

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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LAWS
OF THE
STATE OF MAINE

AS PASSED BY THE

ONE HUNDRED AND TWELFTH LEGISLATURE

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ADDRESS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

of

GOVERNOR JOSEPH E. BRENNAN

to the

ONE HUNDRED AND TWELFTH LEGISLATURE

March 20, 1986

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of the 112th Legislature, honored guests from the University of Maine, and interested citizens:

In January this year the Visiting Committee to the University of Maine delivered their report. It is a superb document, put together by an exceptional group of people.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE

Some of the members of that Committee are here with us today in the balcony. I would like to ask them to stand, so that we may acknowledge them and thank them for their efforts on our behalf. As I have said many times already, this is as talented a group as I have ever had the good fortune to assemble for any public purpose.

I would like to take a moment to acquaint you with the individuals who served on the Visiting Committee:

—Dr. Edward Andrews, President of the Maine Medical Center, and former President of the University of Vermont, from Falmouth;

—Wilma Bradford, Trustee of Westbrook College, Trustee of Husson College, and prominent community leader from Bangor;

—Jean Childs, distinguished contributor to Maine's environment, education, and civic life, from Westbrook;

—Dr. Robert Clodius, President of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, representing 140 major public universities, from Washington, D.C.;

—Francis Keppel, former Dean of the School of Education at Harvard University, and former U.S. Commissioner of Education for Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, from Cambridge, Massachusetts;

—Dr. Eleanor McMahon, Commissioner of Higher Education for the State of Rhode Island, and former Provost of Rhode Island College;

—Jean Sampson, former State Education Board member, former Trustee of the University of Maine, and now an Overseer of Bowdoin College, from Lewiston;

—Dr. Nils Wessell, former President of Tufts University, former President of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, former Trustee of the University of Maine, now living on Chebeague Island in Casco Bay;

—and also on the Visiting Committee, a former member of this House of Representatives, former Maine Governor, former United States Senator from Maine, former United States Secretary of State, Edmund S. Muskie;

—finally, as Chair of this extremely distinguished group, Dr. Robert Strider, President of Colby College from 1960 to 1979, a member of Governor Muskie's 1957 Commission on Education in Maine, and a member of Governor Curtis's 1967 Commission on the Reorganization of the University of Maine.

—I would also like to recognize Dr. Charles Lawton, the Executive Director of the Committee, for his excellent work.

On behalf of the people of Maine, I would like to again thank everyone on the Committee, especially those from outside of Maine, for their sacrifice and their effort on behalf of all of us. We are truly grateful.

VISITING COMMITTEE FINDINGS

The Report of the Visiting Committee has been well-received. It has been praised by journalists, trustees, legislators, faculty, and interested citizens across Maine.

However, some comments have raised the question whether everybody completely understands the Report they are praising. The Visiting Committee Report should be read carefully by anyone interested in, or responsible for, the future of higher education in Maine.

The Visiting Committee found great strengths in the people of our University. They found faculty like Professor Steve Norton, whose research on acid rain brought a critical issue to public awareness; like Professor James Wilson, who represented our fishing interests at the World Court in the Netherlands; and like Professor John Dimond, whose research on the spruce budworm disease has contributed to the renewal of Maine's most basic resource, our forest.

The Visiting Committee found many such inspiring examples of individual and departmental excellence on every campus in Maine. However, they found that the system as a whole, viewed in its entirety, had serious shortcomings.

Let me take a moment to explain.

The Visiting Committee recommends that Maine's University system should have four components: first, community colleges for students seeking two-year technical training in business, health, and human service occupations; second, regional baccalaureate colleges for students seeking four-year degrees in teacher education, liberal arts, and advanced technical subjects; third, an urban comprehensive university for students seeking strong undergraduate education, specialized graduate training, and applied research opportunities in cooperation with area institutions; and fourth, a research and doctoral university for students seeking high-quality undergraduate education and first-rate graduate programs.

In short, Maine needs a system of public higher education with the strength, the diversity, and the integrity of the Maine people themselves.

But this is not what the Visiting Committee found. Instead they found a system strong in the middle, in four-year programs; but weak at the ends, in community college programs, and in research and graduate offerings.

Specifically, Maine's enrollment in two-year technical programs, is just one-half the national average. The Committee found that the lack of community college offerings "constitutes a serious shortcoming in Maine's system of public higher education."

At the other end of the spectrum, the Visiting Committee found that the academic quality of Orono has declined, and that Maine is now one of only four states in the entire nation that has no public institution classified as a full-fledged doctoral university.

Going further, the Visiting Committee reported that the specific roles of individual campuses within the overall system have not been clearly defined.

Finally, the Visiting Committee found that the University suffers from a lack of state money.

The Visiting Committee did commend this Legislature and this Administration for increasing its support to higher education. In fact, in the last seven years, Maine's rate of increase in university funding is among the very highest in the nation.

Yet even so, our level of university support remains low compared to other states. As a result, the Visiting Committee has found that our tuition costs are high, and that our basic support for academic programs—support such as libraries, equipment, and supplies—is inadequate.

We can, and we must, do more.

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL

Today, I will propose how we can do more. More to support the University financially. More to help the University clarify its own mission.

I am submitting legislation that will first of all change the name of the system to the State University of Maine, as the Visiting Committee recommends. This change will allow the Trustees to restore to Orono its proud historic title of “The University of Maine.”

My legislation will also give the Trustees the authority to make other appropriate campus name changes. The Visiting Committee has suggested new campus names that more closely reflect campus missions. In effect, the Visiting Committee has proposed “truth-in-labelling” for Maine’s public institutions of higher learning. I encourage the Trustees to accept their recommendations.

I am also submitting legislation to make a fifteen million dollar “downpayment” for the new State University of Maine. That money will go especially to meet the needs identified by the Visiting Committee, needs such as student financial aid and academic support.

The money will be allocated in the following manner: about \$700,000 to the community college here in Augusta, for research, equipment, and other basic needs; \$1.7 million to the regional baccalaureate colleges at Fort Kent, at Presque Isle, at Machias, and at Farmington—for student aid, library books, equipment, building maintenance, and faculty support; and \$4.1 million to the urban comprehensive university in Southern Maine, to hire full-time faculty, to build up the library, and to strengthen the undergraduate program; finally, the major part of the funds, consistent with Visiting Committee recommendations, goes to the research and doctoral university at Orono—\$8.5 million for faculty development, for equipment, for library books, for student aid, and for the purpose of correcting other deficiencies identified by the Trustees.

Of the total amount available, 56% is allocated to Orono. This is consistent with the first priority of the Visiting Committee to restore Orono to its flagship status within the State University of Maine. But I want to add here that with added money for Orono, will come added responsibility.

Orono is not the University of Penobscot Valley. It is the University of Maine. It is for all Maine students, from Kittery to Eastport to Madawaska. It must meet the most pressing needs of all Maine businesses, from York to Aroostook counties. It must help enrich the academic and cultural life of all the other campuses.

It should be absolutely clear that these funds, and this mandate, are not for “business as usual.”

The fifteen million dollar downpayment is intended to be a permanent increase in the base of funds for public higher education in Maine. It should be funded this year, and next year, and every year thereafter. The downpayment requires, in short, new revenues.

I propose to pay for the downpayment through a variety of measures.

I propose to raise \$5.7 million by eliminating the sales tax exemption on out-of-state long distance phone calls. The sales tax already applies to in-state calls. This means that a ten minute Saturday call from Portland to San Francisco that now costs \$1.99, would cost ten cents more.

I propose to raise an additional \$3.3 million by increasing the sales tax on lodging by two percent. This rate would be equal to our neighbor in New Hampshire, and lower than our neighbors in Massachusetts and New Brunswick. This means that a hotel room now costing \$52 a night, would cost \$53 a night, or one dollar more.

I propose to raise the remaining \$6 million by stepping up tax enforcement, by reducing energy expenses, and by closing tax loopholes.

Raising taxes in an election year, even the very small ones I am proposing, is not a normal, and is certainly not a popular, course of action.

But this is not a normal year. And we are not dealing with a normal matter.

This year we are confronting a once-in-a-generation opportunity to renew public higher education in Maine for all of the Maine people! If we miss this chance, we may not have another for some time to come. We cannot let this historic opportunity slip by over concern for fleeting political advantage.

Higher education demands our attention, and it demands our action, this year. It is an investment we simply cannot afford not to make!

HIGHER EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

It is an investment that builds on prior investments.

In the last seven years, through determined effort, we have added thousands of jobs to our economy. We in Maine can be proud of this record.

But now we must make sure that the Maine people get the education they need to take advantage of the new jobs.

President Lyndon Johnson once said:

“We must open the doors of opportunity. But we must equip our people to walk through those doors.”

Nothing equips people better to walk through the doors of economic opportunity than a good education.

Our economy in Maine, and in the nation, is in the throes of change. Many of Maine’s young people now in school will work in jobs we cannot even imagine today. They need to be ready for their fast-changing world.

Nothing prepares them better than a solid education.

A little over a century ago, in his great lectures on *The Idea of a University*, John Henry Newman pointed out that:

“. . . the man who has learned to think and to reason . . . and to analyse, . . . who has . . . formed his judgment, and (has) sharpened his mental vision, will not indeed at once be an engineer, . . . or a lawyer, . . . or a man of business, . . . but he will be placed in that state of intellect in which he can take up any one of the sciences or callings, . . . with . . . ease, . . . (with) grace, . . . and (with) success. . .”

Indeed, to such a man or a woman, education is a lifelong quest, not just an activity relegated to a few short years between adolescence and adulthood.

The Maine people already know this. At the University of Southern Maine, a 1984 study of top graduates showed that fully 7 in 10 were age 24 or over.

Maine students are changing. The Maine economy is changing. The University must change too.

MAINE HIGHER EDUCATION HISTORY

Maine's public colleges, with their proud record of accomplishments, did not come about by accident. They came into being, and have been sustained and renewed, by the drive and energy and vision of the Maine people.

In 1863, the first teacher's college in Maine opened at Farmington—the result of 16 years of effort by reformers like William Crosby of Belfast.

In 1868, the Maine State College of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts opened at Orono. It was a land grant college, designed, in the words of the Morrill Act, to “promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes.”

Governor Joshua Chamberlain, fresh from the Civil War, where he had just accepted the surrender of Robert E. Lee's troops at Appomattox, spoke to a joint convention of the Maine Legislature, just like this one, and described his vision for Maine's new college.

Chamberlain said:

“Profiting by the experience of the past but unfettered by its traditions . . . comprehending the best results of the latest scholarship, in full harmony with the living interests of the times, such as institution . . . would be a chief means of increasing intelligence and enterprise within our own borders . . . and would open a thousand opportunities to attract our young men. . .”

The Legislature, in setting up the college, explicitly prohibited the charging of tuition. Instead, the Legislature mandated that physical labor be required of every student. The college at Orono was famous for this arrangement. It lasted until 1881, by which time the Legislature reversed itself, and required tuition, but not labor.

In 1872, Louise Hammond Ramsdell from Atkinson arrived on campus. She was the first woman student at Orono; she was a math whiz; and she graduated with high marks two years later.

In 1897, the college became a full-fledged university, thanks to the leadership and the persistent efforts of people like William R. Pattangall, of the Class of 1884, and later Chief Justice of Maine's Supreme Court.

And in this century, time and time again leaders have emerged, to guide Maine's public institutions of higher learning through the storms of war and depression, and into the sunlight of a prospering Maine.

Now it is our turn.

It is our moment to honor Maine's past traditions; to meet Maine's present needs; and to build Maine's future dreams.

REFORM VS. FACTIONALISM

The people of Maine are with us.

They are speaking with one voice. You just have to listen.

Only a few weeks ago, Robert G. Foster, the Chairman of Ventrex Laboratories, Inc., told Portland area business leaders that the university must move forward for Maine to keep its quality of life, and for Maine to keep its appeal for high-tech businesses, like his own company Ventrex.

He told them not to waste energy fighting over what campus would have what program. Using Ventrex as an example, Robert Foster said, "We need a supply of biotechnology graduates, but there's no reason in the world why we can't get them from Orono."

The same month Maine AFL-CIO President Charles O'Leary published an article saying, and I quote:

"Workers have traditionally thought of the University of Maine as an avenue of opportunity for their children to improve their lives. . . Workers still hold this . . . view. . ."

Indeed, Mr. O'Leary's words evoke the very language of the 1863 Morrill Land Grant College Act promoting "the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes."

Charles O'Leary continues, and addresses Maine leaders, of both labor and business, by saying:

"Let's come together on . . . rebuilding one of our greatest resources, the University of Maine, by pushing for full acceptance of the Visiting Committee's Report."

The words of business leader Robert Foster, and labor leader Charles O'Leary, capture the hopes of all Maine people.

Yes, the Maine people are the allies of University reform. The major enemy of reform is factionalism.

It is the belief that what is good for the north, is bad for the south. It is the belief that what is good for one campus, is bad for another. It is the belief that what is good for business, is bad for scholarship.

Factionalism is an ancient human vice.

President Abraham Lincoln once said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

Our university system is one house—with many rooms, and with many campuses. Our university system cannot be divided against itself and still stand, and still do what the people of Maine need it to do.

Today, I say to you that factionalism and divisiveness have no place in our debate, and have no place in any debate over something as important as higher education in Maine.

CONCLUSION

The elements of excellence are in place today. The buildings are there. The people are there.

Now it is up to us to give our talented faculty the tools they need to bring to Maine students what Plato once called the "highest blessing bestowed on mankind"—a good education.

It will take a lot of work.

Reform cannot simply be achieved by a wave of the hand, or by the passage of a law. Reform will take the good will and concerted efforts of hundreds, indeed

thousands, of Maine people: administrators, faculty, students, alumni, most important of all, University Trustees.

The Trustees, under the leadership of Chairman Joseph Hakanson, ultimately bear the burden of defining system-wide, and campus, missions; of saying "no" to pet projects that don't fit; and of saying "yes" to projects that do fit, projects that respond to the needs, and the dreams of the Maine people.

But that is what leadership is all about. And what is needed most in this University is leadership at the center.

We in government can do our job by providing the Trustees with the resources they need, and by holding the Trustees accountable to their stated goals and missions.

Yes, there is a long road ahead of us.

But that is precisely why we must start today.

President John F. Kennedy liked to tell the story of a far-sighted French statesman, who told his gardener one day to go out and plant a tree.

The gardener told the statesman, "There is no use in planting this tree. It won't bear fruit for a hundred years."

The French statesman replied to the gardener, "In that case, plant it this very afternoon!"

Today, I call upon the Legislature, the Trustees, the Presidents, the faculty, and the students. Go out and plant the seed of the new State University of Maine. And go out and plant it this very day!

Thank you very much.