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Inaugural Address  
Honorable Richard W. Riley  
Governor, State of South Carolina  
Columbia, S. C.

For Release, 12:00  
January 10, 1979

Governor Edwards, Distinguished Platform Guests,  
Fellow South Carolinians:

It is with a feeling of gratitude and deep appreciation that I accept the responsibility entrusted to me today. To the people of South Carolina who have given me their faith and confidence, I thank you, and I pledge my full efforts and energies to live up to your trust. To my family and to those special friends who have given me their encouragement and support all along the way, I say, thank you, and I will try to live up to your expectations. And to those leaving office today--Governor and Mrs. Edwards and Lt. Governor and Mrs. Harvey--I thank you for your distinguished service to our state.

We gather today on the South steps of this historic State House, and we begin this administration looking South. Nothing could be more symbolic of our future, because we live in times when an entire nation is looking South--looking South for new spirit, looking South for new energy, looking South for new leadership.

It is a role which we accept with enthusiasm in South Carolina, and not simply for the economic or material gains which may come our way. We look forward to a reawakening of human and spiritual values, and we welcome a government built more truly upon basic trust and confidence in the people themselves.

This inaugural, after all, doesn't belong to me--it belongs to the people of South Carolina. It belongs to young people impatient for change and reform; it belongs to older citizens looking for human dignity and financial security. It belongs to newcomers who have come here for career opportunities; and it belongs to South Carolinians whose roots stretch back through a history of hard times and hard-earned victories.

This very State House--scarred by war and made sturdy by years of human labor--symbolizes the character of our people. The years have tested the spirit of this state, and have built strong wills and moral toughness. Out of it all, South Carolinians have forged a deep sense of duty--duty to themselves, duty to their families and to their neighbors, duty to their churches, duty to their state, and to their nation.

It is to these people--and to their sense of duty--that I address myself today. It is you--through your words, your deeds and your votes--who have spoken out so clearly for change, for a new way of doing things, for a new day when government not only belongs to the people, but is the people themselves.

For that reason, I am not here to present a long shopping list of promises and pledges. That would be misleading and unrealistic. Instead, I am here to discuss with you what we can expect of each other in terms of hard work, good faith--and mainly in terms of the duty we have to each other.

For my part--as your new Governor--I see a duty to provide not a bigger government, but a better government; not an all-powerful government which has all the answers, but one which is reasonable, sensible and fair; not a government which is a problem-maker, but one which is a problem-solver. In these complex and demanding days, we need a government modern and capable of keeping pace with the times, and adapting to the changing needs of the people.

For you, I see a duty not simply to accept things as they are, a duty not simply to complain when things go wrong, but a duty to work in partnership with your government to face the challenges of the day. Let's talk specifically today about several of them--the public school system, the economic needs of the state, our energy problems, the quality of human relations in this state, the burden of governmental expense, the issue of public confidence in government itself.

First, public schools. In all candor, and for all our efforts of the last few years, we still have a long way to go. Obviously, there are not going to be any overnight miracles. But we can attack the problems where they count the most--at the early ages. We can establish as our highest priority the needs of children between the ages of three and seven, when their young minds are in their most formative stages. We can have mandatory kindergartens and a much stronger system of early childhood development, and we can strengthen the primary grades. At the end of four years--if we cannot say that South Carolina ranks first in the nation in education--hopefully, we will be able to say that we are first where it counts the most--in the first grade.

That's not so much a promise, however, as it is an invitation to you, the people. It's up to you to roll up your sleeves as involved parents, as caring teachers and administrators, and as concerned citizens to go to work with me. Together, we can build a strong public school system. But to do it, we must put the public back in the public schools. Excellence in public education is our first duty to each other.

Secondly, let's look at economic growth. There should be no question that we will continue to promote the economic growth of South Carolina. As long as there are unemployed or underemployed people, as long as there are towns and counties suffering economic stagnation, as long as there are businesses deprived of their full opportunity for success, we will strive to enhance South Carolina as a good place to work, and a good place to do business. While we will not seek growth simply for the sake of growth, we will develop a sensible and balanced growth plan, which meets the needs of our people, which complements our existing businesses, and which respects the environment of our state. It is not unreasonable to envision a South Carolina of great natural beauty--and great economic strength--at the same time. We will pursue that goal, and we will attain it, and that is a duty for which you can hold me accountable.

Third, let's look at this frustrating problem of energy. To put it plainly, the only way we can solve it is by working together. Whatever may be our energy supplies in the years ahead, we can begin tomorrow to use our resources more wisely. For my part, I will pursue an all-out policy of energy conservation, and I will advance a comprehensive plan to deal with all phases of the energy problem. But all of that is meaningless unless you--the people--get serious about making it work. It's up to you to realize that energy "conservation" is just as important as energy "generation" when it comes to meeting the needs of the future. The time has come for all of us to accept our duty, and to realize that ours is a world which is rapidly running out of time and patience for those who would waste energy.

Fourth, there is another tragic waste we must address forthrightly. I am talking about people--people whose human energy and abilities every day are cut short of their God-given potential. We have passed laws, adopted policies, created agencies and built programs to abolish the evils of prejudice and discrimination. But it is the duty of all of us now--as individual citizens in this great democracy of ours to translate those documents of public will into real progress--economic progress, educational progress, human progress. For black South Carolinians, for women, for the elderly, for the handicapped, for the disabled and the disadvantaged, this is not the time to make more promises. This is the time to make good on promises long overdue. This is a long-standing duty which we all share.

Fifth, we must understand the unmistakable voice of concern over the growth of government in recent years. The size of government has triped in this state in the last ten years, and so has the cost. While we cannot--and will not--sacrifice the essential needs and service of the people, we must find ways to control government's appetite for expansion. If that means tight-fisted budgets, if that means bureaucratic austerity, if that means even major governmental reform, then so be it. The time has long passed when government could spend money as if it had a charge account with the taxpayers; it cannot continue to run up bills which add to the burden of today's taxpayers, and which may bankrupt later generations. As tough as the fight may be, we can win it by sharing this common and difficult duty.

My sixth and final point deals with public confidence in government today. Government can function effectively only when it has the trust of the people. If it is to regain that trust in South Carolina today, I believe more strongly than ever that members of the Public Service Commission should be chosen by merit; and not by politics. It is a matter of more than common sense and fairness; it is something I view as a absolute article of faith I have with the people of this state. As far as I am concerned, the people have spoken on this issue, and I will respond with all my strength and energy, and with all the resources of the Office of Governor. You can be sure that I will not turn back until this fight is won, whether it is next month, or

next year--or however long it takes to produce this victory for the people of South Carolina. There should be no question that this is a duty to you which I gladly undertake.

I approach the Office of Governor believing that your problems are my problems, your concerns are my concerns, your dreams are my dreams. In fulfilling our duties to each other, however, I will not delude myself--or the people of this state--into believing that our fights will be easy ones. The important fights never have been easy and I wasn't elected to seek out easy fights. But by the same token, there is no greater personal joy than working hard, fighting hard, and making this world a little better place to live. The Indian poet, Tagore, had that in mind when he wrote:

I slept, and dreamt that life was joy;

I awoke, and found that life was duty;

I acted, and behold, duty was joy.



As the nation looks South in the years ahead, it will find here more than a warm climate and a chance for economic gain. It will find a people with a special perception of this nation's needs in the 1980's. It will find a people who recognize that our resources are not unlimited. As America looks South, it will find a people who accept the new realities of limited natural resources, limited energy and limited money to do the jobs ahead. At the same time, it will find a people not limited in their commitment to get on with the job of human progress and human service.

Instead of promising to solve problems with more money and bigger government, we pledge to address those problems with a partnership of duty shared by people and their government. As the nation looks South, let it find here in South Carolina a people still striving for greatness. But let it also find a place where people are building not just a great state, but a good state, not just a bigger state, but a better state, not just a richer state, but a happier state.

Today, as I embark on four years of leadership to this state, I accept my duty to you, the people, with every ounce of energy and ability within me. In the words of the poem by Bennie Lee Sinclair of Greenville, as read earlier by Representative Woods:



What shapes our dreams will take

We now decide; government that cares, laws

That can be strong, and yet equate, a system

Pledged to educate both mind and heart

In achieving the potential of our state.

I begin my administration today with the deep gratitude  
of one who loves South Carolina, and who loves each one of you.

Thank you, and God Bless You.