

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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*INAUGURAL ADDRESS*

OF

*HORACE HILDRETH*

*GOVERNOR OF MAINE*

TO THE

*Ninety-second Legislature*

*STATE OF MAINE*



*JANUARY FOURTH*

*1945*



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*Horace A. Killett*

GOVERNOR OF MAINE





# Address

*Mr. President and Members of the 92nd Legislature:*

## **Separation of Powers**

The Legislative, the Judicial and the Executive branches of the State Government we all are proud to serve are met here this morning as a new state administration takes office. Despite the world wide emphasis these days on the executive branch of government, I want to reaffirm my belief in the separation of the powers of government adopted by our forefathers and express my confidence that in Maine at least each branch of government will continue to function with independent integrity while still having full faith and confidence in the other branches. At the same time however, close acquaintance with most of you and recent service in your midst makes me feel that we face our problems together. I want you to feel that the services of the executive department are always at your disposal.

## **General Observations**

When as a youth I was sworn in as a United States Ranger in Yellowstone Park and was given a badge and a gun as evidence of power it was impressed upon the new Rangers that we were not masters but servants of the people. That conception of government has never left me. Insofar as it lies in my power this administration will be the servant of the sovereign people of Maine, with a minimum of governmental orders, and a maximum of courteous and practical assistance.

In the days of peace to come Government should not eagerly seek more power but rather should give private initiative and individual responsibility all possible aid and assistance. At the end of our term in office let us hope people will say not how *much* state government has done but rather how *well* it has done and

how effectively it has cooperated with private enterprise and individual initiative.

The greatest challenge to a free people today is to dam the flood of thought, grown so turbulent in the last decade, that the way to solve all our problems is to place them in the hands of government. Even in the field of government there has been a constant tendency on the part of smaller units to put their problems on larger units with tremendous power centering in Washington. This philosophy has reached its present flood proportions partly because of encouragement of those greedy for power and partly because of the indifference of citizens and office holders glad to shed their responsibilities rather than face them.

History surely teaches that when people refuse to face their responsibilities and embrace a philosophy which attempts to solve their problems by allowing undue concentration of power at the top they are travelling a road which leaves freedom and liberty behind and takes them toward a totalitarian form of government which, no matter under what name it parades, has always spelled disaster.

There is an obligation on us to resist vigorously the continued concentration of power in the Federal Government and an equal obligation to resist within our own borders the growing concentration of power on the state level at the expense of local responsibility.

**State's  
Accumulated  
Surplus**

When the laws passed by this Legislature take effect, there will be a substantial surplus in the state treasury. In the eyes of many groups of people this surplus represents the solution of their particular problem. No matter how large this surplus may turn out to be it cannot solve all these problems and this Legislature, through appropriation measures, will judge which problems it will attempt to solve by recourse to this surplus. Meanwhile I suggest that we all bear in mind how this surplus came about.

State revenues increased 12.2% in 1942 over 1941 and have since continued to climb. The per capita income of individuals in Maine went from \$600 in 1941 to over \$1,000 in 1943. This was a 68% increase and the highest increase in per capita income of any New England state. At the same time there was a corresponding drop in our relief loads. Thus you can see how this surplus came into existence. It is not a normal operating surplus at all. It is the result of a war inflated economy on the one hand and abnormally restricted government functions on the other hand. The same situation exists in all state governments.

Today approximately one-half of Maine's total payroll comes from war industries, a situation which carries with it for the morrow the threat of recession and distress. A prudent man with a surplus arising out of such circumstances would be slow to use this money for capital expenditures. Much of this surplus should be reserved for inevitable recessions in State revenue and to delay, if not avoid, the additional taxation which the Commissioner of Finance publicly said will probably soon be necessary. I believe that a substantial portion of this surplus should be set aside now for the retirement of bonds maturing in the next few years.

In 1942, the latest year for which debt service figures are available, there were only nine states in the country which spent more per capita on debt service than Maine. And in that year, which was a particularly prosperous one for Maine, this State stood 26th in per capita income. Surely this debt service charge is unduly burdensome and should make us pause before putting any increased debt on the people of Maine. Many states during these boom years have made far greater progress in reducing their indebtedness than has Maine.

If this surplus is not protected it seems quite probable that in the immediate future we shall have the unpleasant alternative of imposing additional taxes on our people at a time when their individual income will probably be receding. We must all make every effort to prevent the imposition of any additional taxes on the people of Maine.

**Comparative  
Costs  
of  
Government**

What kind of a job are we doing on government in Maine compared with our sister states? The statistics used will be the latest available published by the Bureau of Census.

Maine ranks 26th among the states in per capita income. In expenditures however Maine ranks 8th in per capita costs for state hospitals and institutions for the handicapped, of which we have heard so much lately; 10th in per capita cost for debt service; 12th in direct operational expenses; 15th in public welfare; and 19th in per capita costs for public health.

In these fields the State is bearing a far heavier burden than most of its sister states. On the other hand our per capita expenditures for schools make us rank only 36th against our rating of 26th for per capita income.

I would not want to leave the impression that any of the functions of government referred to are unimportant or that we should not meet our responsibilities. When, however, our per capita expenditures are out of line it is a fair warning to consider whether we are moving in the right direction and whether or not we are getting our money's worth for every dollar spent.

If what other states are doing is any criterion in our search for good government we definitely have too high per capita expenditures on debt service charges, (largely on account of highway bonds), institutions, public welfare and public health with too little per capita expenditures on education.

**Education**

There is no problem of such vital importance to the future of Maine as the problem of adequate education for our youngsters.

Democracy relies upon education to train its citizens. Good education demands competent teachers. For decades Maine has been training good teachers only to lose

an appalling percentage of them to other states which pay higher wages.

Today the minimum salary in Maine for teachers is \$720 and yet there are many communities which cannot afford to pay anything more than this minimum salary. This problem is of state-wide importance for we all know that the leadership tomorrow in our largest communities is today being trained in our smallest hamlets.

Therefore three-quarters of a million dollars a year has been made available in the budget to raise the minimum salary of teachers to the not too magnificent sum of \$900, an increase however of \$180 or 25 percent. If the State goes this far in any one biennium certainly it is keeping faith with its teachers. So that all communities will be treated alike towns and cities that meet this minimum salary should receive this additional state aid through the regular educational channels.

For many years the State has assumed financial responsibility for teachers' pensions without doing an adequate job. Legislation will be proposed to provide increases in the lower brackets of the non-contributory teachers pensions and budgetary increases have been made in the contributory retirement fund in anticipation of higher salary levels for teachers. Furthermore I believe a study will show that the non-contributory system and the teachers' contributory retirement plan should be merged into the State employees' retirement plan resulting in better treatment of teachers without an undue increase in State expense.

## **Agriculture**

Turning to Agriculture it is clear that prosperity for our farmers is a necessary condition for the well-being of our entire State. Stimulated by War, agriculture has enjoyed a high degree of prosperity and its prospects for the future are decidedly encouraging. Farming in Maine is steadily progressing from merely a means of livelihood to an up-to-date business operation.

The most acute problem in this field today appears to be the elimination of Bang's disease, that scourge of the dairy industry which is responsible for undulant fever in humans. The Department of Agriculture will submit requests for large sums of money for the solution of this problem and it is important to bear in mind that in this case time is money.

### **Aroostook Potato Tax**

While speaking of agriculture I want to congratulate the Aroostook potato growers for sponsoring one of the best examples of progressive tax legislation on our statute books. This potato tax was a self-imposed tax, passed by the Legislature several years ago at the request of the Aroostook delegation. Contrary to the usual custom of appearing before the Legislature asking for public funds to solve private problems, the Aroostook potato growers had the vision and character to ask for permission to tax themselves to meet the problems of their particular industry. During this session of the Legislature certain industries may ask for similar legislation to tax themselves to meet the problems of their particular industry. Such legislation should have our wholehearted approval. It constitutes a re-assertion of that rugged individualism which is willing to meet its own problems rather than depending on government for the solution of private difficulties at public expense.

### **Water Pollution**

Water pollution in Maine is a problem of statewide importance and by no means confined to the Androscoggin River, although that river presents by far the most acute problem now existing in the State.

Without further delay it is time for legislation that will put an end to future pollution of our streams and rivers by new sources. I have asked that measures to this end be presented to this Legislature. Sanitary engineers declare that such legislation will not discourage responsible industries from coming here.

Once we put a stop to any future pollution, we can concentrate on efforts to correct the present deplorable situation. In our zeal to correct past errors, however, we must not unnecessarily sacrifice our economic life blood.

Progress has been made on the Androscoggin River. Only recently one of the largest industrial users of this river has made plans to eliminate the mill waste it has been dumping into the river.

Furthermore industry all over the State recognizes this problem and is now cooperating whole heartedly, giving generously of its time and money.

### **State Park Program**

The State of Maine should have a long range park program. The need is obvious and action is overdue.

Any State Park Program however should be based upon the fact that it will not only be self-supporting but that it will be run on a basis which over a reasonable period of time will amortize the original investment. If the public is not willing to support a park program on this basis then an extensive program should not be undertaken at the expense of all the taxpayers as a gift to a limited group of users.

Somewhat related to a State Park program is a State community recreational program. For the past two years as a war measure the State has assisted in carrying on a community recreation program to help civilian morale. The Legislature should consider the value to the State of the establishment of this program on a permanent basis.

### **Port Authority**

The Port of Portland Authority energized by the acute problem of the future of the shipyards in South Portland and a realization of the importance of water transportation to the entire State of Maine has been engaged in developing plans for the improvement of Maine's principal deep water port. This group

of able public spirited citizens will appear before committees of this Legislature with full disclosure of their plans. When these plans come before the Legislature I earnestly recommend that they be given the most careful consideration free from any local prejudice. The problems involved are of great significance to every inhabitant of the entire State.

## **Labor**

To successfully solve the economic problems that lie ahead there must be mutual understanding and cooperation between labor and management. Management must give consideration to the human side of its business as well as to its production. It is not a flattering commentary on management that much of the improvement in working conditions has been brought about over the opposition of management rather than under its leadership. On the other hand, as labor comes of age it is vital that its sense of responsibility to the general public keep pace with its ever increasing power. Power without a sense of responsibility and control is a blessing to no one.

Today there are many youngsters putting in the required number of hours in school but they are so exhausted from late hours of night work that they get little benefit from their school hours. It is commendable to see our youth helping out with war work but it must not be carried to the extent of injuring health, impairing education and creating juvenile delinquency. The State should adopt immediately a form of combined work and school program to further protect its youth.

Maine laws at present limit compensation to accidents but make no provision for occupational diseases contracted by exposure of more than a single day. In view of both the Republican platform and the report of the Legislative Recess Committee favoring legislation on this subject the Legislature should give this matter favorable consideration. Workmen's Compensation is now compulsory in 23 States and in my opinion Maine should join this group.

Employers hesitate to employ people who have suffered pre-



vious injury because another injury might mean permanent disability and the victim must be paid compensation for a long period, even though it was the first accident suffered at that particular plant. Either by building up second injury funds, or some other method, such reluctance on the part of employers must be removed. Everything the State can do to encourage employers to utilize the services of our wounded veterans should be done.

It is also appropriate to consider legislation that will predetermine the wages of labor on post war public works projects using the basic wage prevailing at that time for such work in the community in which the work takes place. Labor is entitled to this protection.

### **Department Heads**

It is obvious that some salaries of department heads set by the Legislature are now out of line. In considering government salaries it is always easy to obtain small raises for large numbers of people because it is good practical politics. Conversely, it is difficult to get substantial raises for small numbers of people, no matter how able these people are, because it is not good practical politics. Real efficiency in government however depends upon able management at the top, the same as in any other field of endeavor. Oftentimes it is said when salary raises are discussed "We had plenty of candidates didn't we?" This argument misses the real point which is not how *many* candidates were there but how *good* were they.

### **Public Health and Welfare**

Previously I have advocated the establishment of a state blood bank which would make blood plasma available to every citizen who needs it at a low cost or free if necessary. Michigan has shown that the State can do for civilians what the Red Cross has done for service men. Competent medical men are agreed that there is a need for such a project in this State.

The incredible spread of venereal diseases in Maine is a health problem that demands immediate attention. In the first half of 1944, on the basis of population, Maine led the New England states in the number of such cases. Statistics reveal that in Maine the venereal disease prevalence per 1,000 males is 26.9 compared to the New England average of 13.4. Maine had over 50% more cases in 1943 than the previous year—the highest number of cases in the past 20 years. We must bring about a program of improvement and we cannot do it by shutting our eyes to the situation as it is today. Action is long overdue.

It seems clear that in public health and welfare our expenditures for relief have increased faster than our machinery for the correction or prevention of undesirable conditions, and in allocating funds in this field we should emphasize preventive measures for the sake of the future. In old age assistance payments I believe that though applicants should be added only after careful investigation once they are on the list they should not be harassed as to how they spent each bit of assistance.

## **Aviation**

In international air transportation Maine is at the crossroads. Where national geography has often been Maine's handicap, World geography is now our ally.

The Federal government has spent large sums on the development of airports here for military purposes which indicates the importance of Maine in the aviation transport field.

We must not allow this new airport system to languish. If the Federal government does not make the maximum use of these fields, we must press upon them the desirability of making them available for civilian use.

We must not let Maine's airport development stop here. Every sizeable Maine community should adopt as its own local project the building of its airport or landing strip.

It is imperative in this field that Maine always try to be one step ahead of the need, rather than a step behind the demand. The future of our great recreational business is closely allied to aviation development and it is quite probable that this important and ever growing industry will prove to be the biggest beneficiary of aviation progress in Maine.

## **Highways**

With the war situation limiting man power, material and highway income it would seem advisable to renew the present authorization permitting the curtailment of full activities of the highway commission.

The importance of highways is not open to argument. Obviously our already huge investment in highways should be fully protected at the first possible moment. This means that as soon as men and material are available unusually large allowances should be spent for maintenance work. Therefore a large part if not all of the current limited highway income in sight for the near future should be allocated for maintenance work, bond retirement and administrative expenses, leaving the construction of any new highways to be financed from other sources.

Under the provisions of the Federal Highway Act of 1944, just enacted, Federal funds amounting to nearly \$4,000,000 per year will be apportioned to Maine over a three year period to begin at the end of the present war emergency, whenever that may be. If we are to accept this Federal money it will be necessary to provide State matching funds in approximately the same amount. But it is imperative that there be a balanced highway program in Maine and that a fair share of highway development be in the rural areas.

Thus, so far as new construction is concerned, the Legislature must strike a fair balance in allocating present surplus highway funds (plus the proceeds of any reissued highway bonds) between Federal aid highways and highway development in our rural areas.

Obtaining funds for matching Federal Highway grants by means of reissuing State highway bonds has been done before. If the Legislature decides this is wise and necessary it should again authorize whatever reissue is needed for the program it adopts. When we recall however that only 9 states in the Union have a greater per capita debt service charge than Maine, largely on account of outstanding highway bonds, there is considerable question as to the wisdom of reissuing bonds. Certainly if it is done at all it should be on a very conservative basis and in no event should there be any reissue of highway bonds in any year to a greater amount than the total amount of bonded indebtedness of the State retired that year. Only a true emergency would seem to justify increasing the total bonded indebtedness of the State.

In connection with a highly desirable and efficient program for the development of rural area highways, such as "feeder roads" or "farm to market roads" and "third class roads" we might recall a few words from an inaugural some time ago where it was said:

"Special Resolves for roads and bridges are an anomaly in our highway matters and a nuisance in our Legislative sessions . . . I believe the State, as well as the Legislature, would be better off if this practice of Special Resolves were discontinued."

I make this suggestion again with the hope of obtaining wiser and better coverage for roads in rural areas than we have obtained under our present system.

## **Veterans**

Because of its importance I have left until last the problem closest to our hearts—Veterans and their future. Throughout my remarks this group has been constantly in mind, and various subjects discussed have direct relation to this honored group of citizens. We must not let up in any way on our primary job of winning the war. If, however, we entirely defer the urgent

business of winning the peace until we have won the war, the peace may be lost. The important thing is to provide useful jobs before unemployment brings disillusionment and bitterness.

The Veteran does not want "made work" or "boondoggling" or any other kind of glorified dole. He wants something better. He is entitled to something better. He will demand something better, and he will get something better. He wants to choose his own job. Free enterprise, if it is to work and survive as we have known it and believe in it, must provide that job. If government will assist to its fullest extent by keeping taxes at a minimum, by eliminating unnecessary governmental red tape and regulations, by making its facilities available, and by preventing economic abuse if necessary, then free enterprise will supply these jobs. If it does not, government will to the full extent of its resources.

The difficult transition from War to Peace demands the cooperation and aid of all the people of this State for our veterans. As chief executive I pledge the aid and assistance of all our State Departments. Likewise labor and industry, town and city officials, leaders and workers in all fields must make their contribution. No single group can do the job alone. The exploratory work already done in this field by Veterans Organizations, Service Clubs and others is to be commended.

To aid private industry and business to expand and to obtain the skillful help it will need and at the same time provide our returning servicemen with additional training, the state might establish, at least temporarily, two trade schools. Such schools should provide courses that would be flexible enough to change as industrial and trade needs dictated. Likewise there is a need for some form of an extension service for the fishermen of Maine. This service could be similar to the agricultural extension service now operating in this state. Thousands of our citizens earn their living as fishermen and this great source of economic life is a long way from its potential maximum development.

The state should immediately increase its effort to bring new industries to Maine. Our first job however, is to keep the indus-

tries which we now have, to aid them in every way possible, and to develop here at home additional industries, particularly in our small towns, where industrial and agricultural work may be combined.

Many of our municipalities, as well as the state, have perfected plans for public work projects and these projects will be of invaluable assistance during the transition period.

These suggestions are merely illustrative of many helpful moves which the State should undertake. As the problem becomes clearer other things will recommend themselves. When the war ends undoubtedly there will be need of special sessions of the Legislature, so we do not have to solve too many problems prematurely.

State government of course will reemploy those who left its fold to join the armed services. Legislation may be proposed to give Veterans employment preference, for they are entitled to a reasonable priority in rating for State jobs.

Unlike the last war demobilization will probably take place gradually. The educational opportunities provided for returning servicemen also are far greater than those given after the last war and thousands will take advantage of this. The prospects of business expansion and new business coming to Maine have not been as bright in our generation. Let us look to the post-war period with faith, courage and determination.

## **Conclusion**

I am sure that all of us have the realization heavy on our minds this morning that only because millions of our loved ones are far away making bitter sacrifices to keep the horrors of war far from their loved ones, can we have such an assembly as this and what it represents. No daily effort here should be too great to see that no unnecessary sacrifices are made over there. Today our armed forces all over the world are the principal hope of liberty and freedom. These boys are not asking—What can I get out of my country? They are saying—How much can I do for my country.

It is a sacred obligation for us to serve on the home front in this same spirit. Truly if each of us does not serve with this spirit, our democracy is doomed and their sacrifices will have been in vain. We shall have broken faith with our youth and lost *their future* for them while they are dying to save *our present* for us. May God give us courage, strength and wisdom to meet our responsibilities on the home front in the same spirit with which our boys are meeting their responsibilities on the battle front.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Horace A. Kilbuck". The signature is written in dark ink and ends with a long horizontal flourish line.

GOVERNOR OF MAINE