

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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ACTS AND RESOLVES

AS PASSED BY THE

Ninety-seventh Legislature

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE

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Message
of
Governor Burton M. Cross

to the
97th Maine Legislature

January 5, 1955

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A Message to the Members of the 97th Legislature, and, through them, to the people of Maine:

I have considered very carefully the question of discussing with you many of the problems that will face you this winter. It is my judgment that to look, or make recommendations for, the future would infringe upon the province of the incoming Chief Executive. However, I do feel that it would be beneficial to you to review some of the things accomplished in the two years that I have served as your Governor.

As I review these with you, the information may be especially worthwhile in your deliberations and those decisions which will confront you in determining how best to serve the interests and welfare of the citizens of Maine.

Many other out-going governors who have gone before me have followed this same procedure of addressing an in-coming Legislature with an intent to be helpful in their coming session, and to convey to them some of the knowledge of government acquired over the years.

I would like to quote to you from the opening paragraph of my inaugural message to the 60th Legislature. It is as true today as it was two years ago.

"It has always been my desire to keep government as close to the people as possible. The delicate balance between local and state responsibility should be carefully maintained. During the past eighteen years, it has been my privilege to see both sides of this problem, as I have served both in city and state government. As a fellow legislator, I have sat with you in this House and in the Senate and have discussed, debated, and participated in much of the forward-looking legislation passed by the last six legislatures. All of this time, a major part of my life has been spent in business, and I feel strongly that the businessman's approach to government is not only the ideal to strive for, but within certain limitations, it can be achieved."

Today, when many large, powerful, and well-organized groups bring pressure to bear on members of the Legislature, it is more important than ever that unobligated officials be elected to office. Too many men in business and political life ignore the rights of the people that must be safe-guarded if our State is to prosper and progress. I know that each of you here is sincerely dedicated to the betterment of the State of Maine, and my first advice to you is that any man in public life must be able to say "no" repeatedly. The ability to do so is often the test of his service. Every member must have the backbone to speak out openly and honestly and express his convictions, basing them on his own common sense and intuition. This is not always the popular view, as the people are inclined to see only the surface, and not the deeper motivations. I speak from personal experience, in that I still have great faith in the ultimate sound judgment of the men and women of Maine. No stream can rise higher than its source, and the people are the source of all power. When they realize this, and take a continued, intelligent interest in public affairs, our problems are well on toward solution.

As you consider the many problems of State Government, you are representative of the people of Maine, duly elected to work for and with them. One of the major purposes that I would advocate to you, and one that I have constantly followed, is to inform the people of Maine about their own affairs, to make every attempt to interest them in their government, and to have them understand their own problems. With this in view, I have held weekly press conferences, traveled thousands of miles to speak to the people, and have endeavored at all times to constructively mold public sentiment, not to follow or echo it, and never, regardless of criticism or abuse, have I hesitated to speak frankly and assume full responsibility for my acts.

I would like to quote to you from the farewell address of former Governor Percival P. Baxter. I have taken the liberty of using his words, as they so aptly typify my own political philosophy, so strikingly so that I wanted to quote them to you:

“It would have been easier to have slipped along with the current, speaking only platitudes and catering only to those in a position of power and influence. Certain newspapers, no doubt, would have applauded whenever their own interests were advanced, and my path could have been soft and pleasant. However, I have deliberately chosen the rougher and more turbulent road of principle, independence, and adversity. It has been my desire to be known as the ‘governor of all the people of Maine,’ and it is their cause that I have consistently championed.”

Governor Baxter’s advice is as sound today as it was in 1925. That is my advice to you—hold to the line, regardless of political, business, or personal pressures, and you will finish this session with as fine a sense of satisfaction as I have finished my term as Governor.

And now, with your indulgence, I would like to go over with you some of the major achievements of the past few years—some of the problems that you may consider settled for the moment, although changing economic conditions may require their adjustment.

Today, the State of Maine is in excellent financial condition, with an estimated surplus of 7 million dollars in the General Fund at the end of this fiscal year, and 2 million dollars in the Highway Fund. There is no bonded debt at the General Fund Level. There is working capital of over 2 million dollars in the General Fund. There is working capital of over 2 million dollars in the Liquor Commission Account. There is invested Trust Funds of over 65 million. There is within indicated revenue, ample funds for the economical administration of State government over the next two years. No new tax burden designed to meet the need of political expediencies should have any place in the historically sound financing of the State of Maine. There is in the General Fund surplus sufficient funds for sound capital improvements and expansion of our State institutions. I advocated, and the past Legislature agreed, on a long range building program of our educational, correctional, and penal institutions. Over 9 million dollars has been allocated, and is in the process of construction at the present time, including the new office building.

Health and Welfare:

In the field of Health and Welfare, we have taken many steps to assist those unfortunate people who find themselves in financial difficulties through age and

infirmity. The 96th Legislature financed an additional Old Age Assistance fund, and at the Special Session liberalized rules and regulations pertaining to Old Age Assistance and Aid to the Blind, thereby bringing into the program many hundreds of borderline cases, relieving, materially, welfare expenses at the town level.

We have also set up a program for the fourth category of assistance, namely, Aid to the Totally Disabled. This completes a well-rounded and forward-looking welfare assistance plan, well within the ability of the people to finance.

State Institutions:

The Legislatures over the years have given increasing attention, and particularly over the past two years, to a well-planned and long-range program of improvement of our State Institutions. Over the past two years, every State institution has had capital improvements to a greater or lesser degree, and they have been carefully planned to be expedited over a period of years, financed by surplus. Sufficient funds are available to continue our work on the State School for the Deaf, in the teachers' colleges, at the University of Maine, Pownal, the mental hospitals, and the State schools.

Education:

In the field of Education, the 96th Legislature made tremendous strides in setting up standards of teachers' pay based on ability, training, and years of experience. This is having a marked effect on the acquiring of better-trained teachers in many of the towns of Maine. Its impact will continue to be felt for many years in the future. The accomplishments of the Maine School Building Authority and its program are visible at every hand. This, too, will continue to have a promotional effect on the physical structure of our public schools. In voting nearly a million dollars in the 96th Legislature for improvement of our teachers' colleges, the Legislature recognizes the necessity of training more teachers for the rising population in our State and in our schools. We also have a well-planned building program set up at the University of Maine. Over 100 per cent of State subsidy on education has been channeled to the towns and cities.

State Employees:

In the furtherance of my recommendation, and working in cooperation with the Maine Employees' Association, the 96th Legislature recognized the necessity for better working conditions and personnel rates of our State employees, and in both the regular and special sessions, they met the necessity of bringing our pay scale to a competitive position with private industry. It has meant a great deal in improving morale and working conditions, especially in State institutions, where we have recently instituted a 44-hour week.

The State is extremely fortunate in the quality of employees that we have had over the years. Hundreds of conscientious and able men and women have worked for the betterment of State Government, even though in many cases they might have received more in private employment. It has been my endeavor as Governor to see that these qualifications have been recognized at every level of employment. Maine is no longer one of the lowest paid states in New England.

State Office Building:

With the completion of the new state office building, and the consolidation of the activities within the capitol area, we should have greater efficiency and con-

venience for the tax-paying public. It is a great step forward for the citizens of Maine. It is emblematical of the continued growth of State Government, as it assumes the responsibilities and financial burdens formerly carried on by the towns and cities. It is a slow evolution of government from the local to the State level, brought about primarily by the inadequacies of local taxation to carry the major burdens of modern government.

Development Commission:

We have followed, and are improving, a strong program for our natural resources, with aerial surveys, ground mineral research, and especially by setting up a statistical and industrial development division expanded to the needs of business conditions in Maine. This has been done without in any way infringing on our promotion of recreation, agriculture, fisheries, and allied programs. I would hope that this would be continued and further expanded, for Maine has tremendous possibilities for industry, especially in the light of the desire of many major companies to set up branches away from the highly congested metropolitan areas. We must meet the competition of other states and their selling programs. The Development Commission is, and should be, the media.

Forestry:

We have continued a carefully prepared program of the preservation of our forestry resources, involving advisory forestry cutting practices, expanded facilities for forest fire control, a joining of hands with our sister states and New Brunswick in a forest fire compact designed to prevent any reoccurrence of the holocaust of the '40s. We have given great impetus to the use of forest products through the expansion of our pulp and paper research division at the University of Maine. This has gone hand in hand with the research efforts of the paper-making industry itself. They have contributed many thousands of dollars in conjunction with State funds. I have recognized this fact by the appointment of a representative of the industry to the Trustees Board of the University of Maine. Forest products are still our greatest natural resource.

Public Parks:

The 96th Legislature and this administration put heavy emphasis on the construction and expansion of our public parks, with an appropriation of nearly a half million dollars for capital improvements. This, together with the roadside picnic area program of the Highway Department, has enhanced our recreational facilities at a very minimum of cost. The Park Program should eventually be nearly self-supporting.

Baxter State Park:

We owe much to former Governor Baxter who has made it possible for us to enjoy the unspoiled forest beauty of Baxter State Park. Not only has Governor Baxter been generous as regards to the State Park, but he has given nearly three-quarter million dollars to the State for the very worthwhile project of improving our State School for the Deaf. His record as a public-spirited citizen of Maine is without parallel in the history of the State.

Agriculture:

The 96th Legislature expanded its agricultural planning through a program involving over a million dollars per year, as well as added impetus to the Uni-

versity of Maine's research and extension program. The desire of the 96th Legislature and this administration was to help agriculture to help itself, through higher standards, better packaging, greater prestige, and quality of Maine products. Our experimental farms are continually bringing to the fore new varieties, new methods of spraying, fertilizing, and growing.

Sea and Shore Fisheries:

The same is equally true with the Sea and Shore Fisheries Department of our coast, and Maine leads the other States in research dollars per capita. Great strides have been made over the past two years by the Department in research facilities which will enable them to cooperate fully with the Federal Government in their new expanded program, a program that we hope will solve many of the basic problems of our coastal areas. The groundwork has been laid and expansion should be rapid.

Fish and Game Department:

We have continued a long-range program of expansion of our Fish and Game facilities to enable us to better meet the needs of a tremendous number of hunting and fishing enthusiasts. A half million dollars is being spent this year in building up the fish rearing stations and facilities, following an intelligent and planned program of expansion. This is, of course, dedicated revenue by law and earmarked for this Department.

Water Improvement Commission:

Going hand in hand with these departments is the forward-looking steps of our Water Improvement Commission that will lay before you at this session detailed and specific proposals to further classify the lakes, rivers, and streams of Maine as regards pollution. This is a major problem that will not be solved by any single legislative session. It is by the continued work of many legislatures that this will eventually be resolved.

Labor and Industry:

In the field of Labor and Industry, I believe that the 96th Legislature went a long way to solve many of the basic problems. I advised, and they acceded, to the increase in unemployment rates, workmen's compensation, and death and injury benefits. This should be continually re-examined as changing economic conditions warrant. Much other legislation vital to the safety of the working man and woman has been implemented by our Safety Division.

Sales Tax:

Many adjustments to the Sales Tax were advocated and expedited at the last Session. It will be a continuing task for several years to see that this tax works expeditiously and fairly with the people and the merchants who collect it.

Civil Defense:

Great progress has been made over the past two years in the development of Civilian Defense activities throughout the State. This has been well-tested in the hurricanes of last fall, which showed the value of a coordinated network of

activity to deal with natural, as well as man-made, disasters. Well over a million dollars in disaster relief funds were channeled through this organization following the hurricanes. It shows us the necessity of being prepared for any eventuality.

Maine Aeronautics Commission:

The expansion and development of our airfields in Maine are of grave concern to all its citizens. Through the Maine Aeronautics Commission, we have kept a program of maintenance and assisting of airports, and the 96th Legislature passed a substantial grant of \$250,000 to care for the needs of Maine's largest civilian airport in Portland.

National Guard:

I have taken a great deal of pride in serving as Commander-in-Chief of our Maine National Guard. We have seen a continuing recognition of the necessity of a strong Maine Guard expanded to meet the changing defense structure of our times, by the addition of the Maine Air Guard, and greater anti-aircraft facilities. The Federal Government participates at Brunswick, Dow Field, Presque Isle, and Limestone, pointing up the extreme importance of Maine's status in the offense and defense of this country.

The armory program has been a very worthwhile one, and has been carefully and economically administered, in cooperative effort with the towns and cities involved. The new installations are in Fort Fairfield, Augusta, and Presque Isle, with other installations planned.

Finance Officer:

Much re-organization within the departments has been done over the past two years with the full cooperation of the 96th Legislature, the Governor, and the Executive Council. Notable among these are the changes in setting up the Finance and Budget Officer as the chief administrative and executive assistant to the Governor; we have also instituted many fiscal reforms that have expedited administration and saved many thousands of dollars to tax payers as well as giving better service to the citizens.

Liquor Commission:

The same is equally true in the administrative reorganization of the Liquor Commission, and I take pride in pointing out to you that in the past two years no substantiated suspicion has pointed at this Department. I consider this a major accomplishment and hope that it will continue. New merchandising methods in the stores, listings on a formula basis, the addition of a new liquor warehouse, and many other administrative reforms should pay dividends in added revenues in this department.

Highway Department:

The 96th Legislature passed major legislation to change the administrative set-up of the Highway Department. Having worked with the new Commission, it is my considered judgment that this will mean great benefits to the people of

Maine in more miles of road and in greater service, in what is one of the greatest needs of the State—better highways. The elimination of the pork-barrel procedures, so-called, should give us a greater mileage of roads in the years to come, properly planned and expedited to benefit the greatest number of Maine's citizens. The doubling in dollars of the appropriation for town road improvement and the increases in State Aid through the bonus system and snow removal should give added impetus to the drive for better feeder and farm roads. The million dollar allocation to the town road improvement alone has meant tremendous increases in the towns' abilities to bring the farmers nearer to the idea of a year round highway. This will be felt even more in the next two years, if continued. Over 3 million has been spent since its passage. I am confident that we will continue to build many more miles of passable highways under such a program. It will be in the interest of all of the people of Maine to continue this long range highway plan. We must continue to recognize that our highway needs and highway planning should be geared to the Federal Plan. As I have told the people of Maine, the President's program is one that shows tremendous vision for the future. Maine must, and will, share in this program.

State Police and Governor's Safety Committee:

One of the forward-looking steps of this administration has been to recognize the necessity of a planned program on accident prevention, and public education to reduce highway fatalities and property damage.

The State Police and its enforcement and safety division have worked very closely with your Governor to further develop a long-range plan. In activating the Governor's Safety Conference, I found it to be invaluable in encouraging citizen participation in this activity. The conferences have produced, in conjunction with the Secretary of State's Department, and the basic work of the Secretary of State, notable advancements in highway regulations, including the new point system. Working closely with the Executive Department, the State Police have promoted a sound enforcement program that has helped materially to reduce our highway toll. They will need added assistance to continue this. Every life saved is a monument to the future.

Economy in Government:

And finally, I would point out to you that in this administration we have been, as you should be, prudent of the tax funds entrusted to your care. Economy of operation is a requirement of sound government. This is often misunderstood by short-sighted individuals, but a continued, firm grip must be held to a sane program within the ability of the people to pay. The many things we might like to do as members of the Legislature must be governed by the financial ability of the people. In the words of Abraham Lincoln, and I know no better words, "Government is to do those things, and only those things, for the people that they cannot do better for themselves."

Blaine House:

I do want to say this to you from my personal experience as Chief Executive: One of the most enjoyable experiences of a Governor is to live in the beautiful Executive Mansion that is provided by the citizens of our State. The Blaine House is a beautiful home, typical of the better and more enduring things of our State of Maine, solid, substantial, and steeped in the tradition of our great State's

great past. Let me say to you that in my experiences in other States, there is none in New England, nor in few other states, that do for their governors as is done in Maine. I believe this is the way the people of Maine want it to be. I know that they are proud of their First Family, whoever it may be, and having been a member of that family for two years, I do want to pass that experience on to you, for it is one that many other Chief Executives in other states have envied.

Mrs. Cross and I have felt that this is a home to be shared with as many of Maine's citizens as possible and it has been our endeavor to see that the door was always open wide.

This resumé of two years of service in the Governor's Office, together with the experience gained in over twenty years in public life, is given to you in the honest and sincere purpose of aiding you in your deliberation for the coming months. I know that your problems will be many, that the pressures on you will be great. I am confident that you have the ability and the desire, as I have had, to serve the people in their best interest.

It has been a very pleasant and instructive privilege to serve in municipal and state government for over a fifth of a century. It is an experience that I would not forego, under any condition. It is an experience that I would recommend to all of you who continue your obvious interest in the betterment of this great State of ours.

As I leave office, I do so with a deep personal satisfaction of a job well done, of many things accomplished in the interests of the people, of footsteps in the sands of time that the winds of coming events may dim, but never erase.

To you men and women of today, yours is an unusual opportunity to enter political life and to render service to your State, your city, and your town. The danger that is ever present, however, is for a man or woman to have a desire to **hold office** rather than to render service. Holding office alone has spurred many men and women to continue in power by being willing to sacrifice principle and honor.

Many of us enter politics expecting to accomplish many worthwhile things, only to find our efforts blocked and useless. Many times when a man displays his independence, he is likely to be confronted with opposition and checked by powerful influences which seek to break him when they find they cannot control him. To me, principle, honesty, and integrity are worth more than temporary and elusive honor. Sound administration in the interests of all the people has been my goal in over twenty years of service. I have refused to break that continuity, and it is for your information that I give you these foregoing conclusions, both administrative and philosophical.

I hope that it will be of value to you. I urge you never to lose the ideals which prompted you to seek office. Do not deny principle for expediency. To do so would be a betrayal of those who have elected you.

If I have earned the respect and confidence of my fellow citizens, I am sufficiently rewarded for all my work. I love the State of Maine and all its people, and this affection has increased with years of service. The hard things that have been said have long since been forgotten and forgiven, and there is no one in

Maine toward whom I hold the slightest ill feeling. There is much to be thankful for; much yet that I would do for my native State.

David Starr Jordan says: "Today is your day, and mine; the only day we have; the day in which we play our part. What our part may signify in the great whole we may not understand, but we are here to play it, and now is the time."