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INAUGURAL ADDRESS
OF
THE HONORABLE
George Bell Timmerman, Jr.
AS GOVERNOR
OF
SOUTH CAROLINA



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January 18, 1955

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF THE HONORABLE GEORGE
BELL TIMMERMAN, JR., AS GOVERNOR OF SOUTH
CAROLINA

IN COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

January 18, 1955

I deeply appreciate the honor conferred upon me. I value the opportunity to serve. I treasure the confidence reposed in me.

Realizing the grave responsibilities facing our State and Nation, I assume the office of Governor mindful of your expectations, aware of my own limitations, but determined to measure up to the challenge of our time.

Our State confronts a critical period in its history. I beseech the cooperation and good counsel of the General Assembly and of all departments of government, and the interest, support and prayers of our citizens.

Our hope for the future is the attainment of those ends that will be beneficial to all.

My purpose is to be of service. I pray for divine guidance in the realization of that goal.

In these first moments as your governor, I could not speak further without first recognizing the career of a distinguished South Carolinian. He has received many honors and has served in many capacities. His has been a life-time of service to his State, our Nation and the world. Some four years ago, he expressed the humble desire to make South Carolina a good governor; today as he steps forward from that office to continue as an elder statesman, James Francis Byrnes carries with him the respect and the good wishes of his beloved State.

PHILOSOPHY OF GOVERNMENT

I am proud to be a South Carolinian. We are citizens of a State rich in heritage from a commendable past which no amount of misreport can destroy. Our history is a record of achievement against almost insurmountable odds.

I am especially proud of those South Carolinians of old. During those days of Reconstruction and the many difficult years which followed, they demonstrated their intelligence by first recognizing the problems which faced them; and they demonstrated the courage of their convictions in solving those problems.

That history has shaped our philosophy of government. It is neither the static thinking of the extreme right nor the erratic thinking of the extreme left.

We believe in a government that is responsive to the will of an informed public; in a government that serves its citizens in the priority of their needs by constitutional means.

We believe in a government that shuns the easy politics of expediency and evaluates proposals in the light of their useful potentialities.

We utilize the experiences of the past, and our knowledge of the present, to build a more promising future.

It is within that philosophy of government that we look to the future.

MAJOR PROBLEMS

I cannot predict precisely what it holds for us, except the challenge from our past to meet our problems boldly, with courage and reason.

In our future, however, lie major problems that have their roots in both the past and the present.

One is our economic health; the other, the crisis of our time. One can be solved because it is confined to the facts of dollars and cents. The other is a problem of human equations, for which there is no easy solution.

KEYSTONES

Our efforts to better our economy depend upon our successes in developing our economic potentials.

The keystones for success in building a better and more prosperous South Carolina are agriculture, industry and education.

Agriculture is the keystone of our economic base;—New industry—the keystone of opportunity;—Education—the keystone of knowledge.

It is toward continued progress in these fields that I shall direct my administration. Our development in these fields will determine our ability to improve our material and human values.

OUR ECONOMY

The stability of our government depends upon the soundness of its fiscal affairs. We have enjoyed conservative government which is the will of our own people, and attractive to industry and business.

Our State has a sound tax structure, founded upon a broad base, distributed among available sources of revenues.

No general overhaul of our tax structure is needed or advisable, but we should continually strive to improve our approach to taxation and, when financially feasible, give relief to those least able to pay.

The surest way to expand our ability to finance these things that are beneficial is to provide new revenue without additional taxation by raising the income of our people.

Since 1929 South Carolina has led every State in the nation in per capita income increase. In 1929 our per capita income was 37 per cent of the national average. In 1952 it was 67 per cent. But our State still ranked 45th in the United States in per capita income. There is considerable room for improvement.

INDUSTRIAL PROGRESS

The key to this is maximum opportunities to increase our citizens' earning power. To provide those opportunities we need new industries with diversification in products and locations, suitable to our farm potential and other natural resources. We need to encourage the development and expansion of locally owned industries, and the further development of our tourist trade into the profitable business that it ought to be.

To encourage new industries to locate in our State, we need to maintain a sound tax structure and a stable government rather than offering concessions which we cannot afford.

Since the end of World War Two, we have witnessed tremendous industrial progress in our State. It now amounts to a total capital investment of approximately 938 million dollars. It has created about 115 thousand new jobs, and new payrolls amounting annually to more than 277 million dollars, exclusive of the H-Bomb plant.

This did not happen by accident. Our industrial development has been encouraged by wise government and prudent men.

We have not exhausted our industrial potential. Our future is as bright now as it was at the beginning. We must work diligently toward further industrial development, especially in those sections of our State where it is most needed.

AGRICULTURE AND LABOR

The encouragement of new industries is also a major factor in promoting a sounder farm economy and a more livable standard for farm families. These industries should be synchronized to our agricultural productivity for the benefit of both industry and our farm people.

South Carolina, of course, wants no industry to exploit our people or our natural resources.

We should guard carefully the rights of labor in all vocations. We can never hope to improve living conditions and opportunities by providing prosperity at the top in the hope that some of it may trickle down. Our economy must be built upward. Every effort must be made to improve the earning capacities and the living and working standards of our people.

Good government does not confine itself to assisting those who are strong of health and mind. Good government must also demonstrate that it has good heart. There are those of our citizens who have lived fruitful lives but who are no longer able to provide for themselves. They are still our citizens and they are our responsibility. We must see to it that the handicapped, the indigent, and the aged receive the comfort and necessities to which they are entitled.

CONSERVATION

With our awareness of responsibility for our human resources goes responsibility for caring for our natural resources. The disaster of a long drought has brought home to us the importance of water conservation. Water is vital to plant life and growth. The rainfall cannot be controlled, but the rain that falls can be; and it should be conserved for use when needed. The establishment of a sound water conservation program is essential to our development and will minimize regulatory controls by increasing the available supply for everyone.

The demands upon water for agricultural, domestic, industrial and municipal purposes require a sound water rights law. It should define water rights in the terms of modern usage and ensure equitable distribution with full protection for all users. Care, however, must be taken to avoid passing a law with provisions which may hamper our industrial progress and the creation of needed opportunities for profitable employment.

PORTS

Another major factor in our economic growth is the development of our State Ports Authority. Our ports link our business and industry with many markets and sources of materials in the nation and around the world.

The textile industry of the Piedmont may ship its products to foreign markets through our facilities more economically than through the ports of another State.

The location of basic woolen industries in the coastal section accelerates the need for adequate facilities to handle imports and exports.

We cannot afford to be "penny wise and pound foolish" with any of our program for new opportunities.

BUDGET

A more immediate financial problem faces us, however. It is a problem of some magnitude, but one which must be solved within specific limitations.

Our forefathers were wise in making a constitutional requirement that the State maintain a balanced budget; that it live within its means. It is sensible government.

To meet the needs of its citizens, our government expands and improves its services. Along with that, it increases its own cost.

The problem facing this administration and the 91st General Assembly is one of increased obligations in the face of declining revenues.

The present revenue outlook is not as reassuring as a new administration and legislature might desire.

Current collections have been below those for the same period of the last fiscal year.

The recent drought and the devastation of Hurricane Hazel were more than sufficient to impress income unfavorably. A surplus by prior appropriation has gone to recurring expenses, except for the creation of a small reserve fund.

With some shades of doubt, I think it may be concluded that current budget expenses may exceed our current revenue; the reserve fund may be absorbed within this fiscal year; and no surplus may be in the offing for the next fiscal year.

With no surplus impending—the reserve fund diminishing—and our income less than anticipated needs—the legislative task of drawing a balanced budget will not be an enviable one.

There is some encouragement, however, in the present business activity which is brisk. The trend in revenue seems to be turning upward, and with it the immediate financial future looks brighter.

That is one major problem.

EDUCATION

The other is the gravest problem that we as a government and we as individuals have faced in modern times. It is the impending

threat of compulsory social mixing of white and Negro children in our public schools.

Regardless of outside efforts to cripple our educational program, we must see to it that all children continue to receive all of the education we can afford.

In the past four years much has been done to provide outstanding school facilities within our laws and within our understanding of the Federal Constitution.

The doctrine of separate but equal schools has been the established interpretation of the Constitution for two-thirds of a century.

In reliance upon that doctrine, our State has made vast investments in separate school facilities for many years. Millions of dollars have been annually appropriated for that purpose.

Within the past four years we have accomplished an educational revolution to achieve equality. More than 124 million dollars has been allocated for school construction and improvements. Two-thirds of that amount has gone to Negro schools.

Our new school construction is the equal of any and better than most in the nation. Our building program has substantially equalized school buildings for Negro children. Many of them attend finer school houses than do many white children.

Yet, as meritorious as our school building program may be, real educational opportunity depends in its final analysis upon the character and quality of teaching.

Children of today receive a better education than their parents received. But there is a need for more good education.

The long future of our State will be influenced by the education of its future citizens.

We cannot hope to have the kind of education that we need until our teachers are adequately paid and double shifts and overloaded classrooms are eliminated.

The control of education and training for children is a local matter and has been traditionally the prerogative of the States and their people.

Our law requires that separate schools be provided for the children of each race and that no child of either race shall attend the schools for children of the other race.

This law applies equally to both races at the same time. It does not require that the schools for one race be better than the schools for the other race.

Any statement that our law is inherently unequal is inherently untrue.

This is the law which the Supreme Court of the United States in the school segregation cases says is unconstitutional based upon dubious conclusions found in partisan writings that were not a part of the official record of evidence in these cases.

This opinion as it respects our law holds for the first time in judicial history that equality of treatment is discrimination.

The present members of the Court disagree with the Federal Constitution as it was understood when it was adopted by the people; as it was understood when they each took an oath to preserve, protect and defend it; and as it was understood by every court in the land—until the members of the present Supreme Court undertook to change it in an effort to legislate out of existence a social institution that is older than the Constitution itself.

When separate schools in a district are unequal, the remedy is not to destroy the schools or the law, but to require that the schools be made equal.

If the time is near when we in South Carolina will have to choose between no public schools with peace and friendly relations on the one hand, and public schools with hatred and strife and discord on the other, it will be the first time an American State has had to make such a choice.

The effort to interfere with the progressive development of school advantages for children in the South where there are large numbers of each race is no doubt pleasing to the Communists and their fellow travelers. They above all others are sufficiently cunning to see the potentialities for sapping the strength of America with the creation of internal social unrest, discord and dissension in so large a section of the United States.

White parents do not wish their children to mix in public schools with large groups of Negro children. Most Negro parents do not want their children to mix with large groups of white children. These parental objections are alone sufficient and should be respected.

Our State has discouraged organizations against Negroes, and it is hoped that the best thought and sentiment of the South will continue to do so; but when Negroes combine against whites, it is inevitable that whites will combine against Negroes and both races will suffer.

Loyal South Carolinians will stand firm against any organized effort to destroy the right of parents to choose what is best for their children.

It is tragic to see our educational progress imperiled by those who practice racial isolation in their own lives while professing to perceive from a great distance that our children should be mixed.

They should ponder the words of a famous former president of the United States, who said:

"My own feelings will not admit of this, and if mine would, we well know that those of the great mass of whites will not. Whether this feeling accords with justice and sound judgment is not the sole question, if indeed it is any part of it. A universal feeling whether well or ill founded cannot be safely disregarded."

With profound respect to him, these words of President Lincoln make him what some would call today "a white supremacist." He was a great humanitarian with no spark of intolerance, but he was also a realist.

The development of future educational opportunities for Negro children will depend in large measure upon preserving the right of each race to attend their own public schools.

I do not speak of what our State as a government intends to do or of what I, as Governor, may recommend that the General Assembly should do. I speak of the inevitable consequences where substantial numbers of each race live in proximity, in the event of any attempt to force the children of the two races to mix socially.

But this problem cannot be solved by the cowardly approach of gradualism, which is the essence of discrimination. Gradualism is selective application of the law. It is cowardly because it seeks to minimize opposition by careful selection of a few victims from time to time. It is discriminatory because it seeks to administer the law unequally. It is a creeping evil that has no place in the government of a free people.

The only acceptable decree that may be rendered by the Supreme Court in the school segregation cases is one that will recognize the right of individual parents to choose what is best for their own children. The people of South Carolina will not tolerate any tampering with the lives of their children by any agency of the Federal Government.

The great constitutional problem facing the American people is how to curb the authority of the Supreme Court of the United States, which has abrogated to itself the power to change the Constitution without consulting the people—a power it was never intended to have and a power that endangers the future freedom of all citizens.

The Congress of the United States has the constitutional authority to return to the States their rightful and constitutional prerogatives,

including the traditional right to regulate their own schools. It could be done by the enactment of legislation curbing the jurisdiction of the Courts.

It is the responsibility of the Congress to curb this power for the future protection of all citizens, and for the preservation of constitutional government.

The same article of the Federal Constitution which creates the Supreme Court vests the Congress with authority to limit the appellate jurisdiction of that Court and the jurisdiction of all other Federal Courts. The Congress can exempt from such jurisdiction all cases concerning our public schools, excepting, if Congress deems advisable, cases involving violations of the separate but equal doctrine.

The failure of Congress to act will require that it share the full responsibility for the current judicial infringement upon constitutional government and upon the freedom of a large segment of the citizens of the United States.

CONCLUSION

My pledge to you is that I shall exert my greatest efforts to preserve the way of life in which white and Negro have learned to live peacefully in close proximity, with an understanding of the problems of each—a way of life in which each keeps racial integrity—a way of life in which the white majority has increased its efforts yearly to provide true equality of opportunity to the Negro minority in schools, and in all other endeavor, except social intermingling.

Perhaps there is nothing that I can say which might serve to prove to each of you how deeply I feel about the future of our beloved State and its people.

But in these last words of this my first and perhaps only inaugural address, I shall attempt to do so.

We must ask God to guide us in the troublesome days ahead. Man alone is neither strong enough nor wise enough. I speak not only of the problem of human relationships in our own State. I speak also of the terrible shadow of war, which constantly overhangs our Nation.

Of one thing we can be certain. You as citizens and I as Governor, only with the help of Almighty God, can meet successfully whatever problems the future may hold.

We must place our trust, our faith, our hope, in Him.