

Inaugural Message  
of  
Governor Adam McMullen  
To the Legislature of  
Nebraska



January 8, 1925

GOVERNOR McMULLEN'S  
INAUGURAL MESSAGE

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE FORTY-THIRD SESSION  
OF THE LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

You have been chosen by your fellow-citizens as their representatives in the law making body of the government of the state, a position that not only confers high honor but also carries with it responsibilities both serious and sacred. They are serious because for the time being, you have been entrusted with the power to define, regulate and control the legal rights of the citizens of a great commonwealth; they are sacred because your official acts will have much to do with advancing or retarding the moral and material progress of more than a million people.

On the other hand, you have been favored with an unusual opportunity to render unselfish service to society. You are in a position now to help do the things you believe will be of benefit to the state. Your task will not be easy; your road will not always be smooth. You will find divergence of opinion where you expected reasonable uniformity, and you will be confronted with conflicting interests where you had a right to believe there would be mutual sympathy and common concern.

The executive department, let me assure you, will be anxious and desirous to work with you

in every possible way. While the duties of the legislative and executive branches are entirely different, still, their aims and purposes are identical. Each should strive, within the channels prescribed by the Constitution, to carry out the will of the people. Each should co-operate with the other to the end that the details of a sound and efficient program shall be carried out.

In this spirit of co-operation for the common good, and as required by the Constitution of our state, I have the honor to submit the following suggestions for your consideration:

#### PLATFORM PLEDGES

The political party whose members constitute a majority vote in both the senate and the house pledged certain specific legislation in its platform. All such pledges should be redeemed and all promises covering definite legislation should be held inviolate.

#### AGRICULTURE

In Nebraska, agriculture is the basic industry. If agriculture prospers all other industries will prosper. Trade and commerce will function upon a profitable basis; labor will be given ready employment under favorable conditions, and all other lines of endeavor will be made comfortable and remunerative. No one state can be expected to solve all the farming problems because some of those problems, if not most of them, are beyond the reach of legislative solution, and some are inter-sectional and international. Yet each agricultural state

should do all that is possible to be done by legislation to improve farming conditions, and Nebraska should lead in this direction as it always has in the past.

In the main, the future of agriculture depends, and will depend, upon the energy, skill and thrift of the farmer himself. Legislation cannot create wealth. It can, at most, direct the conditions under which it is created. But legislation can and should have much to do with the distribution of wealth once it is created. Within these limitations every effort should be bent, in my opinion, to the assistance of agriculture. Such obstacles as may exist in our laws, to the organization of sound agricultural enterprise, should be removed. Such improvements as experience has shown to be needed in the laws, under which these enterprises organize and operate, should be made. Such measures as seem wisely calculated to adjust production of farm products to their probable consumption and that tend to promote orderly and efficient marketing and distribution, should have your hearty support.

A prevailing agricultural problem is the adequate dealing with bovine tuberculosis. It is well known to be a source of great loss to the breeders and the farmers of the state. It is a grave and constant menace to human health. It can be eradicated by *energetic* state-wide action. Means to make such action possible should be provided by you.

#### ROADS

Roads are becoming daily of more importance to the people of the state. The growth of traf-

fic, the increased use of the highways for the marketing of farm products, make it needful that continuous improvement should occur. In the past, much needed work has been neglected or postponed with resulting losses of large extent. If Nebraska is to keep abreast of the needs of her growing industries and her agriculture, she must adopt and adhere to a constant policy of extension and improvement of the roads of the state. I am opposed to building roads from the proceeds of bond issues. I advocate their construction, in sane compliance with the needs of the state, from current funds. I shall constantly urge the most economical and thrifty use of such funds upon roads so built and so located as will most speedily bring the products of farm and factory nearer to the consumer.

#### GASOLINE TAX

Among the many sources of revenue for road construction and improvement, a tax upon gasoline used in motor vehicles, has met with most general favor and is now a method of raising revenue in a large majority of the American states. Its fairness seems obvious. It tends to place the burden of the cost of the road program upon the user of the roads in proportion to his use of them. The heavy vehicle which naturally wears hardest upon the highways, with its relatively greater consumption of gas, will pay its due share. The pleasure vehicle, without apparent economic importance, also pays its due proportion. Such a tax is easy and certain of collection, and I recommend the passage of legislation necessary for its adoption in this state. I also recommend, however, that

with the imposition of a tax upon gasoline, there go concurrently a reduction in the license now charged for motor vehicles. In my belief there should be no increase in the amount of taxation, but only a change to a more equitable means of procuring the necessary revenue for roads.

#### SAFETY IN HIGHWAY TRAFFIC

I invite your attention and ask your action upon legislation greatly needed to increase the safety of the users of our public roads. The toll of death and injury upon the highways is appalling. Some adequate provision should be made whereby the criminally careless or incompetent driver be effectively penalized for his misuse of the roads of this state. A proper system of traffic regulations and provisions for summary punishment of offenders calculated to prevent a repetition of the offense, should have your careful consideration.

#### LAW ENFORCEMENT

The basis of sound government lies upon respect for the law. Unless the laws are adequately enforced this basis is impaired. The governor of this state makes no laws. It is his duty to enforce such laws as the statutes direct him to enforce. I invite your thoughtful consideration of such amendments to our civil and criminal codes as may increase the certainty of punishment and may tend to lessen the number of shocking crimes of violence against the persons and property of our citizens. As governor of Nebraska, I promise you every effort will be made, within my constitutional and statutory powers, to enforce them. Violations

of the prohibitory laws lead in many instances to other violations of other laws and the commission of other crimes. It will be my purpose to aid and assist in the suppression of this illegal and criminal traffic.

#### IRRIGATION

The importance of the large and growing sugar beet industry, of our western counties, to the general prosperity of Nebraska, must be apparent to all. Those sections of the state devoted to this branch of agricultural production are noted for their thrift and energy and are capable, under proper encouragement, of greater development to the general benefit of all the people of the state. Their industry depends upon an ample and steady source of water for irrigation, and any action that will tend to prevent encroachment upon the sources of water now available for this use, should have your earnest support.

#### LABOR

Without labor all industry fails. Whatever improves the standard of labor improves society as a whole. Labor thus far has progressed through intelligent application of principles producing permanent benefit. The eight hour day is now recognized as a just and equitable period for service. The right to collective bargaining by labor's delegates is universally unquestioned. The compensation law as written into the statutes of our state is of common benefit to both employer and employee. Its success like the success of any other law, rests upon the

manner of its administration. Any legislation tending to facilitate or improve such administration, will receive my approval.

### ECONOMY

There is always an urgent need of economy in connection with public expenditures. I urge upon you the most mature consideration of thrift and efficiency in the use of appropriated funds. The burden of the tax-payer is heavy. Where possible it should be lightened. While it is true that by far the greater portion of the taxes in Nebraska are levied by agencies other than the legislature, still, you should have constantly in mind the purpose of making taxes still lower, provided, it can be done without impairing any of the necessary activities of the state. I promise you that so far as the executive branch of the government is concerned, diligent and constant effort will be exercised to direct the expenditure of the funds appropriated by you so that the people shall receive full value for their money. However, a wise discrimination upon all points of economy should always be maintained. It is frequently the case that prudent expenditure is the truest thrift. The various institutions of the state, for example, should not be made to suffer through a mis-application of so-called economy, nor should any department of the state government be hampered in efficiency through lack of necessary funds.

### INTANGIBLE TAX

A law was enacted at a recent session of the Nebraska legislature to define, classify and tax so called "intangible" property so as to pro-

duce, what advocates of that law hoped, would be a larger and steadier stream of revenue to the state. In its operation that law has proved a disappointment to many people. An amendment either of classification or in the rate of the tax, or both, would seem in the light of experience to be required, and to such amendment I herewith call your attention.

#### EDUCATION

Nebraska deservedly ranks high in the standing of its educational institutions. They are among our greatest assets and attract to our state each year many new citizens and result, indirectly, in the investment of much capital. In more ways than one they pay large dividends to the people of the state. The economic conditions of the past few years have required appropriations for these institutions to be lessened, while at the same time the attendance has greatly increased in all or in most of them. Crowding of students and lack of sufficient facilities for instruction and supervision have progressed to the point where further continuation of these conditions means a permanent lowering of educational standards. I therefore urge upon you a careful study of these problems to the end that all necessary action be taken adequately to maintain and promote the cause of education.

#### STATE CAPITOL

The new capitol building has progressed far enough to make it clear that if completed according to the plans of its gifted designer it will be a monument for many long years to the civic dignity of a great state. The manage-

ment of its erection seems to have been ably conducted by the commission in charge. I am informed that to complete the structure will require a continuation of the present levy for a period of practically three years. I recommend the passage of the appropriate legislation to produce the necessary funds.

#### CONCLUSION

In the foregoing paragraphs I have called your attention to several matters which I think require your consideration and action. It may be that as the session progresses other vital and important subjects, pressing for legislative recognition, will come to my notice. Should such be the case, I shall consider it my duty under the constitution to submit them to you.

Finally, in view of the responsibilities placed upon us, let it be our mutual privilege to perform our respective duties in a manner that will not only reflect upon our efforts but also will result in promoting the general welfare of the state.

ADAM McMULLEN.