

REMARKS BY GOVERNOR JAMES B. EDWARDS  
S.C. STATE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION BOARD  
JANUARY 26, 1976

I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK BEFORE SEVERAL GROUPS OF STATE EMPLOYEES QUITE OFTEN. USUALLY, I HAVE DISCUSSED TWO MAJOR POINTS: MANAGEMENT IN STATE GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING.

THESE ARE TWO AREAS WHICH HAVE BEEN OF GREAT CONCERN TO ME SINCE TAKING THE JOB OF GOVERNOR. OVER THE PAST YEAR, I'VE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THE FINE JOB THAT OUR DEDICATED STATE EMPLOYEES ARE DOING.

WE HAVE COME THROUGH A TOUGH YEAR ECONOMICALLY. WE HAVE BEEN FORCED TO DEMAND MORE FROM OUR EMPLOYEES THAN IN THE PAST. THE HIRING FREEZE HAS INCREASED THE WORKLOAD OF MANY EMPLOYEES. I AM HAPPY TO SAY THAT THEY HAVE BEEN EQUAL TO THE TASK. OUR EMPLOYEES HAVE RESPONDED TO THIS SITUATION IN A RESPONSIBLE AND HARD-WORKING MANNER.

THE COMING YEAR, QUITE FRANKLY, MAY NOT BE MUCH BETTER. WE PLAN TO MAKE OUR FIRST PRIORITY THE PROVISION OF MERIT AND COST-OF-LIVING RAISES WHEN FUNDS BECOME AVAILABLE.

~~FOR THE~~ MEANWHILE, THERE IS ONE SITUATION I BELIEVE WE MUST AVOID: PUBLIC EMPLOYEE UNIONIZATION.

I CANNOT ENDORSE THE CONCEPT THAT PUBLIC EMPLOYEE UNIONS--IN ANY FORM--WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE STATE.

AS YOU KNOW, I HAVE ADDRESSED THIS SITUATION ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS IN THE PAST. BUT LET ME REITERATE MY POINT OF VIEW.

SOUTH CAROLINA HAS BEEN UNIQUE IN EMPLOYEE RELATIONS IN BOTH THE PUBLIC AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR. GOOD MANAGEMENT AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYEES HAVE HELPED BUILD A STRONG AND GROWING ECONOMY IN OUR STATE. AT THE SAME TIME, GOOD EMPLOYEE-EMPLOYER RELATIONS HAVE RESULTED--PRE-EMPTING THE NEED FOR WIDESPREAD EMPLOYEE UNIONS. I BELIEVE THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF OUR ~~DEDICATED~~ STATE EMPLOYEES DO NOT WISH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING TO BECOME THE "RULE OF THUMB" IN STATE GOVERNMENT.

TO THOSE WHO CONTEND THAT PUBLIC EMPLOYEE UNIONS ARE THE ONLY SOLUTION TO STATE EMPLOYEES' NEEDS, I WOULD OFFER THE FOLLOWING REASONING: PUBLIC EMPLOYEES--LIKE ALL OTHER EMPLOYEES--HAVE THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE WHERE THEY WILL WORK.

OUR EMPLOYEES FREELY CHOOSE TO WORK IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR. IN MAKING THAT CHOICE, OR THE CHOICE TO REMAIN IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR, THEY MUST REALIZE ONE SIMPLE FACT: THEY ARE--AT EVERY LEVEL--THE EMPLOYEES OF THE TAXPAYERS.

WHEN PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COLLECTIVELY BARGAIN--OR UNIONIZE--THEY CREATE A VEHICLE FOR PLACING THE PUBLIC INTEREST ON THE BARGAINING TABLE. IN MY OPINION, WE HAVE NO RIGHT WHATSOEVER TO BARGAIN, DEMAND OR STRIKE WHERE THE PUBLIC INTEREST IS AT STAKE.

WE CANNOT REPEAT THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHER CITIES AND STATES WHERE VITAL PUBLIC SERVICES HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO A VIRTUAL STANDSTILL BECAUSE OF EMPLOYEE DEMANDS. WE CERTAINLY CANNOT AFFORD TO JEOPARDIZE OUR ECONOMIC STABILITY TO INCREASING WAGE AND BENEFITS DEMANDED BY PUBLIC EMPLOYEE UNIONS IN NUMEROUS OTHER AREAS OF THE COUNTRY.

SOUTH CAROLINA'S TAXPAYERS SHOULD NOT BE FORCED TO ENDURE THE HARDSHIPS OF REDUCED SERVICES AS IN NEW YORK OR PROLONGED STRIKES LIKE THE ONE IN PITTSBURGH. OUR OVERBURDENED TAXPAYERS DO NOT DESERVE SUCH TREATMENT. WE ARE DEEPLY COMMITTED TO MORE PAY AND BETTER BENEFITS FOR OUR HARDWORKING STATE EMPLOYEES WHEN THE ECONOMY IMPROVES. OUR EMPLOYEES WILL GET THESE ADVANTAGES IN THE FUTURE.

LET'S REACH THESE GOALS THROUGH TRUST, UNDERSTANDING, AND COOPERATION--NOT THROUGH DEMANDS, BARGAINING, OR STRIKES. I CANNOT AND WILL NOT ENDORSE THE CONCEPT OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING OR STRIKES FOR STATE EMPLOYEES.

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