Maine will follow our deliberations. I am sure they will make their desires and opinions equally known to us.

Although I cannot join with you in considering the detailed legislative problems which will come before you at this session, I will join with you in every way possible to reach the goal which has been set for us. It is my most earnest hope that each of you will feel free to call on me at any time you think that I can be of any assistance.

I fully realize that the responsibilities which I am undertaking will demand my full-time attention. I shall endeavor to be available to you at my office and at my home six days each week for any discussion of our common problems and those of the people we are serving.

Sunday I frankly hope to spend with my wife and my children at church and at home. I feel that this is good, Christian living, which is, after all, a condition to good government.

SUMNER SEWALL,
Governor.