

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Inaugural Address
OF
FREDERICK G. PAYNE
Governor of Maine
TO THE
NINETY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE
STATE OF MAINE



JANUARY 6, 1949

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FREDERICK G. PAYNE
GOVERNOR OF MAINE

Address

Mr. President and Members of the 94th Legislature:

We meet today to lay the foundation and start building a Legislative program. It is imperative that we approach and solve Maine's problems in a crystal clear manner, using as a basic yardstick an honest desire to rekindle humanitarianism and sincere purpose in government.

By so doing, we shall produce a sound, progressive program designed to better equip State and local governments to accept the challenge of those demands which, upon your careful scrutiny, are found necessary and deserving.

The minds and hearts of our people are seriously troubled by international issues and by economic uncertainties at home. In such a setting, the greatest service we can render is to instill in our fellow citizens a strong sense of security, to renew and to strengthen confidence in our form of government, and to face the future with bold and forward looking spirits. If we achieve these broad objectives we need have no fear of any foreign ideology taking root among our people.

The voice of the people must govern our actions. We can ill afford to follow a procedure of blind opposition to urgings for improvement of our welfare, educational and security programs. Let us get closer to the people and more fully live up to "government of the people, by the people and for the people."

By vigorous and progressive legislation, by equally vigorous and progressive administration, we strengthen governmental structure on the one hand, while on the other we build a program of economic and social security aimed at maintaining people in their jobs, creating new employment opportunities and assisting people who encounter economic adversity.

In line with these basic principles, it is my desire as general manager to give to you the facts, all the facts, as I see them. Maine people are confident you will create the mechanism to develop and support a liberal program consistent with sound business principles and our ability to pay.

As a framework for this affirmation of government, a basic program is offered and with it an appeal for intelligent, self analysis by the Legislature. Through teamwork and a spirit of compromise, solutions to challenging problems will be hammered out in a decisive manner.

Education

The foundation for any long range improvement in both economic and social fields is a sound educational system. We must gear our educational program to the needs of tomorrow.

It is mandatory to chart a definite course and not drift aimlessly. We look with pride to the assistance provided to the University of Maine and the Maine Maritime Academy. Continued support of these institutions will do much to enhance our prestige.

Maine cannot hold efficient teachers, nor attract additional ones of the desired calibre until we provide them the proper remuneration.

A statewide vocational and industrial trade school program should be undertaken to enable those not desiring either college or commercial courses to better equip themselves for entrance in our industrial life. Our commercial courses should be strengthened.

The formulas for subsidy to cities and towns should be simplified to eliminate the mass of complicated computations now required. State subsidies must be expanded and yet allow a maximum of local home rule on problems peculiar to the individual community. The school construction program must be assisted by the State.

Education is the first great challenge we must meet.

Social Security and Welfare

No field of government better demonstrates our democratic ideals than provision for the economic well-being of those confronted by adversity arising from unemployment, illness or the non-productive period of advanced years.

It is my firm belief, after a reasonably extensive study, a need exists to re-examine the legislative structure of the Department of Health and Welfare to determine if legal framework precludes a humanitarian solution of the old age assistance program.

As a result of legal restrictions, many aged are suffering today, and they look to us to amend what conceivably has been an oversight in the formulation of a policy which should have for its only objective the welfare of those men and women of Maine who, in the sunset of their lives, find it necessary to ask a helping hand.

It must be recognized that no one yardstick can be used to determine which individual or which family should receive aid or who should be denied aid. Common sense must play a part. We are dealing with human beings.

Likewise, other categories of the Health and Welfare program, including general health, aid to dependent children and aid to the blind, require continuing study.

The State, it appears, in its handling of these functions, has bypassed facilities and services available to us on the local level. We seemingly ignore municipal and private agencies, when perhaps we should be enlisting their support in a common approach.

The interest and study directed to the solution of these problems by the Maine Council of Social Agencies is gratifying. The active interest of this representative group is a worthy contribution to the betterment of our public welfare program.

To keep abreast of changing conditions, it is recommended that our statutory ceiling on Old Age Assistance and Aid to the Blind be raised to the present Federal maximums.

Another important part of social legislation is the Workmen's Compensation Law which provides aid to workers disabled in covered industry. In view of prevailing economic conditions it would appear that the schedule of benefits provided should be revised.

Labor

In any over-all approach to labor legislation, we should be mindful that the people of Maine spoke in no uncertain terms, at a recent election, in commendation of the excellent relationship existing between labor and industry.

No law can supplant what can be accomplished around the conference table. The average worker has been given a vested interest in the preservation of a private economy that simultaneously gives sympathetic recognition to the need for greater security for all.

Maine labor is capable; it is one of the State's most valuable assets. Maine industry is progressive and praiseworthy; it is the lifeblood of our economic stream.

Labor legislation must be approached with a view of building a stronger relationship and not along lines which tend to enact punitive measures against either labor or management. Legislation to provide equal pay for equal work would be practical.

The purpose of the Maine Youth Opportunity Committee, whose only aim is the development of career opportunities in this State for graduates of Maine schools and colleges, is commendable.

Institutions and Farms

In an approach to the successful operation of our correctional and medical institutions, let us not be hazy in an understanding of our duties and obligations. Whether we discuss a penal institution, a mental hospital or a tuberculosis sanatorium, our fundamental consideration is the return of an individual to useful living at the earliest possible moment.

Adequate housing, proper diet and expert care, whether medical or supervisory, are the essentials over which we should concern ourselves. We must be wise and practical, not visionary, in a final solution of situations which will be placed before this Legislature. We will be derelict in our sworn duties if demand is not made upon those responsible for spending a dollar of value for a dollar of tax money.

Institutional farms must be made to provide a greater part of our staple food commodity requirements, and at a lower cost than can be purchased in the open market.

A study report by the Legislative Research Committee gives basis for discussion of the feasibility of re-employing a farm coordinator within the Department of Institutional Services. A once-stated observation is reiterated, if we can't operate our farms in the black, then let us get out of the farm business.

Youth Problems

In dealing with youth problems, prevention should be a first concern. Development of recreational facilities, utilization of the skill of psychiatry and a workable probation system is a more logical approach than increased spending to provide larger correctional institutions.

Veterans

Mindful that housing legislation will be presented to the Congress now in session and, as a result, an initial approach may be made to a serious problem, it is my suggestion that this Legislature appoint a committee to study low cost housing or authorize your Chief Executive to select and work with such a group.

A Maine committee would be in an excellent position to mesh local needs with Federal legislation, if and when enacted. Should the Federal Government fail of a program, we would have a committee thoroughly conversant with the Maine situation.

It is understood there will be presented to this Legislature one or more measures calling for a bonus to World War II veterans.

Five of the six New England states have voted a bonus, and in view of the fact that Maine paid a bonus to World War I veterans, we should give earnest consideration to any sound proposal for payment of a bonus.

Civilian Defense

The recent war demonstrated the tremendous value of a well-knit civilian defense program. Maine can take pride in her contribution.

The devastating forest fires of 1947 and the uncertain peace now hovering over the world suggest we would be using good judgment if we took steps to re-organize civilian defense on a permanent basis. Such re-organization will permit effective and immediate mobilization of man-power in any emergency, whether it be fire, flood, disease, threat of war or any other cause. Already existing are the agencies, fully equipped, to cope with these emergencies. The need does exist, however, for co-ordination.

Aviation

Increased air transportation, both in passenger and freight categories, makes it advisable to encourage airport expansion and development. In any planning, we must recognize the importance of air transportation to our recreational industry because the airplane has brought distant points comparatively close to Maine. A network of landing fields also has great value in National Security planning. The Federal Government offers much to states and communities interested in airport development, and therefore, it is suggested that a thorough study be made of all angles of the growing aviation industry.

Highways

Highways are an important key to the economic and social progress.

In the face of need for an adequate highway system to meet the demands of up-to-the-minute motor transportation, it is well

for us to institute a searching re-examination of maintenance and construction policies over and beyond the long-range program compiled by the Highway Commission. We have a right to anticipate the most modern and efficient approach to make certain that the State receives dollar value for dollar expended.

The proper program will require courage and vision. It will call for a high quality of leadership in this Legislature because to accomplish it we must set aside sectional interests and place the State as a whole above individual desires.

We must start to eliminate a large percentage of heavy maintenance costs which consume revenues with no real return in good construction. The quicker we get this permanent construction, the sooner we can reduce these excessive maintenance costs.

Our recreation, industry, agriculture, forestry, in fact all resources, depend on good roads for future prosperity. It will be an early aim to confer with the Highway Commission in furtherance of this program from an administrative angle.

Highway Safety

State government no longer can ignore the appalling number of deaths occurring on Maine highways. Statewide organizations and the general public are clamoring that something be done to curb the highway death toll.

These private groups are on the move; the State must keep pace.

How best to approach this untenable situation will be the subject of discussion at a forthcoming statewide safety conference. Some contend Maine is weak in enforcement of highway laws; others say highways are poorly marked. Causes notwithstanding, it is to be anticipated that out of this conference will come definite recommendations to guide us in formulating policies and measures to start Maine back toward an outstanding record in highway safety.

Governmental Practices and State Personnel

We must have economy, and to this end your earnest consideration and cooperation is requested in determining with me whether we are operating at a maximum efficiency and at a cost equitable to the services rendered.

It is my aim to work closely with department heads and employees to the end that we get one dollar of service for each dollar paid. We must eliminate duplication of effort and overlapping authority.

You will receive for consideration one or more requests to adjust the State salary scale and to equalize and continue cost-of-living increases.

My position in this matter is clear. Our governmental employees should be paid salaries in line with private business in order to induce and to hold the proper type of personnel for State service.

In any consideration of cost-of-living and merit increases we must be mindful of the distinction. When we talk merit pay, we refer to salary adjustments designed to reward an employee for faithful performance. Cost-of-living means no more and no less than the words imply. In granting cost-of-living increases, let us be mindful that high prices strike everybody alike. It appears unfair to adopt a sliding scale adjustment.

With this in mind, it is hoped a survey may be made of our personnel problems.

You have my pledge at this time that such laws as we now have and such laws as are enacted will be administered to provide the maximum of service at minimum cost. Regardless of appropriations granted by you, such funds will be carefully administered to secure the best in usage.

Quoddy and State Water Power Development

Much has been said and even more has been written about Quoddy. This project has been brought into sharp focus by recent developments along the international scene and by power shortages. Discovery of mineral resources in areas close to this project re-emphasize the urgency that decision be reached with reference to development.

We must prepare ourselves for an hour of decision. With a Congressional study completed, three possibilities doubtless will present themselves. The Federal Government in cooperation with Canada may undertake the development as a joint project. Our government may ask us to share in development costs or, in lieu of these possibilities, private development may be recommended.

The implications of Quoddy are too vital to be dismissed without due deliberation and study.

Development of hydro-electric power offers great industrial possibilities. Maine is the only New England state with any appreciable amount of undeveloped water power. We should encourage this development without delay, mindful of such projects as are already under way, or are being considered.

State Parks

There is much to be desired in our State park system to provide recreational facilities for our people and for our visitors.

More and more people are finding themselves with unassigned time and in their search for recreation are looking to the State to provide public facilities.

To meet this demand, opportunity presents itself to develop additional facilities at existing State parks. We have shore and mountain areas available which can be developed to provide unusual points of interest to thousands of people. Development of Baxter State Park, already started, must be continued.

We should explore gains which might accrue by establishing trailer colonies within our network of State Parks. Other states attract untold numbers of visitors by offering these facilities.

Development

Maine has more natural resources than are found in any other state. In these resources of forests, recreation, agriculture, minerals and sea and shore products, we have a vast potential wealth that can mean increased employment and economic prosperity.

It has been my desire over the years that Maine might adopt a progressive program of industrial and recreational development around these resources. Such a program, well-conceived and adequately financed, will materially benefit all our people.

We need to make our own people alert. We need more Boosters of Maine. We need to bring more forcibly to the attention of prospective visitors all we have to offer. We need to protect our present business. We need to encourage new growth of business, of industry to furnish greater year 'round employment. We need to keep Maine industry on a sound, competitive basis.

Our people are waiting for such an approach.

Our youth are awaiting the opportunity such a program can offer. They want to remain in this State. It's our duty to see they have the chance.

Your support of this program will be an investment in Maine's future.

To succeed in these objectives we must develop promotional and sales techniques along the lines other states have pursued with increasing success. We must place the force of state government back of our efforts just as other states are doing. We must emulate private business by spending money for development to make money.

Only by conservation, constant research into new avenues of use, and vigorous promotion of these resources among Maine people and Maine industry will this state be able to take her rightful place among progressive and prosperous states.

You are urged to provide the support necessary to permit the State of Maine to survive in the never-ending race for supremacy in the fields of development, conservation and research.

I submit for your serious consideration the establishment of a consolidated department of development, conservation and research with one warden force, thereby eliminating any duplication of effort which may now exist in the department of Sea and Shore Fisheries, Forestry, and Inland Fish and Game. Such an agency would remove basic inconsistencies and possible diversity of objectives which currently attend the over-all approach to related problems by *several* State departments. This consolidation would result in a more efficient utilization of an able, alert group of men making up the several warden forces now functioning.

Fish and Game Licenses

Elimination of the 15-day non-resident fishing license apparently has created situations not anticipated by the 93rd Legislature. It is my recommendation that this action be reconsidered.

Elections

Requests unquestionably will be made of this Legislature to study election laws to the end that simplification and revision might be accomplished. It seems advisable that any study include a proposal to establish run-off elections following a primary in which candidates for statewide and national offices fail to command a majority of total votes cast.

Taxation

We recognize more fully today than ever that our patchwork system of taxation must be revised to establish a sound and equitable base capable of producing sufficient revenue to meet the requirements of both local and State government.

To this end, there will be held in this House of Representatives very shortly a public conference to which will be invited spokesmen from all groups who are interested in this problem. The entire tax structure will be reviewed. Our present sources of revenue will be analyzed and conferees will be told where the money is going. They also will be informed as to the apparent financial needs for continued operation of State government, and will be asked for concrete suggestions for revision and improvement.

From this conference, it is believed that conclusions may be reached which will provide this Legislative body with tangible evidence of what our people desire. If reasonable unity of thought and action can be reached, then your problem will be simplified.

However, it is not going to be an easy or foolproof decision: this matter of tax revision. There can be no inconclusive answer or neat generalization.

The proposed conference will be democracy at work and the initial step in what is hoped may be an equitable tax structure revision.

Pending the outcome of this conference, any personal views which I may have are withheld.

Many of our citizens feel taxation laws, as now constituted, are replete with inequities. Complaint is general against the 20 per cent cigar tax. Repeal of this tax provision is urged upon you.

Conclusion

It has been my aim to acquaint you with some of the problems which confront us as we assume our respective legislative and administrative functions of State government.


In all these matters, references of necessity have been broad in scope. It is completely impractical and undesirable for me to in-

fringe upon the legislative field, yet we must, insofar as ethics permit, work closely for a sound solution of these problems.

While the executive branch will hold to the administration of the law, my time shall be yours just as far as is humanly possible. It is my hope we may confer and even meet informally from time to time to discuss more fully these major issues. Yours is not an easy task. It is my desire to lighten the load whenever possible by sharing in the work. A budget message soon to be presented to this Legislature will discuss the financial aspects of these and other impending matters.

Let these concluding words be the beginning of a new program for Maine. Our people are seeking more progressive leadership. Let us here resolve to break with all in the past that may have been reactionary in its influence. Let us look forward with new vision and with high courage toward the future.

We live in troubled times, but all surrounding us are God-given resources to strengthen our hearts and our hands. We have a great destiny if we will but shape our purpose. That purpose must be to serve wisely and well the people and to build for them and their children a more secure future.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Frederic D. Sawyer". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the title "Governor of Maine".

Governor of Maine