

ADDRESS
of
MILLS E. GODWIN, JR.
GOVERNOR

TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
MONDAY, JANUARY 14, 1974

SENATE DOCUMENT NO. 3A

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Department of Purchases and Supply
Richmond
1974

ADDRESS
of
MILLS E. GODWIN, JR.

—oOo—

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, distinguished guests, members of the General Assembly of Virginia:

As I speak to you once more on behalf of our Commonwealth, I am conscious above all else of how much the pace of change has quickened since last we met, of how far and in what new directions the overturning of traditions we began together eight years ago has now progressed. It is to new times that we must continue to address ourselves.

In these historic chambers, we would be cold indeed if we did not take comfort from the past, but we cannot hope to re-create the past. We cannot succeed these next four years by simply putting new wine in old bottles.

And yet our people have expressed to us a need for assurance that there are values, that there are leaders they can trust, that the institutions in which they still believe will be in good hands.

Surely they expect from us now the highest order of statesmanship, and I am certain that in the members of this body, they will not be disappointed.

After fourteen years as a member of the General Assembly, four more as Lieutenant Governor and four as Governor, I am deeply conscious of our respective prerogatives, and that yours include the shaping of the laws of the Commonwealth and the setting of financial goals and limitations.

By reason of that experience, I know that your priorities and mine must begin with what is best for Virginia, and that whatever our political identification, partisanship must never prevent us from supporting the cause of Virginia's progress.

There is evidence on every side that our people expect the forward thrust of recent years to continue, and our public services to keep pace still with their rising expectations and with the new economic growth which is still setting new and higher marks.

Just as surely, they would prescribe financial limits, demand well conceived priorities, and seek a closer accounting of the tax dollars they have entrusted to us.

And coursing through our every effort they would expect the guarantee that every man and woman enjoy to the fullest the equal rights set forth in Virginia's Constitution, the full utilization of their talents, and the unre-served recognition of their contributions to our society and economy.

In order that there be no misunderstanding, I am today instructing my staff, together with appropriate personnel, to draft an executive order reaffirming a long-standing policy that employment by this Commonwealth shall be open to all on an equal and impartial basis, without regard to race, color, sex or religion, and that the various assurances that this policy will be universally followed will continue.

ENERGY

In all our considerations, particularly those requiring financing, we face a crisis of unknown proportions in the restricted supplies of basic energy on which all our efforts are so dependent. We cannot expect to do business as usual when our tax revenues, the normal operations of industry and business, and the warmth and comfort of every citizen may be in jeopardy.

This matter has first claim on our attention. It warrants the cooperation of every group, every business, every individual in the Commonwealth.

I intend to do whatever is necessary under the emergency powers granted to the Chief Executive by our Constitution and existing statutes. If further powers are needed, I will not hesitate to request them before adjournment of this session. Meanwhile the extended shadow of these shortages should be ever in our minds, particularly as we approach the allocation of funds for the coming biennium.

EDUCATION

As we begin to consider other priorities, we turn inevitably to the true and tested fundamentals of good education and good jobs. The more complex our society and economy become, the less the opportunity for those with limited knowledge and skills. While they may experiment with many life styles, our young people will at last discover that only if they are prepared for a career which challenges their talents can they enjoy an unre-sstricted pursuit of happiness.

One of our priorities in education is to be certain that it is in fact a preparation for satisfying work as well as for life. Your crowning achievement towards that end was the establishment of Standards of Quality for our public schools.

As a beginning, we must see that kindergartens are established everywhere with state financial assistance to applicable localities as funds permit. When there is so much more to be learned, we cannot handicap some of our children with a late start.

Long ago, we abandoned the little red school house. Today there is evidence in some quarters that we may also have abandoned the efficiency with which the three R's were taught within its walls. And yet young people who cannot read, write or figure have little chance for success in life.

I propose urgently that you promote throughout the Commonwealth special programs to improve reading skills, without which little further learning can take place. Some of our own school divisions, many in other states, are already at work to find the best way of determining the cause of reading problems among specific students and of applying the most effective remedies. Your underlining of this vital necessity will stimulate more of our own people.

Once basic learning skills have been acquired they should be applied to a life's work, towards training for a career, recognizing the dignity of working with the hands as well as the mind, for we are at least as dependent on our plumbers as we are on our philosophers.

To be effective, this training must be aimed at the market place, with sufficient counseling to assure that each student's skills will be put to work.

Nor can we cram every student into a career stereotype. There must be greater emphasis on special education for the gifted and for the slow learner, for students with special problems as well as those who fall within the norm. For this, we must overcome a shortage of specially trained teachers.

In the field of higher education, our community college enrollments are still telling us to plan for a standard of two more years of schooling within the reach of all who can benefit from the experience.

Some of our rural community colleges which initially were not overflowing when their doors first opened are now demonstrating significant growth, and many of our urban sites are grossly inadequate. Here in Richmond, the community college commemorating the late Lieutenant Governor of this state has half again as many students as the installation was designed to accommodate. All together our community colleges have in their classes more than a third of our total higher education enrollment. We must move towards full implementation of our plans as rapidly as funds become available.

Particularly heartening to me has been the dramatic increase in enrollment of minorities in our community colleges, as they recognized in greater numbers the unique opportunity offered by these specially designed facilities.

And let us not be misled into the belief that all our four year colleges and universities can halt their growth. Many of our community college students will soon be pounding on their doors, as will our young men of draft age who are now learning in their separate ways that the satisfaction of fully developed talents can hardly be achieved outside the classroom.

Nor can we ignore our graduate programs. If we have enough specialists in some disciplines, we are short in others, and many with graduate degrees need re-training, where they are too specialized for the changing emphasis in our technology.

But along with the millions we must pour into the educational process at all levels, let us add a new measure of accountability. For years, we have asked the people of this state to contribute ever more heavily to the education of their children with no guarantee of results beyond a general promise of greater opportunity.

With the understanding that abilities and backgrounds vary, I believe our people are entitled to the assurance that their children will be able to read and write in accordance with their grade level, and that their report cards actually reflect a genuine grasp of the subject matter and the ability to use it, or if this is not the case, then specific reasons why any disparity exists and advice as to corrective measures which may be taken.

We have accepted, as we should, responsibility for formulating standards of quality in education. It seems to me we cannot discharge that responsibility to the fullest unless we have a means of measuring whether those standards are in fact being met, in buildings, in equipment and in teaching performance.

As we move out of a time of teacher shortages, I would hope that members of the teaching profession itself would lend their cooperation to school boards in developing personnel evaluation procedures for selecting and advancing individual teachers which reflect their ability in the classroom.

Likewise at the college level, our people are entitled to assurance that tuition payments are being applied to the education of the student, that faculty members are spending a reasonable amount of time in the classroom, that buildings are being used to maximum efficiency and built with a minimum of duplication, and that libraries, computers and other mutually useful teaching tools are in fact being utilized effectively and economically.

If we are to have accountability in higher education, we must have an accountant. I suggest you approach the various studies and recommendations regarding the State Council of Higher Education with this assignment in mind.

Finally, I believe our people are entitled to schooling for their children uninterrupted by confrontations between teachers and those who employ them.

My record speaks to my pursuit of higher salaries and benefits for teachers and faculty members. It is equally clear in opposition to union membership for public employees.

There should be no barriers to free exchange of ideas, suggestions and objectives among teachers, administrators and governing bodies, so that understandings can be reached short of taking up rigid adversary positions.

WELFARE

When I assumed office eight years ago, there were 74,000 people on Virginia's welfare rolls. Today there are over 200,000. The most recent study on welfare eligibility indicates that far too many are being paid excessive amounts or should not be paid at all.

From March through September of 1973 alone, additional investigation resulted in 5,000 ineligible recipients being removed from our welfare rolls at a saving of \$3 million. More can be saved and still insure that every citizen who truly needs help shall receive what is needed.

Recognizing that two separate legislative committees are completing thorough and exhaustive studies of the entire Virginia welfare program, I offer herewith certain steps that to me seem essential.

One is a means of strengthening our child support statutes, including easy and inexpensive access to the courts for enforcement.

Another is to determine the level of supplementary services the Commonwealth will provide to the aged, the blind and the totally and permanently disabled, since federal funding has taken over the actual grants of these programs.

A third is supplemental aid to those 47 localities who must establish food stamp programs under federal mandate as of next July. In this we have no alternative under present federal statutes.

Most important, I hope the committees will recommend simplification and central administration for the Aid to Dependent Children program, by far our largest and most expensive.

By changing from the composite of several different eligibility determinations to a flat grant approach and by using computers for cross checking with employment and other records, it is estimated that \$5 million can be saved.

Under centralization, records would be kept and checks mailed from Richmond, but case workers would still go about their duties at the local level. Since this program is supported entirely with state and federal funds, local welfare budgets would not be materially affected.

Your own studies I am certain will confirm the obvious, that in practice, public welfare cannot be separated from public health, mental health, and many other public responses to human needs. And yet in our statutes we treat each of these separately, our legislative and executive actions tailored to whatever voice seems loudest at the moment. In each of these categories, we have reacted almost automatically to federal concepts of our responsibilities, which we have accepted in return for federal funds.

There is a growing need to establish a philosophy and a set of priorities for Virginia over the full range of human needs which should be met from the public purse, as a guide to this body and to the Governor in determining future relationships among our various state agencies and between them and their counterparts in Washington.

I propose to appoint a blue ribbon Virginia Commission on Human Resource Priorities from among the most outstanding Virginians I can find in order to accomplish that long-range objective. The Commission of Higher Education and the Outdoor Recreation Commission offer us precedents we have followed to our immense profit.

Obviously, such a project will require financing in the form of a budget item approved by this body. I trust you will act favorably thereon.

CRIME PREVENTION

Fundamental to all our human needs is the protection of society. Official crime figures for our section of the country indicate that only about one reported major crime in four results in an arrest. In the nation as a whole, 65 percent of all major crimes are committed by men or women with criminal records.

These are dismal statistics. We must take action to reduce them.

To that end, there should be established within the Department of State Police a Division of Investigation, created as a separate entity within the department, with its own staff assembled for its individual expertise in criminal investigation. Obviously it would be closely allied in function with the Division of Criminal Records.

There is general authority for me to take such action within the appropriate statutes, but I feel such a division should have the added emphasis, and the added safeguard, of specific statutory re-enforcement. Legislation will be offered you to that end, including funding and a delineation of where

such a division would assume original jurisdiction and where it would be only a specialized technical unit on call to local police and sheriffs.

In proposing such a move, I am acutely aware that the primary responsibility for the preservation of law and order rests at the local level, and indeed it should continue to do so. And yet our society has become so mobile and crime itself so widespread, so complex and so organized, that I feel a special unit with state-wide authority is essential if our people are to be protected properly from major crimes.

CORRECTIONS

A part of that protection is the confinement and rehabilitation of lawbreakers. My meetings with members of the State Crime Commission and its consultants and with other knowledgeable persons convince me that this entire function at the state level is in need of attention, both as to programs and personnel, and I will not hesitate to take whatever remedial action may appear necessary.

Specifically, I have directed the Secretary of Human Affairs, together with a member of my staff, to undertake a personal review of the furlough and work release programs. Carefully administered, these can be cornerstones of rehabilitation. Unwisely used, they can be potential hazards to public safety.

At the state penitentiary, the State Crime Commission's immediate recommendations are now being implemented, although they may require additional funds above the \$500,000 already authorized.

Beyond these, I have instructed the Secretary of Human Affairs to stop immediately the automatic transfer of convicted felons direct from the courtroom to the penitentiary for diagnosis and treatment. Hereafter, only the obvious security risks will go first to Spring Street, and the total population there will continue to be reduced by shifting certain prisoners to other facilities, where this will not endanger the public. I have also ordered every precaution taken to keep from mixing new inmates and older residents.

I believe there should be constructive training and humane treatment of imprisoned lawbreakers, but I do not believe that a man or woman who steps outside the law should be pampered in the course of paying a debt to society.

I believe that a citizen detained by the state has a right to the safety of his person and his possessions from intrusion by his fellow prisoners. Law and order cannot stop at the prison gate.

But there should never be any doubt as to who is in control of our penal institutions, or that swift and forceful action will be taken if that control is placed in jeopardy.

The steps taken at the penitentiary will only make the best of an undesirable situation, and should not delay the phasing out of that outmoded institution at the earliest possible moment. Nor should there be any untimely delay in completing the two projects you have already launched to replace it, unless some evidence can be advanced that they are not the most prudent solution. I would hope that any review of specific plans and programs you might think profitable could be completed in time to take final action during this session.

I do endorse for your consideration at this session the recommendation coming to you from various sources that the functions of welfare and corrections be separated. Many years ago, in a day when government was much simpler, these two were merged as part of an administrative reorganization. More recent experience has convinced me that this marriage of convenience should now be annulled. The question has been studied for at least a quarter of a century. It is time for action.

As you approach the details, I commend to you the State Crime Commission's suggestion that the corrections side include three separate functions under one administrator, a division to operate the institutions, a division of youth services and a division of probation and parole with sufficient staff to provide the services to the courts and to the offenders for which these two services are designed.

One of our major goals in corrections at the state level is to avoid for the young first offender the shock of direct and sometimes brutal contact with hardened criminals. We should provide the same assurance at the local level.

Accordingly, I recommend that you provide new authority for state standards covering community-based procedures and facilities, to the end that rehabilitation may begin on the occasion of the first offender's first contact with the correctional process.

Finally, as a major deterrent to ultimate crimes against the person, I urge you strongly to reinstate the death penalty as an option of the jury in at least these instances: murder of a law enforcement officer in his line of duty; murder in connection with rape or arson; and a second conviction for first degree murder.

MENTAL HEALTH

Virginia has made real progress in recent years in the field of mental health, establishing regional treatment and custodial facilities to relieve somewhat the crowding at our immense centralized institutions.

Still to be realized are a sufficient number of community mental health facilities to avoid the exposure to mental hospital confinement for citizens with low level disorders and to ease the return of custodial patients to the environment from which they came.

About a third of our custodial care patients are elderly citizens who have lived useful and productive lives but who are no longer able to earn a living for themselves and yet are not being supported by their families. At present, they have nowhere else to go but into the state's custodial care. We must find another way.

Another third of our mental health population consists of persons afflicted with the disease of alcoholism who turn to our mental hospitals when their symptoms become acute, but return in a few days to their communities without remedial treatment of any kind.

And yet the statistics tell us and our highway death toll confirms that the misuse of alcohol is a greater danger to the individual and to society than the misuse of drugs. Clearly then, it is an issue to which the state and her localities must address themselves. I hope to have more specific measures for your consideration on another day.

Also confronting us in the field of mental health are difficult questions as to the propriety and adequacy of our commitment procedures.

I know you share my concern and abiding interest in making certain this entire function of government continues on the high road.

TRANSPORTATION

Among its potentially positive results, the energy crisis has reminded us that we are a nation largely dependent on wheels. Our need is for a balanced transportation program, reflecting various requirements and flexible enough to meet the demands of change and growth.

Obviously we must complete the interstate and arterial highway systems. Priorities beckon to carry Interstate 66 to the Potomac River and to complete the gap in Interstate 64 between Lexington and Clifton Forge.

Enough has already been completed on these systems to turn our attention to feeder roads, especially those essential to bringing the products of the farm to market.

Northern Virginia presents the unique problem of one of the nation's fastest growing metropolitan areas attempting to squeeze its working population twice a day through the narrow funnels of Potomac River bridges. Some of the most expensive Virginia highways, including special bus lanes, cannot cope with the resulting backup.

The area's localities have already assumed a \$200 million debt toward a mass transit system, using highway funds for a portion thereof. The General Assembly at its last session contributed \$2.5 million from the General Fund.

Traditionally, mass transit has been locally financed and locally administered, but the size of the problem in Northern Virginia and other areas of concentrated population warrant state help.

At the eastern end of Virginia's urban corridor, another major metropolitan area is divided by the rivers emptying into Hampton Roads, their crossings historically financed by tolls.

Our firm objective should be to remove all the tolls from these crossings, some of which have been in effect since 1929 and before. I am delighted at the prospect that the residents of Tidewater may cross the James, the York, the Rappahannock and Hampton Roads toll-free before the end of next year.

Here at the hub of the urban corridor in our capital city, we face still a different problem, the combination of suburban traffic surging back and forth to the core city, and through traffic north and south and east and west seeking a way around the resulting congestion.

Almost as spectacular as the increase in highway mileage has been the growth of air transport within, and to and from, the Commonwealth. Many a small city or town is now graced and its economy bolstered by its own airport. The combination of passenger and freight has brought total Virginia transport dollars from aircraft close to the total from rail transport.

Still to be realized is the full potential of the two international airports in Northern Virginia, particularly the magnificent facility at Dulles.

This variety of problems, all inter-related, calls now for a more broadly based transportation grouping, as a planning, coordinating and funding agency. I suggest that you create such an agency by expanding and renaming the State Department of Highways and the State Highway Commission as the State Department of Transportation and the State Transportation Commission.

The department is already deep into planning and coordination of mass transit and will be able to supply additional funds under amendments to the Federal highway laws. In addition, I suggest that you might consider transferring to the newly named agency the State Division of Aeronautics.

This would also be the time to enlarge the representation on the State Transportation Commission to include at least one representative for each of our ten congressional districts, exclusive of the transportation commissioner.

While our railroads are an integral part of the transportation picture, the interplay of state and federal regulations indicate their supervision should remain with the State Corporation Commission.

The Virginia Ports Authority involves special factors which persuade me it too should remain as an independent agency, and also that it should continue to receive your close attention and support.

The combined ports of Hampton Roads are now second only to New York City on the East Coast and have exhibited commendable leadership in the move towards containerized freight which has revolutionized ocean transport.

Trade through our ports is multiplied many times before its total impact on our economy comes to an end, and hence the return on tax dollars spent is enormous.

Separate from creation of this newly named agency, I would suggest greater adherence in your legislative deliberations to the Uniform Traffic Code, partly as a convenience to visitors, but primarily as an enhancement to traffic safety, which remains an unsolved problem.

THE ENVIRONMENT

With the energy crisis forcing a number of difficult choices upon us, we are entering a critical time of evaluation in our efforts to protect our total environment from our own excesses. We dare not run out of energy, and yet we dare not return to lesser concerns for clean air and clean water and the preservation of Virginia's matchless natural endowments. We must strike an equitable balance.

You have made commendable strides in land use planning, protecting our coastal wetlands, regulating strip mining, controlling sedimentation, environmental assessments of construction by the Commonwealth as an example to others, and the launching of widespread planning for still greater accomplishment.

Thus it would seem an inappropriate time to create a major new state agency combining the weight of all those boards and commissions now concerned in various ways with environmental matters. Rather it would seem better to resolve this pending issue on an interim basis, which perhaps your own Virginia Advisory Legislative Council committee will recommend, until the Commission on State Governmental Management can suggest a permanent solution.

Legislation passed in crisis is seldom well considered. In so vital a cause, it would be better to resolve this question in the light of further information and in an atmosphere of calm deliberation.

Meanwhile, I would suggest in the interest of efficiency that the Governor's Council on the Environment become an official agency under the Secretary of Commerce and Resources where it could have interplay with agencies directly concerned with its functions.

I do strongly suggest that you provide for a study of available drinking water potential in the Commonwealth, requested by the State Water

Control Board, as a vital ingredient in the environmental picture. We cannot today complete an environmental study of possible water impoundments in Piedmont Virginia without considering the impact of a possible water shortage on the environment in the cities of the Tidewater.

TAXES

Our Virginia tax structure is a landmark of sound, balanced, responsible government. Any changes should be approached in this light.

It seems obvious to me that the budget requests of our state agencies on the one hand and the possible reduction of various revenues because of the energy crisis on the other preclude any major reduction in taxes, and I do not propose one to you. Nor do I propose any tax increase.

I do propose an upper limit on property taxes for persons 65 years of age and living on low fixed incomes, reimbursing the various localities from state funds.

Limitations are already in effect in some of our cities. The cost is reasonable.

You are aware, I am sure of recent court decisions requiring uniform assessment for the same classes of property across Virginia, with the responsibility for uniformity resting with state government. This is typical of the miscellaneous but possibly potent problems which may arise in the tax field.

THE BUDGET

I have already suggested caution in projecting revenues for the coming biennium, recognizing that they were made without the benefit of recent economic developments.

Depending on the final balancing of the budget for the current biennium, there may be a short fall to be made up. Any revenue estimates made now may be subject to economic restrictions no one can now predict.

By the time you must vote on a final budget bill, perhaps we will have a better insight into the revenue picture. If my fears appear well founded, we may have to resort to conditional appropriations or some other precautionary measure.

It would be an administrative disruption of the first magnitude and a cruel disappointment to our people's expectations if I were forced to withhold expenditures for various programs you will have approved because the revenue projections were overly optimistic.

EFFICIENT STATE GOVERNMENT

Among your efforts to maintain and improve the efficiency of state government has been the creation of a governor's cabinet, bringing associated departments together under one canopy in order that they might more efficiently serve the public, and reducing the number of official channels into the governor's office. The cabinet concept has been in existence only a little over 18 months, not enough time for an accurate evaluation of its effectiveness. As we continue with the cabinet arrangement, I trust that the Commission on State Governmental Management will focus on its worth and potential in its own extensive studies.

Other efficient management considerations await you, including cramped office space, critical parking problems, full coordination of data processing facilities, and the recruitment of personnel with specific skills to direct many of our complex and highly specialized operations.

STATE EMPLOYEES

In the last analysis, efficient government depends more than any other factor on our dedicated state employees, for whom over the years I have accumulated such a high degree of respect. Certainly their compensation and working conditions should reflect at least those of their counterparts in the private sector.

Recognizing that the Commission on State Governmental Management may have recommendations, I suggest to you that several matters are in need of attention. Most pressing perhaps is a prompt review of state pay days where a recent change has generated dissatisfaction. Others include incentives for employees at the top of the salary scale, compensation for accumulated sick leave, improved retirement options, and the availability of tax sheltered annuities now offered educational personnel.

For my own part, I intend to utilize an Employee Advisory Committee as a means of assuring employee participation in any further improvements to benefits and working conditions.

CAMPAIGN PRACTICES

We have made great progress in Virginia in improving the electoral process and protecting the integrity of the franchise. My own recent experience and reports from other areas convince me that further precautions are necessary with respect to the source and the amounts of campaign contributions.

The Virginia Fair Campaign Practices Act has been a salutary influence, particularly its requirement of financial disclosure. I recommend that the

General Assembly consider the erection of additional safeguards against undue influence from within or without the state against contributions which seem to place a public official under an unacceptable obligation to any individual or group.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

I believe as I am sure you do, that we must support clean air and clean water and the things that go to make up the quality of life. But among these is also the need to sustain and improve the standard of living of our people. In this endeavor, our prime ingredient is industrial development.

This past year, with its record number of new jobs created by new corporate citizens and by the expansion of established industries, indicates that the resurgence of Virginia and the South has not lost its momentum, and suggests that our efforts at attracting new industry cannot in any way be lessened.

In fact, our emphasis now might well be toward selecting those industries which best complement our Virginia economy, and towards as nearly perfect a match as we can achieve between a new industry and the community best able to use its assets and serve its needs.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

As our economy becomes at the same time more complex and more disoriented by changing conditions, the individual consumer will become an even greater concern to state government. You have provided the machinery which you can adjust to the needs as they arise.

One of those is already with us, the citizen facing protracted legal action or catastrophic loss as a result of an automobile accident. I would support a fair and equitable no-fault insurance statute, retaining the citizen's right to appropriate court action where the alternative would be disastrous.

Our housing picture in Virginia is not an enviable one. In order to give added emphasis to the program you have established, I suggest that you consolidate the three housing agencies under the Secretary of Administration as a line function, instead of the present separation of authority and powers.

RECREATION

Eight years ago I recommended and endorsed a ten-year plan for the preservation of Virginia's matchless natural endowments by various means and their enjoyment by our people through the purchase and development of a network of new state parks. I am concerned, as I know you are, that our original timetable has fallen so far behind.

The budget presented to you on Friday suggests as a remedy the use of the general obligation bond authority which we included in the Constitutional revision of 1969.

I am in accord with the objective of speeding up the schedule for the Virginia Outdoors Plan. I do not oppose the principle of using general obligation bonds for this purpose. My reservations stem from fresh contact with the mood of the voters from one end of Virginia to the other, reinforced by the prospect of more gasoline shortages.

It would be a major setback for the plan and a precedent difficult to live with in other connections if our people were to withhold their approval in the referendum which would be required.

AGRICULTURE

Nor can we forget that agriculture is still one of the three major legs to our economic stool. State supported agricultural education, research and marketing activity are still basic needs if a sufficient number of our young people are to stay in farming and other agribusiness jobs.

There remains the continuing problem of providing opportunities for our farm people to share equitably in the economic and social progress of Virginia on a uniform and continuing basis.

THE AGING

In addition to a property tax ceiling for our older citizens on low fixed incomes, I alert you to my intention of transferring the Office of the Aging from the Division of Planning and Community Affairs to the Secretary of Human Affairs, where so many of the services of concern to the Commission are now administered.

BICENTENNIAL

If I could at this early date select a centerpiece for these next four years, it would be our nation's Bicentennial, with all the meaning that it holds for our own state. Just as the Prelude to Independence celebration in Williamsburg has in the past been a source of spiritual refreshment for the members of this body, so could a proper observance of our country's 200th year and Virginia's part therein become a catalyst, creating by its presence a resurgence of patriotic spirit, positive love of country, and rededication to fundamental principles among our people. Virginia's story is well worth telling to the nation.

As our plans unfold, I will ask your help in providing additional funds and lending your personal participation to some of the events that should attend that momentous remembrance.

CONCLUSION

I have not tried in this message to speak to every problem confronting the Commonwealth, although I have felt obliged to address those I consider most pressing. I will have some later suggestions for your consideration with respect to the budget, and perhaps other suggestions during the course of your deliberations. Until then you will find the door of my office always open to each of you for discussion of our mutual concerns.

I know so well, as we face these sixty days, the torrents of words, the flaring of emotions, the steadfast positions and the careful maneuvering that always attend the legislative process, and ever will as long as strong men disagree. I accept, as we all must, the demands of varying constituencies and the dictates of differing consciences.

But I know too, although at times it seems inconceivable that out of the apparent chaos will come any positive result, there is method and order in the madness, that there are limits beyond which we will not step no matter the pressures or the provocation, and that in the end, we will turn finally to be judged by the good of this Commonwealth.

With this assurance I take my leave of you, confident that in the end, principle will triumph over partisanship and that in the larger things you will be the larger men and women that our people knew you to be when they sent you here.

As I play my own part in what is to follow, I too will be conscious that the process of which we are all a part now dictates my own adherence to what is best for all our people, and that I must henceforth judge every course of action by the straight and narrow rule of what is right in their behalf.

May God lift all our hearts to that high purpose.

