

INAUGURAL ADDRESS  
OF  
**JOHN N. DALTON**  
GOVERNOR  
TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
AND  
THE PEOPLE OF VIRGINIA  
SOUTH PORTICO, STATE CAPITOL  
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Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, distinguished guests, members of the General Assembly, my fellow Virginians.

As I stand before you today, I am humbled by, and deeply grateful for, the great honor the people of Virginia have bestowed upon me by choosing me as their chief executive. I recognize that this office is both a public and a personal trust, public because I have been given the great Constitutional and legal powers of the Governor of Virginia and personal because it is my responsibility to discharge those powers to the best of my own ability.

I will be sustained in the exercise of this responsibility, as I have been sustained over the years, by the support of my wife and family and by the example of my father, a man of wisdom, common sense and deep concern for the people of Virginia.

I am encouraged also by the examples of my predecessors, and especially by the man who has just turned over to me the responsibility and the great legacy of the governorship, Mills E. Godwin, Jr. As the only man ever chosen as Governor twice by vote of the people, he was first the architect of a great leap forward and then the firm hand which sustained our progress during a time of troubles unequalled in recent years.

As we inaugurate this new Administration, surely it is appropriate to reflect on just what the people expect of us, what kind of government they want.

In my judgment, the people want government that is effective, government that will work to solve their problems. The people are more interested in solutions than in slogans.

The results of the balloting two months ago and the observation of our own common sense show that the people of Virginia still believe in the middle way—the way of moderation, of prudence, of reliance on time-tested principle. This is not to say that the people are content with everything the way it is, because they certainly are not. They are looking for continued progress and positive change, and all they ask is that we, as their elected

representatives, have the courage and the wisdom to select the most appropriate courses of action and lead them into a better tomorrow.

We have been through a difficult period in the history of our nation and our State. We were shocked by the disparagement of ancient virtues and divided by war and domestic turbulence. The prosperity which many had come to take for granted was shaken by a ruinous inflation and sudden increases in the costs of the necessities of modern life. The ability of government at all levels to govern wisely and to do as the people wished, even to know how to begin solving their problems, was brought into serious question.

Many of the governmental programs enacted in a more confident time were later judged useless failures.

This is a harsh indictment on the ability of government to perform. I am afraid that in many cases the skepticism has become mere apathy as people conclude that government is ineffective or benefits only a few.

It is our task to prove that the opposite is true—that government, at least in Virginia, is effective, that it can attack the tough problems, that it works to benefit all the people, or at least the great majority.

There is certainly no lack of areas in which to operate. We have resources to manage so that we can have healthy economic growth to provide jobs on the one hand and on the other a well-preserved environment to provide recreational benefits today and a natural heritage for the future.

We must untangle the traffic jams of our own technology, be it the need for more efficient mass transportation systems serving thousands of people or the individual and very personal problem of a citizen looking for a missing benefits check.

We must seek to make the government itself more efficient so that the people who pay the bills, the taxpayers of Virginia, see that their money is being put to good use.

And above all, we must make it clear that government can be trusted as much as any other frail human institution. We can do that by avoiding extravagant promises—by trying to do what we can reasonably expect to accomplish.

And we can help restore faith in government by making sure that it is open to all the people of Virginia, whatever their race, class or station in life. Eight years ago, one of my predecessors, Linwood Holton, said this Commonwealth should rely on an aristocracy of merit, and that is a pledge which I renew today.

My Administration will seek counsel and advice from many sources, and we will seek talent from many sources. Virginia is not a closed corporation, it is a public corporation, and it will be operated in the public interest.

To the best of my ability, it will be a government free of discrimination based on race or sex and a government providing moral, legal and political leadership in the struggle to eliminate such discrimination throughout society.

This Administration will not stop at non-discrimination; it will actively seek to involve all our people in the governmental process.

This is because I recognize that I cannot solve the State's problems alone, State government cannot solve these problems alone.

The proper role of government is that of a partner and a leader, but not a master. Government has neither the resources nor the wisdom nor really the obligation to solve all our problems.

Rather than relying on the power of the state, we should keep in mind that each of us can look inside himself or herself to find the strength and the will to overcome many of the problems confronting us.

One cannot travel throughout Virginia and meet with as many Virginians as I have without gaining a profound respect for the wisdom, the common sense and the goodness of the people of Virginia. As Governor, I intend to continue my dialogue with the people—to seek their advice—listen to their problems and include them in the process of decision-making.

My solemn compact is that henceforth my voice will be their voice, that I will act only with their close counsel and in their certain interest.

I have no doubt that we can overcome our problems if we put our minds to it and work together. For my part, I pledge to work closely with the elected officials of the Commonwealth, particularly the General Assembly members here present, and with my official advisors, members of the Cabinet, other State employees and public servants.

I will also seek to cooperate fully with the agencies of the federal government, asking only that they do not seek to stretch the law beyond its plain meaning and intent.

I have no doubt that we in Virginia have the resources, the wisdom and the will to overcome our problems. I wish to do my part in forging a partnership for progress.

With a firm reliance on our basic guiding principles, with faith in God, each other, and ourselves, and with a willingness to compromise our differences and work together, we can make this great Commonwealth a New Dominion of freedom, justice, progress and opportunity for all.