

The Loneliest Governor

WILLIAM S. ELLIS

MONTPELIER
SNOWDRIFTS more than six feet high still lay all around Aaron Ward's farmhouse and barn in central Vermont. In the driveway, in a green pickup truck with an "I MISS IKE" sticker on the front bumper, Ward waited to take his wife, Zephine, to the village for the weekly meeting of Pythian Sisters. "Wouldn't surprise me if he came out and said it's been a big joke and that he ain't a Democrat at all," dairy farmer Ward told me, as we chatted about state politics. "Then, maybe I could believe what happened."

Tremors of disbelief have been shaking Vermont ever since January, when Philip A. Hoff, a Democrat, moved into the governor's office, ending 109 consecutive years of Republican State House control here. Looking back over his first hundred days in office, it can be said that seldom has a governor of such a small state been beset by so many big problems. Moreover, he faces them in almost complete political isolation.

THE WALLS of the governor's chambers are covered with massive gilt-framed portraits of pinch-lipped Whigs and Republicans. Soon after taking office, Hoff added a portrait of the state's only other Democratic governor, John S. Robinson. So far Robinson, who alas brings no smiling relief to the gallery of mutton-chop-whiskered scowlers, has been about the closest thing to a Democratic confidant that Hoff has.

Most of the Republicans in the State House naturally avoid him for fear of being identified with what is still sometimes referred to here as the New Deal. The Democrats are angry because Hoff hasn't swept out the Republican heads of departments and replaced them with members of his own party. The case of Elmer E. Towne, the commissioner of agriculture, irks them particularly. They thought that Towne would be the first to go because, for one thing, he had allowed a dairy to do business without posting a performance bond. When the company went

broke, many farmers in Vermont lost money. However, Governor Hoff announced that he would keep Towne and let him stand as "a symbol of Vermont Republicanism." Democrats were incensed and Republicans were insulted.

"This state is lousy with Democrats who have been waiting for years and years for patronage," Carroll P. Adams, the executive secretary of the Republican state committee, told me. "But Phil Hoff is smart enough to know that if he expects to be re-elected in two years he has to court Republican wishes."

"I have to approach my appointments with a great deal of care because my only hope of accomplishing anything is to take a bipartisan approach," Governor Hoff told me. Then with acid despondency he added, "I'm the only Democrat in my administration, you know."

While the Republicans have no quarrel with Hoff over appointments, or the lack of them, they are concerned with the possibility that he might tamper with the town governments—the quintessence of home rule in this state. In his inaugural address, Hoff asked the legislators to go home for a year; he needed time, he explained, to make a comprehensive study of the system whereby fewer than four hundred thousand persons are called on to support 246 local governments.

"The governor wants to consolidate some of our towns," said Sam Parsons, who, when he is not sitting with the legislature, is the town clerk of Hubbardton. "People aren't going to put up with that, I don't believe. It'll cause the towns to lose their identity. The governor hasn't lived here long enough to know our problems." (Hoff is from Massachusetts.)

The legislators didn't go home. They stayed around to debate such matters as paying funeral expenses for persons on relief (actually, Vermont has some of the most advanced social legislation in the nation) and a proposal to require all cars registered in the state to be equipped with "seat harnesses." It is expected

that the legislators will end their season in May or early June, still uncertain about the future course of the tall, blondly handsome thirty-eight-year-old governor, who served in the state legislature only one term before becoming the chief executive.

Philip Hoff worked hard to win the election. He traveled thirty thousand miles through the state, reminding the people of the "sterility" of the Republican program. He nursed along a growing disillusionment with the administration of the incumbent, Governor F. Ray Keyser, Jr. He chatted with the ladies at their church suppers. He laughed with the men in the Grange halls as they related tall Yankee stories like the one about the two Vermont cows that hiked 1,200 miles to the national dairy show in St. Louis in 1929 and gave forty quarts of milk each day they were on the road.

Now that he is in, Philip Hoff may well question the value of the reward. His salary is less than \$15,000 a year, including expenses. There is no such thing as a governor's mansion in Vermont, so he has to rent an apartment. And to suggest that the state buy a limousine for its chief executive is to outrage Yankee frugality. So Hoff calls the state police when he wants to go somewhere. If there is a cruiser available, it is dispatched to him.

In the State House, both Democrats and Republicans agree that Hoff is one of the most personable governors the state has ever had. They also agree that he has little chance of winning re-election. This opinion is based largely on the state-wide reaction to his plan for letting things mark time until he can determine how best to tackle the major problems of finances, overlapping town governments, and the present apportionment formula that makes it possible for representatives of only 11.4 per cent of the population to control the state house of representatives.

"Next year, though, the fur is going to fly in this State House," Hoff promised in our interview. "I realize that the future of the Democratic Party in Vermont rests with me." Meanwhile, the waiting game goes on and the governor sits in his office, hoping that someone, anyone, will stop in and say hello.



A Canterbury Tale

ROBERT RUSHMORE

ONE DAY back in September, 1832, a minister's wife in Canterbury, Connecticut, paid a call on Miss Prudence Crandall, the handsome twenty-nine-year-old principal of a female boarding school situated in the village. Canterbury, a community of about fifteen hundred people, located in eastern Connecticut on the turnpike between Hartford and Providence, prided itself on having both a reading club and a temperance movement. When Miss Crandall had first considered investing her capital in the large white house with classical pilasters at the southwest corner of the village green, everyone had encouraged her, believing that an institution for private education would be an embellishment to the town. Up until now Miss Crandall's conduct of the school had been entirely praiseworthy. But she had recently accepted as a day pupil a girl named Sarah Harris, a seventeen-year-old mulatto. Speaking for the town, the minister's wife felt obliged to point out that under the enlightened Connecticut laws regarding Negroes Sarah had been able to obtain an elementary education at the district school. That was certainly enough. She must be withdrawn from the boarding school immediately.

Miss Crandall replied that Sarah Harris was a pious and intelligent girl who had asked to attend the classes in order "to get a little more learning—enough if possible to teach colored children." Before accepting her, Miss Crandall had put the matter to her pupils, some of whom had

gone to district school with Sarah. They had unanimously voted for her admission.

The minister's wife was firm. The people of Canterbury were upright New Englanders of Puritan stock, moral and high-minded and in no way opposed to the colored people becoming educated. Nevertheless, "The parents will not have it said their daughters went to school with a nigger girl." If Sarah Harris were not withdrawn, the other pupils would be.

THOUGH she had invested all her money in the school and even gone several hundred dollars in debt, Miss Crandall's reply was equally firm: the school could sink before she turned the girl out.

What followed was as predicted: the pupils began to drop away. Miss Crandall, a modest but determined Quaker, came to a decision that she wrote in January, 1833, to William Lloyd Garrison, editor of the abolitionist paper the *Liberator*: "I wish to know your opinion respecting changing white scholars for colored ones. I have been for some months past determined if possible during the remaining part of my life to benefit the people of color. I do not dare tell any one of my neighbors anything about the contemplated change in my school, and I beg you, sir, that you will not expose it to any one." She asked him if it was possible to find "20 or 25 young ladies of color to enter this school for the term of one year at the rate of \$25 per quarter includ-

ing board, washing and tuition . . ."

Garrison reacted to Miss Crandall's proposed school "with a rush of pleasurable emotions" and set about helping her in every way he could. When the village of Canterbury discovered her plan a month later, it had a rush of somewhat different emotions. To block the plan, it formed a committee headed by Arthur T. Judson, who had just built a handsome house cater-cornered from Miss Crandall's on the village green. Mr. Judson, a politically ambitious lawyer, was a colonizationist; in other words, he believed that all Negroes were unfit for intellectual training and should be exiled from America to some colony of their own. Another member of the committee that now waited on Miss Crandall was the village physician, Andrew Harris, also a neighbor on the green. Their reasons for opposing the school followed lines that have become familiar. Morally, of course, they felt a real regard for the colored people and were perfectly willing for them to be educated—but in some other place. A school for Negro girls in the center of Canterbury would lower real-estate values and keep new people from settling, with a resultant loss of taxes; society might become leveled and there was the ugly possibility of intermarriage. It would bring "ruin and disgrace" on everyone.

ON MARCH 9, 1833, the people of Canterbury held a noisy town meeting. Miss Crandall's proposed school was denounced as a plot against the general peace and prosperity, and the principal was branded a dupe of "male conspirators." Three attorneys, friends of Garrison's, sat at the back of the hall trying to say that Miss Crandall would be willing to move her school to a house less conspicuously situated than on the village green, but they were threatened with violence if they spoke and as a result were never heard. At the end of the meeting a resolution was passed disapproving the school and pledging Canterbury to oppose it in all possible ways. There was only one dissenting vote.

"Heathenism Outdone!" Garrison headlined an account of the meeting in the next issue of the *Liberator*