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SPEECH BY DEANE DAVIS ON "ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT"
AT WOODSTOCK ROTARY CLUB, MAY 29, 1968

I am well aware that you are all businessmen and have tight schedules, so I will dispense with the usual preliminaries and get right into my topic for today. It is a subject that effects the future lives of every person in Vermont.

The subject is economic development.

I am sure there are some people in Vermont who wish that the subject didn't exist. These are the same people who wish they had never heard of Viet Nam, civil rights, poverty, crime and over-population. They would like to lock us in forever in some idealized version of the 19th century. We all know, as practical men, that version never really existed.

As an advocate of "responsible progress" I would like to see Vermont take steps <u>now</u> to lead us, in a responsible way, into the 21st century.

And the economic development of Vermont will pretty much determine what kind of state we will turn over to our children.

What are the forces that demand that we give priority treatment to this subject?

First, there is the unrelenting factor of population growth. The census bureau recently announced that we now have 200 million people in the United States. That figure will be 300 million within the lifetime of your children. And Vermont will figure to get more than its previous share of this 100 million additional people before the year 2,000.

Second is the migration trend. In the East it is all toward the North, and that means Vermont. The cities have expanded to the suburbs, and the suburbs will expand to what they now call the rural area. Scarsdale, in suburban New York, fifty years ago had a population of only 2,000. Today it has 100,000. I have often heard your village of Woodstock described as the "Scarsdale of the 21st century." God forbid!

Third, is the increased travel that has become a way of life with the American family. With better air line schedules and facilities, with the completion of the Interstate Highway system, more people will come rolling into Vermont. The projection for this year is 5 million visitors. Watch how fast this figure becomes 10 million.

Fourth is the new leisure time being alloted not only to the executive but to the average working man. He will have more time to hunt, more time to fish, more time to travel, more time to get away from the humdrum of city life.

Fifth is the increase of oppressive taxes which are making more and more small businessmen reappraise their futures in the big eastern metropolitan areas. And these are exactly the kind of men we want to interest in Vermont.

Sixth is the dynamic growth of business and industry in this country. We are approaching a gross national product of one trillion dollars. As American marketing genius continues to find new markets for new product and services, American industry must constantly expand and look for new locations to produce the goods and services for this gigantic market. The very law of supply and demand will force some of them into Vermont. They will need new room, new space, new facilities, new manpower to feed their expanding markets.

The foregoing are the reasons why economic expansion will come to us whether we want it or not.

The seventh factor in economic development is home-grown. Vermont will need an orderly economic development in order to upgrade the average income, supply more jobs, and to help pay for the ever-increasing cost of government.

Our people need and demand more government services. These services are costly. In order to pay for them, we will be obliged to attract new sources of revenue to help foot the bill.

Thus, I believe we are going to get more growth and more development whether we like it or not. The big question is, are we going to let outsiders determine the future of this state; or are we going to make that determination for ourselves?

My suggestion is to let Vermonters determine the future course of Vermont as it heads for the 21st century. My suggestion is to embark on a program of "selective planning" so that we can pick and choose what we want for Vermont.

Through a program of "selective planning" we can bring in the desirable and screen out the undesirable. We have an excellent opportunity to maintain our way of life here in Vermont and let the outsider help us pay the bill. Or, by default and inattention, we can let the outsider buy up our property, line our highways with fried-chicken shacks, inundate our cities with the smoke and smog of cement factories, and drive the good life of Vermont into the pages of history.

With these considerations, here is my six-point program for the economic development of Vermont:

Point #1. We should stress the role that Vermont is the playground of the East. We should stress the fact that Vermont is a four-season playground. We should make Vermont the number one ski area in the world. We should emphasize that Vermont is the ideal location of summer camps. We should promote Vermont as the perfect place to ride a horse. We should invite hunters. We should invite boaters. We should invite fishermen. We should continue to stress to the metropolitan east that the scenic beauty of Vermont is unparalleled. Most of the 5 million visitors who come to Vermont come to admire the scenery, to breathe the air, to drink the water. Our natural beauty is Vermont's number one asset. It should, therefore, be our number one source of economic development. Let's capitalize on this asset.

Let's be wise marketers of what we have. Let's plan to make Vermont the "fresh air, fresh water, elbow-room" of the crowded East. We have four beautiful, stimulating seasons. We have easy access to the metropolitan areas. There we have a ready market of stifled, crowded, bored rat-race inhabitants who are ready, willing and eager to come to Vermont. Let's lay out a big welcome mat.

But let's be selective. Let's make recreation the number one industry in Vermont - today, tomorrow, and into the 21st century. Let's ask the family in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania if they would rather pay $300 to a psychiatrist or $200 for a refreshing and stimulating weekend in Vermont.

Point #2. I do not for one minute want to see Vermont committing itself to an over-emphasis on one industry. We need a vigorous agricultural industry and the lovely pastoral countryside that dairy farming makes possible. This we must encourage and preserve at all cost.

I think we should have a good mix of development that would guarantee a stabilized employment factor and a continued inflow of taxes. I propose that we seek to attract light, clean, small manufacturing plants, that can bring all of the advantages of new industry and none of the disadvantages.

I suggest we seek out major electronic, plastics, printing, chemical research and service corporations to establish branch plants in Vermont. Such industries would help raise our per capita income, help us to pay the increasing costs of government, and provide a high level of employment to our people.

Point #3. The question has been raised about who should have priority in such development. The suggestion has been made that we concentrate such development in several key areas. I do not believe that such concentration is a good idea.

First, I am keenly aware that we could go overboard and over-develop in Vermont. Does anyone in this state want to see us create another Jersey City? Do we want to concentrate to the point where we here in Vermont have purposely created traffic jams, air pollution, and housing shortages?

If we are to construct a "selective planning" policy for the state of Vermont, then we should be just as keenly aware of where these new industries are going, as well as what these new industries will be. I am just as eager for Rutland and Chittenden Counties to grow as I am for the other twelve counties to grow. But I must remind you that an over-concentration in a few key areas will be in conflict with the very idea of the Vermont way of life. It will also be in conflict with the very purpose of new industries coming into Vermont.

They will want the advantages of the relaxed atmosphere. They do not want to be crowded into the kind of rat race they are trying to escape.

I say that the wishes and ambitions of fourteen counties are to be considered. We should consider the entire state, not just segments of it. If we are to embark on a plan of economic development, it should be for the benefit of all of the state. And such planning should recognize the goals of those who would come to Vermont.

Some may want the atmosphere of one of our cities, but others may seek the quiet and placidness of a small inspirational village. We should show them everything, and let them decide. A round-the-clock electronics plant might want to be located in Burlington, but a research laboratory may prefer the tranquility of Pomfret.

Point #4. How do we go about getting these ideal industries to come to Vermont? Here is what I would propose to do about it personally.

For 25 years I have traveled about the country on behalf of a Vermont company that does business in every state in the Union. I have met literally hundreds of people in positions of responsibility in industry and commerce. All of them expressed their admiration and respect for Vermont. Many of them envy us the kind of life we live here.

One of the easiest and most appropriate things for me to do would be to have access to the managers of American industry and commerce. In New York, Philadelphia, New Jersey, Detroit and Chicago. To capitalize on the advantages of Vermont as a place to do business. It is no secret that several companies have established branches or plants in Vermont because the people running them were ardent skiers.

In cooperation with the Development Department, I would propose to invite selected prospects to come to Vermont as guests of the State, for a period of exposure to our many attractions. This type of exposure could be the door-opener to another splendid addition to Vermont's growing list of enthusiastic industries, turned on by our great natural advantage of being the "elbow room" of the corwded metropolitan East.

As you businessmen know, there is nothing quite so effective as personal selling, and in combination with Vermont's natural attractiveness should provide us with the kind of "selective planning" and "selective promotion" that will give Vermont the kind of economic development it would like to live with.

Point #5. An ideal type of new development to bring to Vermont is a private boys or girls prep school or branch of a major university. We already have several prep schools and colleges living happily and prospering in Vermont and contributing to its economy.

I could not think of a more ideal, year-round, solid economic advantage to bring to a community in Vermont than the introduction of one or more private schools. Education is on the march in America. And whether we could induce an existing school, strangled in its current existence, to move to Vermont, or whether we appeal to those who are currently planning new educational ventures, an educational plant would be a welcome addition to a growing Vermont.

Such schools as the University of Chicago, and more currently Columbia University in New York have found that the ideal Groves of Académe are not compatible with the asphalt jungle. The original Groves of Académe where Plato taught were on the outskirts of ancient Athens. Perhaps wise administrators of educational plants could be persuaded that the Green Mountains of Vermont, on the outskirts of the turmoil of the metropolitan East, might be more conducive to academic pursuits.

I was shocked to learn that the president of Columbia University is forced to forego the custom of delivering the annual commencement address. He also had to change the location, off campus, of the commencement exercises. He was afraid of physical violence.

I do not mean to suggest that mammoth institutions like the University of Chicago or Columbia have any place in Vermont. I do mean to suggest that even small colleges or prep schools might be interested in avoiding such conditions. And such conditions would likely not prevail in an institution nestled in the Vermont hills.

F. Point #6. Economic development cannot stand alone as an individual ambition of the State of Vermont.

Industry will not come to Vermont if we do not have sufficient skilled manpower to serve their needs. Thus we need a program of educational training to supply adequate manpower. Manpower needs housing. If there is inadequate housing, then there will be no manpower.

If government is to progress, we need a coordinated program of education, housing and transportation, as well as economic development to bring us into the 21st century. All of these problems tie in with the suggestion that we need "responsible progress" in the state of Vermont.

The per capita income of Vermont is the second-lowest in all of the New England states. Our unemployment rate is very uneven in Vermont. I believe these will be corrected. But they will either be corrected by the inexorable pace of a dynamic and growing society forcing its way into our state or by internal forces - meaning you and me - that will take the necessary steps now to effect a program of "selective planning."

The future of Vermont depends on how seriously we treat this problem. The state we hand over to our children will either be the product of our own indifference or our responsible action.

If I had to summarize my hopes for the future of the State of Vermont, I could do no better than to adopt the slogan you here in Woodstock have used to describe your village - "A cosmopolitan culture in a rural atmosphere."

If that could describe Vermont in the 21st century, then I feel we will have done our job in 1968.

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