

- #-

FAREWELL ADDRESS OF GOVERNOR PIERRE S. DU PONT, IV
JANUARY 10, 1985

Governor-elect Castle, Lt. Gov.-elect Woo, Mr. Speaker, Mr. President Pro Tempore, members of the judiciary and cabinet, members of the 133rd General Assembly, Gov. Boggs, honored guests, and all the people of the First State of the United States of America.

Just sixteen years ago this week, I stood in the well of this chamber, swearing my constitutional oath as a new representative in the 125th General Assembly. This evening I return here for the last time, to thank all of you -- staff, members of my cabinet, members of the General Assembly, and most of all the people of Delaware, for your faith, your support and your help as we made the decisions and the choices that have led Delaware back to prosperity. I thank you, for together we have made a difference.

Eight years ago, as members of the General Assembly were taking that same constitutional oath of office and I was preparing to take office as Governor, I was contemplating the opportunities, the challenges, and the awesome responsibilities each of us in this hall would face as we attempted to rescue a ship of state drifting toward disaster.

I believed then that Delaware's governmental problems could be solved; that we could have a government that lived within its means; that we could have a government capable not simply of fulfilling its legal responsibilities, but of improving the quality of life of all Delawareans as well; that we could have a government that was respected by its people. I said that it would take personal discipline from each of us and political discipline from all of us.

As I began preparing my remarks for this evening, I thought back to those early days, when the problems were before us, demanding immediate solutions, but the solutions lay at the end of a road we had only just begun to travel. Now patience is a virtue, but back then I think we all wanted to make changes -- lasting changes -- and make them quickly. We wanted to be well on our way on the journey we were just beginning.

In some ways, that was possible. Executive Order Number One, signed half an hour after I took the oath of office, immediately required financial disclosure for all cabinet officials and appointees. A simple signature on a document began a visible

process of restoring people's trust in their government and its officials -- a trust that had been so badly shaken in the 1970's.

In others ways, visible progress took much longer -- and was certainly more difficult -- to accomplish.

As you all recall, Delaware was in serious financial trouble in 1977, primarily as a result of a spending appetite that was threatening to devour everything in its path. Why, some people even said the state was -- well -- perhaps bankrupt.

But we worked together to make the tough decisions. We froze the capital budget, reduced the operating budget, limited the growth of government and, perhaps most important of all, enacted constitutional spending restraints that made it virtually impossible to spend more money than was available. No government can spend its way to prosperity, and enacting constitutional restraints was a critical step in restoring the integrity of our government.

But government is not an end in itself, it is a means. Restoring integrity to government, restoring discipline to government and restraining government were part of a process of improving the means. The end was, and remains, to provide our citizens with the chance to prosper, to grow, to excel.

We reduced Delaware's high personal income tax rates which were stifling economic growth and were simply an unfair burden for our working men and women. We passed legislation like the Financial Center Development Act and the Blue Collar Jobs Bill -- both of which brought jobs and opportunity to our people. We began to rebuild Delaware's economic base.

After eight years, I think we can all look back with pride on what has been accomplished. In 1977, a year of deep concern for Delaware government, we made a covenant with the people. We said Delaware should have an honest and ethical government, and we have taken steps toward that end. We said Delaware government should live within its means and balance its budget, and we have accomplished that goal. We said Delaware's economic base should be rebuilt to provide our people with the opportunity to grow to their fullest potential, and we have responded by helping to provide greater employment opportunity than almost any other state in this nation.

Together, we have made the difficult decisions, cast the tough votes, and held a steady course. Without support in the General Assembly, without the leadership of

Richard Cordrey, Andy Knox, Lonnie George, Chuck Hebner and John Burris, it would not have come to pass.

Delaware and our people are better off today than eight years ago because our government has accomplished the most important task of any government: to create a climate of opportunity in which all of its people may grow, and excel, and prosper.

But of course Delaware's progress in the past eight years has been the result of the actions of many more people than are gathered in this hall this evening. Certainly we provided some leadership and made some fundamental decisions that were helpful in clearing the way for progress. But while government alone can prevent opportunity, government alone cannot create opportunity. Delaware is blessed with community leadership that kept its part of the covenant -- creating a partnership with government to enhance that climate of opportunity. Just think back to the major pieces of legislation that helped clear the way for Delaware's progress -- most could not have been enacted, and our success would not have been possible, without the active participation and commitment of our community leaders.

Some might suggest that eight years ago Delaware stood at a crossroads, and that we -- in the words of Robert Frost's poem -- "took the road less traveled by." But I would suggest that the course we have followed together was one of our own making, that the choice we made was to follow a road other states had not traveled before us. But then, in the First State, we have a tradition of not waiting to see what others will do, but making our own decisions and charting our own course.

In a sense, America has recently faced the same choice we faced in 1977. We have seen a federal budget that has been out of balance for nineteen of the past twenty years, a budget that Congress has neither the political will nor the personal discipline to control. We have seen America's powerful economic engine mired in regulation and taxation policy that has stifled growth and prevented expansion. We have seen our competitiveness eroded abroad as a result of poor management of the national economy at home.

Perhaps the federal government should learn a lesson from Delaware and our sister states, these fifty laboratories of democracy which created the federal government -- that that strong, conservative financial management is a prerequisite to good government. If it is our goal to provide every American with a chance to make tomorrow better than today -- and that must be our goal -- then this free nation,

with its heritage of opportunity for all, must learn to make the same hard decisions and learn the same discipline we have shown here in Delaware and in other states. For the nation and for every one of our states, the challenge is identical: to create a climate of opportunity, then to transform that opportunity through education and economic growth into increased prosperity for all. To transform opportunity into prosperity requires both sound education programs and conservative economic policies.

Education is the springboard to the future for every one of us. Our educational system must demand performance, and teach the art of critical thinking. For the challenge each of us faces as an individual is to learn to make sound judgment on difficult issues; to reason through the facts, disregard the fictions, consider the alternative choices, and reach a sound judgment among them; in other words, to develop the capacity for critical thought. To reach that goal we must set our academic standards to challenge rather than accommodate, to instruct rather than entertain, to instill in every American the skills necessary to survive, and the intellectual curiosity necessary not just to survive, but to grow and contribute. In the past four years we have begun an educational renewal in Delaware focused on those goals; it is the responsibility of our new leadership to continue that progress. In economic policy, Delaware faces an even more difficult task; a challenge equal to the challenge of adversity we faced in 1977 and 1978: and that is the challenge of prosperity.

Prosperity is welcome, of course; we have been striving for it for eight years. I am not one of those who Theodore Sorenson described as he viewed a meeting of President Kennedy's Council of Economic Advisers in 1962: "There they sat, gloomily contemplating the dangers of an upturn." But prosperity does not free us from the need for the same kind of discipline required by adversity; rather, it requires greater discipline.

Sometimes in the life of a government there comes a moment, when the pressure is off, the problems of the past seem resolved, and, with a sigh of relief, the government can look optimistically ahead, free of past concerns and constraints. It is a satisfying moment, but a dangerous one, too, for if at that moment the discipline that solved the earlier problems is lost, the seeds of future problems are quickly sown.

So it was in England, in 1946, when the nation, through remarkable self-discipline had survived the Second World War. A euphoric electorate, intent on immediate reward for the deprivations of the past, abandoned the careful conservatism of

Winston Churchill and embraced the free spending, protectionist ways of the Labor Party. England paid the price: twenty-five years later the per capita gross national product of England was less than that of Germany -- no, not West Germany, but East Germany.

So it was in the United States, in the 1960's. Bored with eight years of quiet, competent government and steady economic growth, the electorate opted to "get America moving again," to create a "great society," to expand domestic programs at home and military influence abroad -- guns and butter and the devil with the cost or consequence. Like England, America lost its discipline at a critical moment and paid its price: twelve years of high inflation, low productivity, huge deficits, and economic stagnation. The economic and social impact upon our people has been devastating.

It seems to me that Delaware stands at a similar point in time today. Eight years of discipline, prudence and bipartisanship have brought us unusual prosperity: eight consecutive surplus budgets, two tax cuts, two welfare increases, a doubling of the per- pupil funding for public education, the greatest proportional employment growth of any state in America, and an unemployment rate several points beneath that of the nation as a whole. And now, with the economic recession behind us and our local economy growing vigorously, we find ourselves faced with an unexpected dividend of prosperity: continuing and growing revenue surpluses. We already have about \$46 million in the bank in our "rainy day fund" as a cushion against emergencies. But instead of an emergency, we are faced with the prospect of such rapid revenue growth that we may have as much as \$90 million free and clear -- to spend, or refrain from spending, however we wish.

And so, I wonder, will Delaware be able to meet the challenge of this prosperity? During past years we have demonstrated that we could govern our appetites in difficult times; but can we do so in good times? We have proven ourselves in adversity, now we must do so in prosperity.

The temptation to try to win the approval of interest groups of every kind by spending our good fortune will be enormous. Spend on human services and corrections, they will tell us, on health and welfare, on teachers and transportation. If we yield to all those pressures and temptations, if we spend it all, we could quickly return to the problems and crises of earlier times.

To avoid mortgaging our future in this way will require spending less than we have

available to us, not much more, in fact than the real growth in our economy, a difficult task which will once again require personal discipline of each of us and political discipline from all of us. It is most important to our future that we successfully apply that discipline if Delaware is to continue its progress.

Governor-elect Castle is no stranger to either of these central policy issues: he was the chairman of the Task Force on Education for Economic Growth which has prepared a blueprint for substantially strengthening our education system over the next your years; and he has participated in the economic decisions of this administration for the past four years. I know he will do well; give him the same support and counsel you have given me, and Delaware will continue to excel. To Governor Castle I say, Godspeed; the challenge is fresh, the opportunities boundless, and a talented people stand ready for your leadership in keeping Delaware the First State of the United States of America.

But now, my constitutional moment as Delaware's Chief Executive has passed; next Tuesday I join Elbert Carvel and Caleb Boggs as one of only three people in Delaware who can never serve as Governor of our State again. And so I'm afraid I shall not pass this way again; I leave with deep appreciation for your support, valuing your counsel, and having enjoyed -- no, loved -- the opportunity you have given me. For me, it simply has been the best of times. It has been my honor to have served you.

Elise and I stood at the window in Woodburn earlier today, watching the snow fall gently on that magnificent tulip poplar tree, which was perhaps a sprout two hundred years ago when our nation began just a few blocks from where we stood. We recalled some of the times, some of the places, and the many images of Delaware we will take with us as we leave you:

- Woodland Ferry, hot in the hazy August sun; cold beer, oysters and sawdust in the Georgetown firehall;
- A lighted Christmas tree afloat on Silver Lake reflecting its colors in the still December waters; all of us elected officials tug-of-warring the entire press corps into St. Jones Creek in seven and a half seconds flat;
- Caroling in the halls of the Smyrna Home and Hospital, seeing joy and memories light the faces of the elderly patients there; the crash of drums and brass as the University of Delaware marching band breaks into the fight song under the concrete stadium on an October Saturday;
- The flash of muskets and the smell of powder, the Union Jack moving across the meadow in the re-enactment of the Battle of Cooch's Bridge,

where 208 years ago fourteen brave Delaware lads gave their fullest measure to help America become the land of the free.

But most of all we remember people -- thousands and thousands of you -- men and women, old people, young children, complete with pipes and shawls, ice cream cones and baseballs, glasses, hats, costumes, coats, diapers and canes -- people who slapped our backs, pressed our hands and wished us encouragement and cheer as we made our way through eight years of your lives. We will one day forget the speeches, the press conferences, the podiums and meetings, but we will carry with us always in our hearts your generous friendship.

As I said when we set out on our journey on that frosty morning on the Green eight years ago, "I pledge to you to do my best, to strive for the highest quality of leadership and the highest standard of performance that it is possible to achieve. I cannot promise to do more; I shall not do less." I have done all I could to meet that standard.

Robert Penn Warren wrote that we must go out, "into the convulsion of the world, out of history into history and the awful responsibility of time." An awesome responsibility did await us in 1977; together we seized it, shaped it, used it to go forward, to achieve a better time, to improve the quality of life for all our people. This evening we step out of history and into history, proud of our past, optimistic for our future, for together we have achieved our goals. Together, we have made a difference.

God bless . . . and farewell.