

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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ACTS AND RESOLVES
AS PASSED BY THE
Ninetieth and Ninety-first
Legislatures
OF THE
STATE OF MAINE
From April 26, 1941 to April 9, 1943
AND MISCELLANEOUS STATE PAPERS

Published by the Revisor of Statutes in accordance
with the Resolves of the Legislature approved June
28, 1820, March 18, 1840, March 16, 1842, and Acts
approved August 6, 1930 and April 2, 1931.

KENNEBEC JOURNAL
AUGUSTA, MAINE
1943

GOVERNOR SEWALL'S
INAUGURAL ADDRESS

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF GOVERNOR SUMNER SEWALL TO THE NINETY-FIRST LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MAINE

January 7, 1943.

Mr. President and Members of the 91st Legislature:

You and I meet here today as the elected representatives of the sovereign people of the State of Maine.

As citizens of the United States we are waging world-wide war to defend the right of free representative government which we exercise in this hall today.

To give honest, courageous and effective expression to this great right is now our solemn duty.

Military Defense

It was two and a half years ago that the 89th Legislature, acting with true vision, provided authority and funds to aid in modernizing our State military defense structure. Maine municipalities thus were enabled to arrange with the Federal Government for the construction of 22 magnificent airports. No section of the nation is now more adequately prepared than Maine for the operation of our growing military air power.

In war these airports are "airforts" of the first magnitude. In peace they will serve as safe harbors on the newly-discovered global ocean of the air and will assure Maine her rightful place in the vast air commerce of the coming era.

State Guard

When our National Guard units were inducted into Federal service it was decided to replace them in part by organizing the Maine State Guard. This guard now has an enlisted strength of 1,000 regular officers and men, with approximately another thousand in organized reserves.

The problem of adequately equipping these units for service has been extremely difficult. Long-range rifles issued by the Federal Government when the guard was formed were recalled suddenly six months ago and replaced by short-range shotguns. Trucks and other equipment long on order by the State have been withheld by Federal agencies. Several of the reserve units have expressed the desire to be made part of the regular guard, but it would seem wise to postpone such action until the equipment problem can be satisfactorily solved.

Every citizen of Maine should be proud of the work of these officers and men. By their unselfish service our security is strengthened.

Civilian Defense

One year ago, in special session, the 90th Legislature granted to the Executive certain broad emergency powers to organize and train the forces of civilian defense and to meet the exigencies of war.

I am glad to report that there are approximately 100,000 Maine citizens now trained and on volunteer duty in the various activities of Civilian Defense. All counties, all cities and most towns are organized and are perfecting their work through practice.

Under the emergency powers granted, twenty Executive Orders having the effect of law have been issued. Copies of these will be made available to you forthwith by separate communication.

With the approval of the Council \$225,875 has been allotted from the Emergency War Fund, a detailed accounting of which will be submitted also by separate communication.

Of this amount, approximately \$200,000 has been spent to date, which represents the total cost to the State of all activities undertaken by authority of the civilian defense and emergency war fund laws.

The splendid cooperation rendered by our municipalities and the magnificent volunteer spirit shown by our citizens have been tremendously helpful in controlling the State costs of civilian defense and the various war agencies.

We must be mindful, however, that the war still rages on, that we have been fortunate so far in not having suffered attack and that there is evidence that a measure of the striking power of the German air force has been mysteriously absent from all active fronts for well over a year.

Finance

The finances of our State government are currently in good condition. During the past fiscal year our general fund increased, our bonded debt decreased and our cash position improved.

This happy result was made possible in large measure by the forthright and courageous manner with which the 90th Legislature met the problems which confronted it.

We now have problems of a different nature, but I am confident that these can be solved with equal success.

Assistance

The rapid rise in the cost of living has brought tremendous problems, the impact of which on the many activities of State government has been severe.

Assistance which formerly seemed adequate for dependent children, the blind and the aged now demands review and revision. While broader opportunity for work has made it possible to reduce substantially certain of our relief expenditures, increased cost of food, fuel and clothing must be recognized in a fair and human administration of our social security laws.

It would seem desirable, therefore, that our old age assistance statute be liberalized at this time so that Federal participation in benefits in excess of \$30 per month may be made available to our aged. I also urge that larger provision be made for aid to dependent children which is an activity supported by State, Federal and municipal funds and which serves the very heart of an enlightened democracy.

Education

We should be happy in the thought that we are helping our less fortunate and dependent citizens but we must be ever mindful of our duty to increase the independence of our future citizens.

We all want our children to be well educated, to be given good primary training, to be taught in the ways of the modern world, to be made curious in the new sciences and conscious of the new geography developing daily in the war. We want them to come from our schools with an understanding as to the responsibilities of democracy and enlightened as to the peoples of other nations. In short, we want them to be good citizens of our country and of the world.

We like to feel, possibly, that we as parents are helping actively along these lines. In our busy lives, however, are we not actually relying largely on our schools to carry out this vital program?

We expect our teachers to be alert, well trained, and intelligent in these matters, and we want them to be patient and understanding with our children. Theirs is obviously a tremendous responsibility,—for which many of them receive distressingly low salaries.

While this condition has prevailed over an extended period, the rapid rise in the cost of living makes it imperative that corrective action be taken now.

Under our present system we are expending substantial sums in training Maine citizens to teach in Maine schools and then losing them to other

states by the attraction of higher pay. This is neither good business nor good government.

Legislation will be proposed at this session to provide effective help toward the solution of this problem and to benefit every school in Maine.

This is a situation which demands our immediate attention and substantial assistance.

State Employees

The matter of adjusting the pay and salaries of State employees to meet current conditions demands your very thoughtful attention.

Every possible effort has been made to meet this situation within the present framework of appropriations and law. The fact is, however, that during the past two years the average weekly salary of all regular State employees has been increased from \$22.86 to \$25.47. This represents an increase of 11 per cent, which would seem sufficient neither to adjust for the rising cost of living nor to meet effectively the attraction of higher pay in private industry. I again would remind the Legislature of the cost to the State of losing trained personnel and of using inexperienced help.

In arriving at a fair wage for State employees as compared to others in civil and defense industries, the value of stability of employment, civil service protection and retirement benefits should be taken fully into account.

You will also want to bear in mind that during the last two years the number of State employees has been reduced by more than 300, effecting a saving to the State of more than \$300,000 annually.

Provision for pay increases has been made in the budget which will be presented to you shortly for consideration. Increases for the State Police must be provided by legislation, inasmuch as these rates of pay are fixed by law.

As a State we have been vitally interested in legislation aimed at assuring our workers in private industry an opportunity to make a reasonable living under satisfactory conditions. As an employer certainly we must be an example in fair and considerate treatment of our own employees.

You will recall that two years ago in my message to you I recommended that salary adjustments of department heads be reviewed and revised upward judiciously. It seemed clear to me then and it seems clearer to me now that there are inequities among certain of these, and that nearly all of them are too low for long-term effective results.

If we are to be of real assistance to our business men, our workers, our farmers and our fishermen in their efforts to produce the goods and food necessary for the winning of the war, we must make sure that we can continue to employ able administrators, experienced in their respective tasks.

There is hardly an essential activity of our business or private lives which is not now controlled, rationed or guided by Federal directive. To cooperate with the Federal war effort to the end of victory, and at the same time to protect our citizens against undue hardship or suffering, requires constant and intelligent attention by State government.

I shall be glad to discuss these ideas with the Committee on Salaries and Fees.

Administrative Efficiency

In the course of administering State government during the past two years, it has been apparent that many laws should be clarified, and others enacted, in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of State government.

Several of these already have been given consideration by your able Recess Committee. All demand your very careful attention.

Provision should be made for increasing the working capital of the Liquor Commission.

The law controlling the sinking fund reserve should be amended to eliminate encumbered balances from this fund. Money in this account will thus be made available for debt retirement by action of the Governor and Council or for capital expenditure by action of the Legislature.

The law for bonding of State employees should be clarified.

The State Employees' Contributory Retirement law should be liberalized for those who served thirteen years or more under the old system.

The State Police retirement law requires adjustment to conform to present experience.

The Teachers' Contributory Retirement System Fund should be placed on a currently sound basis, and past deficits should be cleared up. While the promise to pay has been law since 1923, no appropriation has been made since 1933 to meet the rapidly growing obligation of the State to this fund.

I firmly believe that when the people of Maine make a promise they intend to fulfil it, and it is our duty to see that this integrity of thought is truly reflected in our laws.

A new wing to the State House was voted at the last Session. Because of the war, it was necessary to postpone construction. In an effort to provide reasonably adequate space to carry on during this emergency, some additional space has been leased in privately owned buildings in Augusta. The largest undertaking of this kind involved the lease of a fire-proof

building on State Street a short distance from the State House. This lease contains a provision that the State may purchase this building for \$32,500. I recommend that you authorize such purchase as permanent quarters for the Motor Vehicle Division of the Secretary of State's Department.

A law permitting the purchase of short term Government bonds with surplus State funds would return better than \$30,000 a year.

Post-War Planning

The law of the Development Commission should be broadened to permit true development activities and post-war planning.

Under present law the sole purpose and power of this commission is to advertise and bring to public notice the agricultural, industrial and recreational resources of our State. There is need for more active development of these resources. The work of the State geologist should be expanded and brought under the control of this commission. There is definite need for an agency to coordinate and prepare projects for post-war development.

There will come a time when peace returns and we may once again turn our energies to the building up of our State. New and greater opportunities for profitable work must be opened up for our citizens. New projects for health and recreation should be encouraged, promoted and constructed.

Military victory is to no avail if our sons return to a country without opportunity.

A society which permits millions of its citizens to go long unemployed does not long endure.

If full employment is a necessity of war it should certainly be the aim of peace.

The Budget

Although budget figures for the next two years have not yet been developed completely, I am glad to report that it now appears reasonable to expect we can make substantial progress along these lines within the present structure of our finances and without additional taxes. Detailed figures covering the costs of these various proposals and showing anticipated income with which to meet these expenditures will be set forth in the budget report.

Highways

Since Federal rationing of gasoline and tires there has been a sharp reduction of highway revenues. Anticipating this loss, a law was passed at

the last special session permitting the Highway Commission to curtail expenditures in such manner as to conserve funds and to permit the department to operate within available revenues.

Acting under the provisions of this law, highway costs for the current fiscal year have been cut to save \$4,645,000, which is approximately equal to estimated loss of highway revenues for this period.

Experience to date indicates that the current level of revenues is barely sufficient to take care of interest payments, maturing bonds and minimum highway maintenance. Under the present set-up, therefore, it would appear necessary to provide money from the highway surplus account for snow clearance.

I would call to your attention, however, that the cost of snow clearance for the current winter and for the two winters of the coming biennium would exhaust substantially this surplus.

In view of this the Legislature might well consider refunding certain highway bond issues maturing during war years in order to conserve funds for snow clearance. It would appear impossible to clear both the debt and the snow with present revenues. I recommend clearing the snow.

I would also remind the Legislature that the law permitting the Highway Department to curtail expenditures in accordance with receipts expires February 1 of this year. With conditions still uncertain, it would seem advisable to reenact this law.

Law Enforcement

While we are considering the enactment of new laws let us not overlook the possibility that there may be laws now on our books which are no longer acceptable to our citizens.

The laws of democracy belong to the people, and it is our duty to see that they truly conform to the needs and wishes of the majority. If we are to run a responsible government, holding the respect of the people, all laws on the books must be of such acceptability as to permit reasonable enforcement, and sufficient provision must be made to support adequate enforcement agencies.

A Legislature which approves laws but denies enforcement is avoiding full responsibility.

An administration which takes the oath of office with mental reservations does not deserve, and can not long maintain, the respect of the people.

It is, therefore, of very real importance that you as representatives of

the people place and leave on the books only those laws which you sincerely believe the administration can and should enforce.

Trustees

You and I are trustees at this time for a freedom and a kind of government which has been obtained at the cost of tremendous human sacrifice in the past and is now being maintained by further sacrifices of our own sons of this generation.

To let deteriorate this right of free representative government would be to betray a trust. To build and strengthen it so that it may remain a symbol worth fighting for and a living force to help those who have preserved it, is the solemn duty of us who now remain at home.

May God guide us in this sacred trust.

SUMNER SEWALL,
Governor.