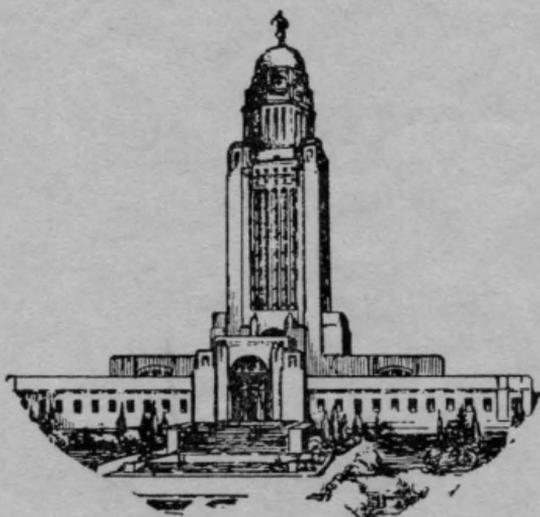


***Inaugural Message***  
of  
**Robert B. Crosby**  
GOVERNOR

To The  
MEMBERS OF THE  
SIXTY-FIFTH SESSION  
Of The  
**State Legislature of  
Nebraska**



Lincoln, Nebraska

Delivered January 8, 1953

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker and  
Members of the Legislature:

The responsibilities of the office of governor have just been settled upon me. I knew they would weigh heavily. How heavily I did not dream!

I confess to my own inadequacy. Your help and advice will be needed. I know you won't withhold them. I shall need God's help and I shall seek it.

In giving you this message I am fulfilling a requirement of the constitution. I make no pretense that my thoughts are entitled to your consideration for any other person than this: that what I say today was widely expressed by me during the campaigns of last year and may be regarded in some measure as having received a majority acceptance by the voters.

For a few moments I shall digress to make some acknowledgements.

I am succeeding Governor Val Peterson. He has experienced the political tides at both the high mark and the low mark. I find his administration of state affairs to have been clean, honest, and vigorous. He is to be commended as one of Nebraska's many fine governors.

With pleasure I acknowledge my companions, the other elected state officers. Without exception I am proud to be on

the same team with them. If some of the new members of the legislature have gained an unfavorable opinion of any of them, I warrant that they will have a better opinion upon close acquaintance.

One more thing—and the campaign is over so please don't regard this as political flattery—I recognize a large measure of ability in your membership. Even though I may seem to be distracted by the host of new duties that confront me, please remember that I will feel pleasure in listening to your views on any problem under the sun. I want our problems to be shared. I hope to earn your goodwill and respect.

Now to the purpose of an inaugural message: To sketch shortly the outlines of my views on state problems.

What is the most important problem? Just this: How, against the background of the world conflict between western civilization and the Communist regime, can we in state government contribute most.

I won't labor the point that our tradition, that of individual liberty stemming from teachings of Christianity and Judaism, cannot be reconciled with the Communist culture. They outnumber us of the free world by almost two to one; they control most of the world's area. Historically, and from any other point of view, the survival of a society of free

people is not assured.

It is not just of military conflict that I speak, although I am not one who takes a detached attitude toward the horror in Korea.

Even more I am thinking of the conflict of ideas. During my own little campaigns of last year I felt fright at the number of people in this state who have come to look on government as our main hope for bringing happiness, self respect and material welfare to people. This is such a sad fallacy—the more sad because it has entrapped the minds of men so often. For those who want to see this truth, let them finger the pages of history—or better yet, let them as members of this generation draw on their personal recollection of the eventual tragedy that has befallen our brothers in some other countries: those who magnified the efficacy of government.

The thought I have just tried to express is central in my political thinking. If you do not agree with me, please concede that I am utterly sincere and am not saying it for show.

In the light of what I have said, I regard the proper role of state government in 1953 as being one of restraint—state officers and the legislature should exercise a restraint far beyond what we have seen in other states or in Washington.

By "restraint" I mean this: only the essential services of state government should be maintained, and that must be done with the least outlay of money and man power. Any savings of tax money and employment hours that we can manage belong first to individual men and women, each of whom would rather make his own way by his own effort. Government fiat cannot rub out the fact that each of us is essentially alone in this world, and that each of us has only a brief interval in which to justify his personality. Whatever of serenity that I capture in my time will come through my own effort, it will not be conferred upon me by government.

Next, and for the time being perhaps first, any savings of tax money and employment time belong to the federal government in that part of its activity which supports the Korean war and which readies us for a possible world war.

In common sense, we cannot now afford any frills. In all but the most fundamental government services we can certainly endure at least a moratorium on expansion of state government.

Permit me to apply this to some specific details of state government.

### **Administrative Reorganization**

Not since 1919 has there been a comprehensive effort to put into better order the administrative functions of our state

government. In the meantime the number of independent agencies has increased more than seven fold. It may be that the present administrative pattern is the most efficient that is possible—but I doubt it.

As to the detailed manner of reorganization I shall find it easy to defer to the judgment of the legislature.

Even a modest reorganization will not be easy. I have found that almost everyone approves the general idea. A specific proposal, however, will almost certainly meet with resistance from the affected department or from that department's constituency among the public.

Today I shall make a few specific proposals, and I hope to find time to have a few bills prepared. Neither these proposals nor any bills that I may draft are clothed with a mandate. What I mention today requires legislation, and that is your province. What can be done by administrative order is my duty, and a good start has already been made: in the department of agriculture, for instance, some excellent suggestions for consolidation of inspection activities have already been offered by Ed Hoyt, whose name I shall later offer to you for appointment as director of that department.

With regard to the department of agriculture, it seems to me that it is burdened with too many non-agricultural functions. State inspection of restaurants,

hotels, rooming houses, confectioneries and the like ought to be under the supervision of the public health department. Collection of cigarette and motor fuel taxes should be done in a department of taxation and finance, headed by the state tax commissioner.

Highways are an acute problem. The state engineer, who is responsible for highway administration, ought not to be distracted by too many unrelated responsibilities. The bureau of irrigation should be in the department of agriculture. Its engineering staff could remain intact, and necessary engineering assistance from the highway department could continue. There would be the added advantage of placing irrigation in its proper context, i. e. agriculture. The state safety patrol is a law enforcement activity, coupled with the duty of assisting in emergencies and major breaches of the peace. In practice this activity has been under the governor's direction, and could well be placed in a division of administration stemming from the governor's office.

In such a division of administration, besides the safety patrol, should be placed some other administrative functions, such as those of the state purchasing agent, the budget supervisor and the general supervision of personnel.

The administration of school lands and funds should be strengthened as almost everyone acknowledges. The device of an

ex-officio board, the Board of Educational Lands and Funds, is unsatisfactory at the outset. However, improvement could be accomplished by giving the board authority to appoint a qualified director with adequate salary. With regard to the supervision of school lands, the board should have authority, if it is needed, to locate the administrative personnel in an office in the western half of the state where the school lands are located.

Public assistance now accounts for almost one-fourth of the state's total spending. Yet its organizational status is somewhat that of an unrecognized stepchild. The governor now appoints the director, but once appointed his administrative superior is the board of control. Legislation is desirable to give public assistance a clear status, with a plain definition of authority and responsibility. It is further desirable to give the county assistance activities the status of a department, and a definite authority to exercise a maximum of local administration.

### **Spending of Money**

The word "economy" has come to have a demagogic flavor. However, that is what I am talking about. The spending of other people's money by state employees has more than tripled in the last decade. In the same time the population of the state has hardly increased. To be frank, a comparison of the per capita spending of our state government with

that of other states is not very useful. Many other state governments have assumed the responsibility for services that we in Nebraska still leave to local units of government. In passing, I should tell you that I like this characteristic of Nebraska's government. In the long run the chief internal threat to freedom in this country lies in the tendency to centralize activities that should remain with local government.

The spending of excessive amounts of money by government employees is of course a burden to tax payers. An even greater evil is associated with it. Each new spending activity requires a new bureau; each new bureau causes some new regulations to be issued; each new regulation limits the individual freedom of some persons. Historically the achievement of personal liberty has depended upon a people's success in limiting its government.

In this thinking there are many who disagree with me. I expect it.

The budget which I shall submit to you will be considered by some as unduly restrictive. I am convinced, however, that most people want reduced government. Many such people do not seek publicity for their views. I wish they did.

### **Roads**

Perhaps the most talked about issue in state politics is the "road problem".

As for my own part in meeting this problem, there are two special assurances that I wish to give you. First, during my term there will be no "political" roads built. To the limit of my ability there will be a planned program of road construction and repair based on priorities that can be defended as best serving the general public need.

Second, in this field as in others my constitutional role is that of administrator. It is up to you to provide the amount of money that you think the circumstances require and permit. It is up to me to get the last inch of good roads from that money.

I do intend to make one recommendation to you, and to suggest one thing that I think is a fact.

The recommendation: that you seriously consider the creation of a bi-partisan highway commission. In my judgment it should be a part time commission and it should be restricted to the formation of broad general policies.

The fact: that if you wish to achieve a substantial improvement in our highways you must provide more adequate funds than are now available.

### **Education**

Nebraska has lagged in the field of public education.

With regard to grade schools and high schools permit me to make these suggestions:

1. The standards for certifying teachers should be made higher.

2. The redistricting law should be strengthened so that consolidation will be mandatory under certain minimum conditions.

3. A new effort should be made to distribute the school tax burden more equally.

4. The administration of school lands and funds must be improved, as I have above suggested, so that maximum income will be obtained from rentals, royalties and interest; school lands should not be sold.

5. The state teachers' retirement fund must be placed on a sounder financial and actuarial basis.

6. Salaries of teachers should exceed minimum levels that are in keeping with the responsibility of teachers in our social system.

With regard to "higher education", so called, I feel some special concern about two departments of the university. Of course, the state university is a point of pride with all of us. We want it to be a good one. It should be adequately sup-

ported in all of its departments, both undergraduate and graduate. However, I feel justified in recommending expansion of only two departments: the research activities of the College of Agriculture, and the College of Medicine.

Nebraska is an agricultural state and there is a continuing need for better research that will promote the welfare of agriculture. I do not want to see agricultural research scattered here and there throughout state government. It should be consolidated in the College of Agriculture.

With regard to the University Medical College, I am told that there is some danger of its losing its accreditation. This would be unthinkable. Our state should do its share in providing an adequate supply of well trained doctors.

### **Property Assessment**

In assessing property for tax purposes we are permitting serious injustices. For as long as I can remember there has been lack of uniformity among counties, among different classes of property and among individual property owners. I have watched various state tax commissioners apply earnest effort to this problem but with disappointing results. I suggest that you create a state board with sufficient authority to assist the tax commissioner in matters of policy. It is indefensible that one section or group should have an un-

fair amount of property tax burden imposed upon it.

### **Resources**

Because I have expressed what is badly named the "conservative" kind of political thinking, please do not think that I am blind to the great material development that Nebraska people can achieve. I want state government to provide a friendly environment for the promotion of all of Nebraska's resources.

Already I have mentioned the state's part in agricultural research. We must further the development of irrigation, flood control and soil conservation, remembering to keep this development at the level of local control wherever possible as is suggested in some of the proposed enabling legislation for water sheds. We must encourage the production of oil and natural gas. Business and industrial development must be stimulated, taking care that we do not enter the field of subsidization of private enterprise. By good roads and other means we should attract tourists to our state.

### **Public Assistance**

I recommend that the law be amended so that the records of expenditures of public money for assistance shall be open to inspection by any citizen. This need not involve the disclosure of confidential communications by assistance recipients.

I do not want anyone entitled to public assistance to be denied a decent subsistence. I want the ceilings to be high enough to permit this.

On the other hand, we must not permit public assistance to be so generous that it is an inducement for people to become unproductive and dependent on government support. I am told that less than one-fifth of our citizens over age 65 are on the public assistance rolls. The balance of our senior citizens are managing for themselves or are being assisted by relatives and friends. We must not do them the injustice of making their lot poorer than that of people being supported by tax money.

I have found it difficult to make it clear that I feel the deepest sympathy for elderly people and children who have come upon bad times, have no one to whom to turn and are helpless. I want them treated with respect and kindness. At the same time I believe in enforcing the responsibility of children who are able to help their parents and of fathers who are able to care for their minor children. Enforcement of these responsibilities conforms to the generally accepted notions of decent human conduct.

In this field I have been dismayed and hurt by some criticism that has been directed at me. I cannot avoid the feeling that it is a cheap substitute for charity to urge the spending of tax money for those

who have a claim to our love by reason of kinship. Charity, as I understand it, is the sharing of one's own substance with another.

### **A Centennial**

Next year, 1954, is the 100th Anniversary of the establishment of Nebraska territory. The Nebraska State Historical Society has made a recommendation to me concerning the appropriate observance of this event. A committee of the Omaha Chamber of Commerce has also brought this matter to my attention. I recommend that you designate a temporary legislative committee to consider the proper part that state government should take in this Centennial commemoration.

### **Social Groups**

An unfortunate defect of human thinking is that we classify our fellows into groups and then symbolize each group.

One man feels that every employer is by nature an oppressor of the workingman. Another feels that no member of a labor union can have the capacity to understand and be fair to management.

In spite of our best intentions there are few among us who can avoid grading the worth of human beings according to the pigment in their skin.

We divide according to the forms by which we relate ourselves to the Creator. Then a strange vanity seizes us, and we judge by the form he has adopted whether a fellow being is acceptable in God's eyes. A fearsome judgment! and one against which those of us in the Christian groups have been given a fearsome warning.

We group ourselves according to the amount of our material possessions—probably the most meaningless distinction of all, ever more meaningless than the groupings according to mental or physical agility.

In this country government rests on the proposition that all men are created equal.

To the extent that I can free myself from these blindnesses, the administration of our state government shall proceed from the proposition that all men are created equal. We shall seek an even-handed fairness to the rights of workingmen and employers without favoring either. We shall dispense benefits and enforce obligations without regard to color, race, creed, political party or station in life.

### **Conclusion**

I am conscious of the special honor that the people of Nebraska have conferred upon you and me. Our people in this state do not take their politics lightly. They are noted for being independent in

their thinking and well informed as an electorate. Because of the quality of Nebraska people we have had good government in this state. Much is expected of you and me—it will not be easy to measure up to what is expected. I shall do my best, and I pray that my best will be good enough.

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