

INAUGURAL MESSAGE
of
VAL PETERSON
GOVERNOR



To The
MEMBERS OF THE SIXTY-SECOND SESSION
Of The
STATE LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA

Lincoln, Nebraska

Delivered January 4, 1951

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, and Members of the Senate;

Mr. Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court;

My fellow Constitutional Officers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

We meet in a difficult hour. Guns of war are blazing and at this very moment American boys are dying upon the battlefields of Korea.

The world is divided into two great warring camps and slowly, but surely, all the peoples of the world are being forced into one or the other of these camps.

The aims of world communism, centered in Russia, are crystal clear and easily available to anyone who is willing to scrutinize communistic literature. World revolution and the destruction of religion and democracy are the objectives of those who take their orders from the Kremlin. Nothing is sacred. All individuals and institutions which stand in the way are to be ruthlessly eliminated. Subversion, deceit and sabotage are favorite weapons of these emissaries of destruction.

Communism as an economic doctrine or practice is as old as mankind. It need not be feared. In fact, its successes have been so limited as to be practically negligible. But the revolutionary doctrines of Marx and Engels, augmented by the devilish devices and practices of the masters of Russia, require that we and free men everywhere, be ready for any eventuality if we are to survive. Never before has it been truer that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance.

Why we have been so slow to sense the danger which confronts us, why we committed the blunders that have brought about the loss of nearly all of Asia, why we have coddled Communists at home and abroad, we need not consider here today. Some of us, for years, have been raising our voices against what we thought were fatal mistakes in our foreign policy, particularly as it applied to the far east. But the urgency of present events has carried us past the stage of debate. Our troops are committed upon foreign soil. Our President has declared a national emergency. No one knows where or when the next blow will fall. but all expect it and dread it. Our job now, as representatives of a great commonwealth and as citizens, is to cooperate fully in the common effort to preserve everything which we hold dear. Large scale mobilization is underway. All-out war could come to our shores at any time, bringing with it for America its first taste of modern warfare, the destructiveness of bombs, both conventional and atomic, and the horrors of bacteriological attack.

We face a skillful, a determined, a competent and powerful enemy. Victory for the ideals cherished by free men will not come easily. It will not come at all unless we are prepared to defend ourselves, unless we are willing to make the sacrifices which mobilization requires. America must reach her maximum strength in production. She must renew her faith in herself and in the idealism which led to her greatness. Ours must be total preparation. We must bear in mind constantly that in the long run the battle against Communism will not be won on the field of combat, but rather in the minds of men.

Personally, I face the future with confidence. Evil forces many times before have threatened the peace and safety of the world. Always when the danger has become evident the forces of decency have rallied and smashed those who would throw mankind back into the darkness of the past. America has the resources, spiritual as well as material, to permit her to meet successfully any challenge which lies ahead. Our greatest danger lies in the failure to see the situation clearly, in confusion and in the refusal to understand that we cannot gain security and simultaneously enjoy all of the gadgets that characterize American life. We must recognize and make the sacrifices which are necessary.

CIVILIAN DEFENSE

Nebraskans can take a considerable measure of pride in the fact that America's civilian defense plans were developed largely under the direction of the late Russell J. Hopley and that other Nebraskans have played a prominent part in their formulation.

Responsibility for civilian defense has been vested in the states and while the federal government will offer leadership and will finance certain features of the program, the states must assume direction. The real work must, of necessity, be done at the local level. If we are to protect ourselves and be prepared to continue the vital activities of civilians, without which a war could not be won, we must have the utmost cooperation at all levels of government, local, state and national.

We are extremely fortunate in Nebraska in that in our state there would appear to be no targets of the highest priority. Omaha, and possibly Lincoln, might be bombed and preparation must be made accordingly. The greatest danger, not alone in Nebraska, but throughout the nation, would appear to be from sabotage carried on by native communists. Great danger lies too in the introduction of germ warfare, which the Russians might undertake by floating

deadly germs into our country by the medium of paper balloons. In the last war, the Japanese floated thousands of these balloons into America by taking advantage of the prevailing winds.

Whether Nebraska is bombed or not, and God grant that we may be spared such disaster, we must be organized to extend relief to our neighbors in such great cities as Chicago, Kansas City, St. Louis, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Denver, and possibly others, through organized mobile support units. We must be prepared to receive victims of the bombings into our state for hospitalization.

Should the ravages of modern warfare reach America, survival will depend upon our ability to continue the production of war material and necessities of our economy in spite of enemy action. The only way this can be done is through carefully worked out civil defense procedures based upon the experiences of the English and the other people who have undergone the trials of bombing. No one knows when war may come, but on that day it will be too late to concern ourselves with civilian defense. Consequently, we simply must plan and drill and re-drill in advance and that means immediately. It means, too, that we will have to spend money for the equipment and the personnel necessary to carry out the program.

Acting under the authority of LB 523, enacted at the last session of the Legislature I have established the Nebraska Advisory Defense Committee, appointed a Vice Chairman thereof, and the committee has in turn designated an Executive Director. For several months, in addition to his other duties, State Treasurer, Ed Gillette, has assumed the responsibility for supervision of civilian defense preparation in our state. He has attended a number of meetings and has organized civilian defense to the extent that this has been possible. Mr. Gillette has been named as Executive Director of the Nebraska Advisory Defense Committee. In addition to his activities, we have sent several governmental specialists to meetings and training schools to receive instruction in their fields.

In my judgment, a successful civilian defense program in Nebraska requires the full-time services of an Executive Director with a small staff. Accordingly, I have had prepared for introduction today, and request passage by your body, of an appropriation in the amount of \$100,000 to initiate civilian defense activities in Nebraska immediately. I request consideration of this measure and urge you to expedite its passage.

I can assure you that it will be our purpose to utilize every instrument of government presently existing before we add anything

under this civilian defense program. I can assure you, too, that every dollar appropriated will be handled with the utmost care. In this, a period of emergency, it is more important than ever that we receive the maximum for every dollar which is expended. I point with pride to our record in handling the \$500,000 which you made available to the administration in connection with Operation Snow-bound. Due to the speed with which Major General Lewis Pick proceeded and by careful management, we were able to return to the Treasury \$327,716.14. I point out to you, too, that of the \$50,000 appropriated by the last session for storm emergencies, not one penny has been expended to date.

I do not know what the eventual cost of our state civilian defense program will be. I believe, however, that the request which I have made will be ample to permit us to function effectively until toward the end of your session when we see our needs more clearly.

To strengthen our Nebraska civilian defense program, I am submitting for your consideration a bill incorporating the ideas of the Council of State Governments.

STATE GUARD

While we have received no notification, it appears entirely likely that our National Guard may be called to action in the next few months. When it leaves our borders, there will be no organized force ready to function in event of any of the many situations which would require it. Should one of our cities be bombed, the first and probably the most difficult job would be to maintain law and order. It appears likely that this could not be done without the employment of a State Guard. Such a catastrophe might befall us within thirty minutes after our National Guard units leave. Then, again, it would be too late to start talking about the organization of a militia. The need would be at hand. Accordingly, I suggest that you amend Section 55-201 Revised Statutes of Nebraska to authorize the establishment of a Nebraska State Guard immediately.

It is our present plan to organize five battalions of 250 men each. It is my understanding that the federal government will provide arms and uniforms for such bodies. I think that it is imperative that you act upon this suggestion as promptly as possible.

INSTITUTIONAL BUILDING

In the firm belief that America cannot gird herself in the current emergency without the employment of all her manpower and ma-

terial for mobilization purposes, and, also, to help fight the vicious inflationary spiral, which is consuming us all, I recommend to your Honorable Body that it freeze all public institution construction not already under way or not necessary to further the mobilization program.

I announced to the press sometime ago that I would make this suggestion for your consideration, and I am pleased to report to you that the response of the state agencies affected has been excellent. They all want to cooperate fully. The University of Nebraska has three projects, a Meat Laboratory, a Dairy Barn, and an Insectary, each of which it feels can contribute to mobilization and war should it eventuate. Upon examination you may be in agreement and in view of the fact that the responsibility rests in your hands, I am referring its desire to proceed with this construction to you for such action as you deem advisable.

Our state has made tremendous advances in the improvement of its physical plants through the forward-looking 1.1 mill levy building program enacted by the Sixtieth session of the Legislature. In my judgment, the best interests of our state require that the program be continued. Therefore, I recommend to you that while the present emergency in America requires that building be suspended, you permit the levy to continue in effect during that period and the funds to accumulate to the credit of the institutions involved. Such a course will permit the orderly continuation of the program at the earliest possible time. I have prepared for introduction a bill incorporating my ideas in this matter.

It is my intention to discuss some matters of state government in greater detail in connection with my budget message. It is also my intention to direct messages upon separate subjects to you at different times during the session as they may be appropriate.

I extend to you a hearty welcome as you undertake the responsibilities which are yours. I join with you in pride in the good government which has long characterized Nebraska and which we have today. No state enjoys cleaner, more efficient and economical government than does Nebraska. I pledge to you my utmost cooperation, and I know I may do so also for the other Constitutional Officers, with whom I am pleased to be associated. We want to be of assistance to you in every way possible, to see that the people of our state receive not only the finest governmental service possible but also the maximum benefit for every dollar of tax money expended.