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Inaugural Address
of
OLIN D. JOHNSTON
Governor

To The General Assembly
Of South Carolina



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Regular Session, Beginning January 12, 1943



Olin D. Johnston
Governor.

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Executive Chamber

Columbia

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, distinguished guests and Members of the General Assembly:

Let me take this opportunity to sincerely thank the people of South Carolina for the confidence they have shown in me by electing me to serve as Governor for a second four-year term.

I feel keenly the duties and responsibilities that will rest upon this office during this critical war period, and I am sure that every patriotic South Carolinian agrees with me in the belief that our first consideration must be that we extend every energy to the war effort.

All of us are proud of the way South Carolina has cooperated with the entire war activity. Our men in all of the armed services of the country are carrying on the noble traditions inherited from distinguished South Carolinians in former wars. Our workers in the defense plants are keeping the wheels of industry running twenty-four hours a day, and in many instances these plants have been presented with the Army-Navy "E" award, which represents excellent production and one hundred percent efficient operation. We are proud, too, that there has been no stoppage due to any labor controversy.

We also point with pride to the fact that South Carolina has gone over the top in meeting and going beyond its quota of war bond and stamp sales.

All of these responsibilities we must continue to meet, and we will make every sacrifice that is necessary to win this war.

I urge this General Assembly to keep constantly in mind the importance of refusing to pass any new legislation or allow the imposition of additional taxes that would hamper South Carolina in its zeal for placing the war effort first. We are doing a good job and we must continue to do so.

EDUCATION

Our country is face to face with the most serious crisis in its history. Cunning foes, educated in their own sinister ways, are trying to undermine and destroy the very tenets of our democratic way of life. The great guardians of our democracy are our schools,

our teachers, and our educational leaders. Not only our safety, but also our prosperity, depends upon an enlightened and educated citizenship.

Today our schools are operating under unusual duress and strain, but they are responding to every call of duty with the unequalled patriotism and valor of their leaders and teachers. Of necessity, new courses of study, geared to the war effort, have been introduced in our schools to better fit the youth of our great land for the winning of the war. Patriotic, but tedious tasks, such as rationing, have been performed by our noble teachers without recompense and sometimes without thanks.

At this, my first official opportunity, I express my gratitude to the teachers of South Carolina, but I submit that gratitude is not enough. I pay tribute to our faithful teachers. I also pay tribute to the educational leaders of our State, to Professor A. C. Flora, President of the National Education Association, to Professor Z. L. Madden, President of the South Carolina Education Association, and to our many other outstanding educators. I am justly proud of them. I look to them with trust and confidence. We should not turn a deaf ear to them nor to the interests or programs of the association they represent.

Too long South Carolina has lagged behind other States in the matter of education. Too many of our teachers and leaders are being forced to go to other states, or forced to leave the profession entirely because we have failed to make sufficient appropriations or to pay adequate salaries. Many of our teachers have answered the call of duty and are in the military services. Many have gone to higher paying war jobs, thus leaving an acute shortage of well-qualified teachers which may result in detriment to our children and to our State unless prompt action is taken by this assembly.

The following recommendations to the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina concerning the public schools are earnestly made at this time:

(1) *Increased Compensation for Teachers:* I recommend that the teachers of South Carolina receive a substantial increase in salaries. I also recommend that additional increments be added to the salary schedule in order that experienced teachers may be induced to remain in the profession during the period of life when they are most efficient. Many of the other states have ten or more salary increments and their systems are functioning successfully. When the State had a deficit the teachers were faithful. Now, when

the State is in more fortunate financial position they should not be neglected.

(2) *An Adequate Teacher Retirement System:* I recommend the establishment of an adequate retirement system on a teacher-state basis. In the interest of the welfare of our children some of the older teachers should be retired, but the teacher who has given her best in the line of duty should not be turned away without home or hope. Thirty-five of the forty-eight states have workable retirement systems. Thus, we shall not be venturing into an untried project. Our children and our teachers are as deserving as any in the nation.

School bus transportation in South Carolina should be more closely scrutinized and watched to guard against the overlapping of routes, purchase of buses and repair of buses.

A county-wide bus system should be inaugurated in every county. This would provide saving through wholesale purchase of buses, more efficient service in economical operation, and eliminate overlapping of routes.

When the war is over and conditions are stabilized, then we will be ready to consider the State assuming greater responsibility in the field of school bus transportation.

All of our institutions of higher learning have been greatly helped by having their plants enlarged by the State of South Carolina in participating to its fullest extent with the Federal Government. We must not let these institutions be forgotten during the war, for immediately after the war they will be called upon to full capacity to care for students.

LABOR

It has always been my policy to see that labor and capital receive a square deal. I have advocated in the past many labor measures believing them to be needed in this State. Several of them have become laws and are now rendering a distinct service to both the working man and his employer.

Some of these labor laws need certain amendments and I will suggest in a later message to the General Assembly the needed changes. This General Assembly should study carefully the present labor laws, both State and Federal, with regard to bringing about a closer cooperation between the State and Federal Governments.

OLD AGE BENEFITS

It is recommended that this Legislature require, by appropriate legislation, system of annual accounting and itemization of all expenditures under the Social Security Act showing by counties the amounts spent and to whom paid.

Millions of dollars are now being provided for the aged, the infirmed, the crippled and dependent children of our State and the taxpaying public at large is entitled to know where the money is going and to whom paid.

Funds for this purpose should be increased as much as possible for most of the State appropriation is matched by the Federal Government dollar for dollar.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

I recommend that the present laws as regards unemployment compensation be amended so as to simplify the payment to the employee. If something is not done along this line, we will run into trouble should general unemployment come.

STATE GOVERNMENT

I have recommended to the General Assembly on several occasions a constitutional amendment providing for biennial sessions of the Legislature. I am thoroughly convinced that the present plan of annual sessions is not only unwise, but uneconomical. Annual sessions of the Legislature keep many business concerns from coming to South Carolina and causes business concerns already located here to have dread and fear that some law will be passed taxing or jeopardizing their business.

By meeting biennially the Legislature would save approximately two hundred and fifty thousand dollars every two years. I am informed that only five states in the Union have annual sessions and South Carolina is one of these. Alabama has a quadrennial session. All the other states have biennial sessions. I respectfully urge that this Legislature give its attention during this assembly to provisions of biennial sessions for South Carolina for the people of the State have voted on three separate occasions in favor of a constitutional amendment providing such sessions, but for some unknown reason their wishes have been ignored.

PRIMARY ELECTION LAWS

Since the ruling of the Supreme Court of the United States on primary election laws, we are put on notice that we should wipe

from our statutes all laws pertaining to primary elections except those designed to prevent fraud in elections and to punish those convicted of these violations.

I am firmly convinced that the Absentee Ballot Act (2406 Vol. 2, S. C. Code of Laws for 1932) should be amended in the best interests of fair and honest elections in South Carolina. The application of this law, although theoretically feasible and sound, is often open to fraud. Other states have encountered the same difficulties in the enforcement of the absentee ballot law as South Carolina, I would by no means restrict any constitutional rights of suffrage, but I ask that elections in this State be freed from any taint through the abuse of this law.

POLICE SYSTEM

It is my opinion that South Carolina has an opportunity at the present time to create a centralized State police system, to supplant its many law enforcement agencies that have no coordinating scheme or central supervision. I urge this Legislature to create a unified police system, one that will combine the highway patrol with the Governor's constabulary thereby saving thousands of dollars annually for the State.

Through a unified police system, we could bring into being a State police radio broadcasting station, a centralized agency that would keep complete records of convictions, fingerprint records of all convicted persons, and other similar information deemed very necessary to cope with the increased criminal warfare.

LIQUOR

My position in regard to the wet and dry issue is well known throughout South Carolina. In the campaign of 1934 I declared my attitude to be both personally dry and politically dry, but I told the people of the State that if they voted wet, I would abide by their wishes and sign a reasonable liquor bill.

When the Legislature of 1935 passed the liquor bill, I signed it making the following statement: "I signed this bill, though it is a bitter pill to swallow, but I do not believe that I am bigger than the people of South Carolina and their wishes should prevail."

Since the signing of that liquor bill the people of South Carolina by handsome majority have expressed their opinion in another referendum as being against the legalized sale of liquor. I would be delighted to see their mandate carried out.

TAXATION

The committee on taxation which is a sub-committee of the committee on preparedness for peace has a big problem to solve in recommending to the Legislature ways of correcting in our tax system as many inequities as possible. There are so many inequities in our tax system that time does not permit me to enumerate them. However, I recommend that our income tax law be amended so as to grant an exemption from the State income taxes of all amounts paid to the Federal Government for taxes. I further recommend that stocks of goods in stores (floor tax) be assessed at the same rate as other personal property.

This is no time for new taxes to be put upon the people by the State when additional burdens are being placed upon us by the Federal Government to carry on the activities of the war.

HIGHWAY

The administering of the affairs of the highway department during the next few years will demand the most business-like and efficient handling. This is plainly evident when it is shown that the department needs approximately eight million dollars with which to pay principal and interest on bonds during the year 1943. This is very close to the estimated total amount of our gasoline tax for this same period.

The present drop in the sale of gasoline is becoming dangerously near the point where the department cannot pay its obligations and carry on a reasonable program of existence in maintenance and administration.

The department can be assured that I will lend my aid in helping them pass over the financial chasm that it is facing.

I do not believe that any additional bonds should be sold to do any road building, but it may become necessary if the gasoline tax revenue continues to drop, to sell refunding bonds in order to save the credit of the State. The finance committee of this department, which has already offered to cooperate with me, should keep a close watch on all the financial affairs of this department. I am glad to inform you that this department has already begun to drastically cut its expenditures and try to live within its income as much as possible.

I recommend that the automobile inspection law be repealed or suspended during the war and for one year thereafter. I further recommend that the General Assembly pass a resolution, memorial-

izing Congress, suggesting and requesting that the Federal Government assist the State Highway Department in maintaining the roads during the duration of the war. I feel that the roads of South Carolina are a part of our national defense and should be kept properly repaired.

AGRICULTURE

Since South Carolina is basically an agricultural State, it is appropriate to devote a portion of this discussion to the problems confronting our South Carolina farmers.

Our farmers have never faced a more critical time except in the Reconstruction period. Securing help on the farm is almost impossible.

Rural Electrification spread rapidly for a few years, but is now retarded on account of the war. As soon as possible we must continue again to expand rural electrification, which is badly needed not only to give the rural population many of the comforts of the city, but to remove some of the drudgery.

We should encourage reforestation and soil conservation, and experimental work on any crops that might be properly grown in South Carolina. We should encourage those in charge of inducting men into service to give deference to men on the farms for if this war continues for more than one year, and it looks as if it will, one of the problems of this nation will be feeding our population here and abroad. The committee now appointed on preparedness for peace should study ways and means of setting up a proper marketing system, refrigeration plants and providing adequate facilities for the dehydration of all surplus products of our farms and thereby preventing millions of dollars worth of foodstuffs from going to ruin each year.

FINANCES

The State of South Carolina finds itself in the fortunate position of having at this time a large surplus. No one knows exactly how much it is now, or will be at the end of this fiscal year, so I call upon the General Assembly to guard the finances of the State. The fact that we have a surplus now is no guarantee that we will continue to have one in the future. We cannot see into the days ahead, so it seems wise to keep a portion of this fund intact as the State's operating capital.

I recommend that the greater portion of the surplus, however, be converted into the payment of outstanding bonds of the State that have "call" features and if we have any surplus remaining, we should not allow the money to lie idle when it can be invested in war bonds and draw interest. I recommend if we do not have sufficient amount of bonds of the State that have "call" features, we invest a greater portion of the remaining surplus in war bonds.

From a business standpoint we should keep a small part of the surplus as an operating balance. Any good business man would do this. It would be unsound to deplete the sum entirely.

PENAL BOARD

Our State Penal System will require of the General Assembly careful study and deliberate action. Persons convicted of violations of the law are entitled to certain consideration by the State.

We should strive to rehabilitate the men and women in our prisons. All Juvenile Correctional Institutions should be operated and governed under a separate and distinct board.

Farms owned and operated by the State should provide sufficient acreage for the production of all foods necessary for the sustenance of inmates of both our penal and charitable institutions. More hogs and cattle should be raised on the penal farms.

The State Hospital headed by the able Dr. Fred Williams, is doing a splendid piece of work. The purchasing of supplies at this institution meets with my approval and the approval of every business man with whom I have been able to discuss this institution.

We are praying and hoping for peace to come to this war-torn world, but we should desire the kind of peace that will bring a more permanent peace than the peace after the last World War. We should profit by our past mistakes. This war should be waged until the enemy is thoroughly beaten.

We should now be preparing for peace. We should, with the cooperation of the Federal Government, make plans to guarantee every man when discharged from the armed forces six months of employment in order for him to become readjusted to his place in society. This will help to guarantee our Democratic form of government. After this war we should feel the danger of various "isms." Let us all endeavor to have no "isms" except Americanism.

SHORT SESSIONS

There has been a great deal of criticism in the past concerning long sessions of the Legislature. The seriousness of the times de-

mand that we bend every effort to accomplishing as speedily as possible the legislation absolutely necessary in order to carry on the affairs of our State. I am satisfied that you liberty-loving men will show your patriotism and devotion to your State and nation by accomplishing your task in the shortest time possible.

I offer to each member of the General Assembly my full personal cooperation and that of my office, and I will be pleased to have you call upon me if I can be of service to you at any time.

May God give us the wisdom to perform our tasks according to the oath that we have taken, striving at all times to work for the common good of our fellowman.

Respectfully submitted,

OLIN D. JOHNSTON,
Governor.