

**INAUGURAL ADDRESS**  
**of**  
**MILLS E. GODWIN, JR.**  
**GOVERNOR**

**TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**and**

**THE PEOPLE OF VIRGINIA**

**SOUTH PORTICO, STATE CAPITOL  
RICHMOND**

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**MILLS E. GODWIN, JR.**

—oOo—

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, distinguished guests, members of the General Assembly, my fellow Virginians.

Today the people of Virginia break with a tradition a century old, that no man shall twice serve as Governor of this state. I am humbled to be the instrument of that departure.

I do not deceive myself that our people have abandoned such a long-standing custom out of personal devotion, nor am I persuaded that in desperation they sought refuge in the past against the restlessness of the present or the uncertainties of the future.

If they looked back, it was to timeless principle, not to acts or attitudes that time has passed by.

Whatever their reasons, whatever their respective choices two months ago, I am acutely conscious that in accordance with the democratic process, I have today become the Governor for all the people of Virginia.

I am conscious too of the record of my predecessor, the Honorable Linwood Holton, who has carried forward many programs of lasting benefit to this Commonwealth.

From these same steps eight years ago, I spoke to you of material needs, of schools and colleges and highways and hospitals, the tools of greater opportunity for every citizen. In a burst of effort and sacrifice that overturned still other traditions, our people and their elected representatives, provided them.

From that time to this, Virginia's rank among the states has steadily increased in education, the first door of universal opportunity.

But that great work is not complete. We must be certain still that no Virginian, young or old, rich or poor, whatever his endowments, is denied a place in the classroom or the laboratory or the library, and likewise that no place already provided goes unoccupied.

We must take care also that from those new buildings come young people accomplished in the basic learning skills without which they have little chance in life, and beyond these, that their talents are sharpened for careers that fulfill their lives, not just for the drudgery of daily labor.

New needs also beckon us, as do old problems grown larger with time; an answer to urban traffic congestion, growing concern for our environment, swollen welfare rolls and crime statistics, continued penal reform, and others clamoring for more attention.

The forward thrust of public services must and will continue, despite whatever difficulties arise, taking care first that what has been done is wisely used.

More recently has come a trial that may cast a cloud of curtailment over our plans, the threat to our supply of the prime mover of our economy and the silent servant of every citizen, our energy.

Whatever the extent of shortages to come, whatever sacrifices we may be called upon to make, I intend to see that they are shared equally by every citizen, and that Virginia receives fair treatment among the states.

No less important than our peoples' comfort is their safety, in their homes, on the streets, in public places, and their peaceful enjoyment of their property.

Whatever may be our private definitions of freedom, however heated the argument over property versus human rights, ours is still a government of laws and not of men or of pressure groups or partisans of any kind.

In Virginia, no citizen or group of citizens is above the law, just as no citizen, whatever his station, is unworthy of its protection or below its impartial measure of justice.

Among the constitutional duties of the Governor of Virginia is one to see that the laws be properly enforced. I intend to discharge that obligation fully and completely. The preservation of civil peace and tranquility is not negotiable in Virginia.

But these material assurances are no more than our people have a right to expect. Still unmet is a great yearning for spiritual reassurance, for their faith is tested at every hand.

The moral strength that sustained the men of three tiny ships across a mighty ocean, that carried families across a hostile desert in prairie schooners, that fought a war across two oceans and three continents and rebuilt the nations of our enemies when it was won, now seems lacking in high places and in countless lesser endeavors.

The values we thought inviolate, the institutions we relied on to preserve them, are scoffed at or bitterly attacked.

The very air we breathe and the water we drink are the subjects of distressing charge and countercharge.

The discordant choruses that clamor for our attention would have us ignore our sense of history and believe our country has irrevocably lost its way.

And yet the rising expectations of our people, their impatience with solutions still imperfect, speak to our unparalleled success as a nation, not to our failure.

As often as we have taken to the battlefield in defense of freedom, just so often have we returned to re-examine our principles, to make them more worthy of the sacrifices we made there.

The ordeal of Tory against patriot attended our nation's birth. Brothers from the North and from the South were first locked in mortal combat before we could weld together our several states. Two world wars and two armed conflicts in far off Asia occurred before our people could be intermingled into a truer democracy.

Each time the conflict was followed by the heat of controversy, and each time we refined still further the principles that never change, the principles of unfettered freedom, of impartial justice, of unimpeded pursuit of happiness for every citizen, of institutions responsive to the public voice and accountable to the public will, of leaders earning with their personal integrity the right to be believed and to be followed.

And so it will be again if we keep our faith, if again we exercise our individual citizenship toward the common goal.

Let us each and every one resolve that his small corner of the conflict shall be ended, by speaking positively to the furthering of basic principles in which we all believe, not merely negatively to those imperfections with which we take issue.

Let us abandon the hunt for someone or something we can blame for whatever offends or aggrieves us. Where the people govern, no citizen can hold himself completely blameless if government be found wanting.

Let us convert our concerns over what we feel is wrong into positive and peaceful work toward what is right.

If there is a fitting place where this latest challenge to examine our principles should be resolved, it is Virginia, where those principles were first cemented into organic law.

If there is a time, it is now, when the issue has been joined and decided by our people, from whose judgment there is no appeal.

If we need an incentive, if we need a flag to look to or a drum to follow, let it be our nation's Bicentennial, for which we need even now to be preparing.

Nowhere can that event be filled with more meaning, nowhere is its purpose better remembered than in a state from whence came the philosophy of revolution, its first battle cry and its commander in chief; a state that inspired the words of the Declaration of Independence, that gave the model for the nation's constitution, that offered the final battleground of freedom from foreign domination and sent to the new nation's capital its first president; a state which gave away an empire that once stretched across the Mississippi in order to form a new nation of new states.

We cannot do less than take the lead in this observance, in its outward pageantry and in its inner resolve that from the ravages of war, from the divergent cries of opposing elements, we can once again weave a lasting tapestry of harmony and progress for this Mother of States, and we ourselves be an example of integrity and responsible citizenship for an anxious nation.

To that end, there is inspiration still in the venerable words of our own Virginia constitution: "That no free government, or the blessings of liberty, can be preserved to any people, but by a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality, and virtue; and by frequent recurrence to fundamental principles. . ."

In the days to come then, let it be our purpose and our prayer that disparagement may give way to discussion, altercation distill into alternatives, integrity disarm distrust, and principle rise above partisanship, to the end that God's greater purpose of perfect freedom for all mankind may be better served throughout this Commonwealth.

And let this resolve echo from the mountains to the sea, that this shall indeed be a government of all the people, a faithful attendant to their needs, a jealous guardian of their liberty, a worthy object of their trust and their support, that their spirit might be refreshed and their faith restored.



