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STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INAUGURAL SPEECH

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As I stand before you today, my thoughts range back to all those who occupied this space before me. Those who swore solemnly the oath of office as I did moments ago were, I am sure, as deeply moved as I.

All spoke of the need for wisdom and courage and, in many cases, the help of Almighty God to assist them in meeting the complex and difficult tasks which lay ahead of them.

On this day, I understand and share those feelings as well as the emotions which must have surged through them on the occasion of their oath-taking.

Woodrow Wilson said it best, perhaps, when he described his inaugural nearly seven decades ago "not as a day of triumph, but as a day of dedication."

How deep our dedication reaches and how staunch it shall remain will be the subject of intense scrutiny not only by the people of New Jersey, but of the nation.

Today marks the start of a time of great testing for New Jersey and its government, a testing which, if we are to be equal to it, will relentlessly demand the skills, talents and imagination of all of us.

We can no longer rely heavily on outside help to solve the problems which afflict the State.

The new course charted by the Federal government is one that we must follow.

Neither New Jersey nor any of the other States in the Union can turn to Washington, casting covetous eyes upon what some people have always seen as a limitless supply of money. That day is over.

A new path has been blazed by the national Administration.

So, we in New Jersey must change also. We must change the way we do things and the way we view government's role in our rapidly changing society. We must turn to ourselves, to draw upon the diversity of our people and to tap the strength inherent in that diversity.

We cannot view this need to change with resignation; rather, it must be viewed as a challenge. A challenge to our ingenuity, our dedication, and our imagination.

We know our state government has many obligations, obligations which we must do more to meet. But, it is also clear we will have in the days ahead less resources to meet those obligations.

This is our challenge and I invite you to join with me today in summoning all our resources -- both human and natural and applying them all to the tasks which await.

The only constraints imposed on us will be those we impose upon ourselves.

The untried can no longer be viewed with fear, but with interest.

The new and innovative must attract our attention, not divert it.

We can no longer shrink from the imaginative; rather, we must nurture and encourage it.

We must turn away from a reliance on Washington and focus our energies on a renaissance in Trenton.

I have used the word "we" throughout this address and I have done so deliberately.

For it is, indeed, we who must solve the problems which concern our State and its people.

New Jersey will be governed by a bipartisan government -- bipartisan in the truest sense of the word -- for the next two years at the very least.

That bipartisanship will be sorely tested in the next twenty-four months by the clash of ideas and a clash of ideology, as we all try to solve the problems before us.

But, those clashes will produce sparks which will forge the programs and policies to govern this State.

I look forward to the coming two years because of the deep respect I hold for the legislative process and for those who make that process work and serve the people.

I am proud to say that I am a product of that process. I am keenly aware of the pressures and rigors of that office and of the conflicts which flare in that crucible of public life.

That awareness has given me an understanding which can only help me as I work with our legislators to deal with the issues and problems which confront our State and our people.

Many of the problems we face seem like old and persistent ones. Indeed, many are.

Our transportation systems are deteriorating, and without our commitment and dedication, will continue to do so.

Crime, and the deep-seated fear it engenders, is a scourge on the land. I want the criminal elements, particularly those who have embraced violence as a way of life, to know this administration will be dedicated to seeing that punishment for their acts against others will be swift, sure and severe.

We must never forget that the land we occupy today is but a trust for those who will follow us. Our children and our grandchildren deserve the right to live and work in this State free from the fears of poisons in their air, water and earth.

We must strengthen our commitment to the basics of education: reading, writing and arithmetic. But at the same time, children and teachers must never be inhibited from striving for excellence, and searching out new horizons of intellectual growth.

Our cities remain a concern and a priority, but we will be unable to help them, or to grant further help to the unfortunate in this State or to accomplish any of the other things I mentioned, if we fail to provide an atmosphere in which our economy can grow and our economy can flourish.

New Jersey has within its borders qualities which should be irresistible. New Jersey is more than one of fifty states -- it is a microcosm of America. In the diversity of New Jersey is the mix of America -- a melting pot of resource as well as race. If the future is not bright for our state, then it is indeed dim for the United States. And so I say that the only thing New Jersey has to fear is the economic failure of the nation itself.

From the high cliffs of the Palisades to the lowlands of the Pine Barrens -- from the Delaware River at the gap to the Atlantic Ocean at the cape -- this state has within its bounds not only the factories that outfit America but the farms that feed it; it has not only the major ports that are America's gateway but also the resorts that are its playground; it not only contains much of the muscle of American industry that is today's economic power, but also corners most of the minds in its laboratories that are tomorrow's future. In the state of Thomas Edison where close to a fifth of the nation's researchers and scientists work, the spirit of Menlo Park still lives and flourishes.

And those doubters who see decline ahead for New Jersey should be asked: Is the State which discovered so many miracle drugs, developed the transistor and sent Telstar to the skies, now to be termed economically obsolete for the space age?

I think not.

But, government is a means to an end, it is not the end itself.

We must listen to our people, not dictate to them.

We must strike the philosophical chains which have shackled us to the past.

We must regain the confidence which our people seem to have lost in government and its institutions.

By our words and our deeds -- and through the people who speak those words and perform those deeds -- we must convince the people of New Jersey that government is, indeed, capable of compassion, caring and serving.

And, we must do it together.

I intend to look to and draw upon the experience of my predecessors during my administration. I want to take this opportunity particularly to thank Governor Byrne for his help during a difficult transition period. While he and I have disagreed on issues, he has always been a friend. I want to take this occasion to thank him on behalf of all New Jerseyans for his service, for his integrity, and for the devotion he brought to his office.

Now on this, the first official day of a new State government, this administration, kindled by its beliefs, pledges a new spirit of government to establish in the framework of a new federalism the furor of an old idealism. Let New Jersey show the nation that the northeast can economically grow and prosper. Let us prove that a region is built, not by what it takes from Washington, but by what it makes on its own.

If we can put to practice the old truths in new ways, we will see a New Jersey with an economy as rich and robust as the resources of its land and its people. If we put to work a new economic plan for New Jersey, we will see our State with a future as rich and glorious as its past.

So we call upon all of you, not just those involved in State government, but anyone interested in the future and progress of our State to come to our cause. For, if this new plan for New Jersey is to succeed, it will need more than votes, it will need your help.

It is that help which I ask of you today.

To close I would like to read a prayer composed by one who exactly 200 years ago held this executive office to which minutes ago I was sworn. His name was William Livingston, our first Governor. "Our Father, smile on the Governor, may he walk in uprightness and his ways please the Lord. Teach our Legislators wisdom, let them be reasonable men such as that fear God, men of truth hating covetousness, so that justice may run as a mighty stream and righteousness as a river, and peace be within our borders and prosperity in our dwellings. Amen."