

THIRD INAUGURAL ADDRESS
OF
THE HONORABLE VINCENT A. CIANCI, JR.
MAYOR OF PROVIDENCE

Today begins a new era in the history of Providence. It is a day for firsts. Today we begin to govern with our city's first home rule charter and its first independent mayor.

But it is also a day for tradition. Indeed, it is fitting that we begin this new era now, in the month of January, named as it is for the Roman God Janus, who faces both the past and the future in a symbolic posture of continuity as well as change.

Today, on the occasion of my third inauguration, I feel the same intense enthusiasm that I possessed in 1975 and 1979, but my experience, my confidence, and hopefully, my prudence, have increased, for I have been seasoned by eight years of trial and error, blame and praise, victory and defeat. Like the characters in Homer's Odyssey, my supporters and I have engaged in an eight-year journey beset by challenges and tribulations. What we won in November was the opportunity and the honor to continue for four more years, our quest for governmental excellence--a goal that we will tenaciously pursue as we travel along a still difficult, yet more familiar road.

I love my work as your Mayor, and the longer I serve, the more I am impressed with the importance of this post, for it is at the local level that government touches its citizens most directly.

Demographers describe America as an urban nation, and rightly so, because cities are vitally important to the advancement of our culture. The prophetic Alexander Hamilton perceptively and correctly observed that, "Cities are the measure of a nation's civility." As such they merit prime attention and concern from the best and the brightest of our public-spirited citizenry.

Though together, we have compiled a litany of accomplishments in the eight years just passed, an inaugural address is not the document to recount them. For us the past must mainly be the prologue to an even brighter future. Today it is not enough to look back in pride--today is the occasion to look forward with purpose, resolve, and optimism.

In my second inaugural I vowed to work for the cause of local autonomy--a goal that was realized when our Home Rule Charter was drafted and ratified. As the first Mayor to serve under this new basic law, I realize the ample powers and the weighty responsibilities that it confers upon the city's chief executive. My appointments and my conduct will reflect my respect for its letter and its spirit.

During this new term I will continue, even more vigorously than before, my efforts to secure financial relief for Providence from the higher levels of government. Since 1978, I have repeatedly--and in vain--requested the General Assembly to compensate this city for serving as Rhode Island's educational, cultural, health care and governmental center. I have sought repeatedly--and in vain--some state relief to compensate this city for the disproportionate amount of tax-exempt properties located here--an amount equal to a quarter of our total land area. I will not rest until the state enacts some urban aid formula that recognizes the financial needs of its capital city--a city that provides so many essential services of statewide benefit.

Another of my priorities for the term ahead is continued financial stability for city government. This can be achieved first by a fiscal austerity that emphasizes prudence, planning, and sacrifice. To this end, I will immediately conduct, with the cooperation of our private sector, a thorough management study of every facet of city government. Such an analysis will streamline municipal procedures, eliminate duplication and waste, and cut unnecessary expenditures.

A second prescription for fiscal health is to strive for the continued expansion of Providence's tax base. During my eight-year tenure its long and steady shrinkage was first slowed and then reversed because we encouraged new construction, the renovation and recycling of Downtown buildings, plus home improvements and other programs for neighborhood revitalization. After being ravaged by two decades of decay and demolition, our tax base is now expanding to a point where property values are rising through more than 80% of our city's land area. With \$200 million dollars worth of new construction in progress and the Capital Center Project on the horizon, ever greater growth in the years ahead is certain.

For the South Side of our City, I advocate a new industrial park in close proximity to our port, an urban enterprise zone to promote jobs and business investment, and increased attention and funding from my Office of Community Development.

Our efforts thus far--at midstream in this administration--have attracted national acclaim. Listen to this litany of praise which our work together has inspired: The New York Times in 1979 called Providence, "a vibrant, charming city," and "one of the most attractive medium-sized cities in the country, rich in history and culture." Town and Country magazine reviewed our progress and wrote a glowing tribute called "Providence Regained." And only a month ago, the prestigious Christian Science Monitor wrote a feature story on the city calling us "a sparkling embodiment of urban renewal."

These admirers may call Providence charming, revitalized and "born again," but we call it something even better--we call Providence home!

For those of you who love Providence as I do, these impartial observations should be a source of pride, but they must never become a source of complacency. In fact, I vow to increase and intensify the efforts of this administration--in historic preservation, Downtown renewal, culture and the arts, neighborhood revitalization, port and park development, and industrial growth--during the challenging term that we begin today.

And as I commence another four years as your Mayor, let me assure you that I intend to give my service and my time to all the people of this city, regardless of their past support. As an independent, I owe allegiance to no political party or political machine.

Government will continue to be open to all citizens who display interest, concern or ability. I will be as accessible to all people and to all points of view as I have been in the past.

As your independent mayor, I owe no debt to any special interest. For the next four years my special interest will be you!