

Inaugural Message

of

Victor E. Anderson

GOVERNOR

To The

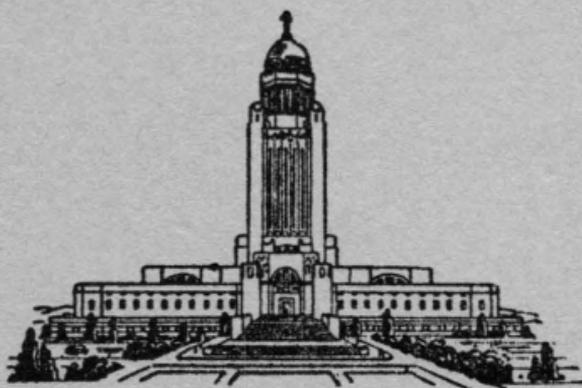
MEMBERS OF THE

SIXTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Of The

State Legislature of

Nebraska



Lincoln, Nebraska

Delivered January 6, 1955

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker

Members of the Senate:

We meet on an occasion characteristic of free people. We meet on an occasion that is denied great segments of the world's population — the inauguration of public officers chosen by free people to conduct their government. It is with a sense of high honor that I accept the responsibilities of the office of Governor. It is with equally high confidence that I join with you, the elected representatives of the people of the great State of Nebraska, in the common objective of preserving sound self-government and the American way of life for our fellow citizens and for future generations. We are, in a sense, the trustees of their freedom.

Except of course as the state has its role to play in the federal partnership, it is within the province of neither you as Senators nor me as Governor to assume ultimate responsibility for national and international problems. But I know we are each aware of the seriousness of those problems today, and that each of us in his own way prays to God for a strong free America in a world of lasting peace.

Our primary task here is to preserve sound self-government at the state level. Before touching on the principles that should guide us, I wish to make an observation about the Legislature of Nebraska. One of my most cherished privileges as an American citizen was to represent my home district in this Legislature in 1949.

It has been said that, with certain exceptions, the legislatures of our several

states have lagged behind other government institutions. Nebraska is a notable exception. It is common knowledge that your membership is of the highest dignity and ability compared with the legislative bodies of other states. Your method of open proceedings with free debate and individual responsibility, promptly and accurately reported to the people by the press, radio and T.V., has no equivalent in state government. You, members of the Senate, individually and collectively have my confidence. I seek to work with you as a team member. I am determined that together we shall protect and perpetuate sound self-government for our state. We will do that best by keeping the people well informed of our activities. To that end we may rely upon the press, radio and T.V. of Nebraska, to whose high integrity I pay my respect.

Principles That Should Guide Us

Now as to principles that should guide us. I recommend that we hold fast to those basic concepts on which our forefathers based their fight to make us free men, and which they preserved by constitutional provision, and that we follow those concepts as trustees of the freedom of our children. In providing the legislation and administration for a sound self-government, let us never forget these fundamental rights:

First: The fullest opportunity of self expression—freedom of speech and press;

Second: The opportunity to worship, each as he chooses;

Third: The opportunity to enjoy the fruits of our labors, and,

Fourth: The opportunity to provide our own government and choose from among us those who shall be our governmental officers.

These are the characteristic privileges of free men. They must be safeguarded as natural rights in our homes, in our schools, in our businesses and professions and in the operation of our governmental processes. It is by the denial of these rights that the Kremlin enslaves millions of human beings.

I wish to give you an expression of my views, in general terms, with regard to certain fields of legislation with which your honorable body will be concerned. In some of these fields your views may differ from mine. You may differ in opinion with each other, just as many of our best informed citizens differ in opinion with each other. Bear in mind, however, that a fearless expression of our views and a frank debate of the reasons supporting them provides the best tonic for the heritage of freedom. Let us always seek to settle our problems by coming to grips with fundamental issues.

Tax Economy and Efficiency in Government

The one issue that confronts every legislature and every governor of every state is taxes. This has to do with how to assess them the most fairly, and how best to hold them within prudent bounds. It has to do with thrift through efficiency in government. I have dedicated myself to be constantly alert to see that the state gets the most out of every tax dollar. As the representatives of our

people, you have been vested with the responsibility of determining the amount of tax money needed to carry on the state government, and the sources from which it should come. In the discharge of that responsibility you should constantly strive to improve our tax structure. I look for significant benefit from the recently adopted constitutional amendments proposed at your legislative session. I have confidence in the fairness and wisdom of the determination that you will make regarding the need and demand of our citizens for state expenditures and their ability to provide tax funds without injury to the economy of our state. My recommendations for the state budget for the next biennium will be the subject of a special message to your body at a later date.

Assessment and collection of taxes and expending of tax monies are among the duties of the executive branch of government. I shall strive to avoid unnecessary expenses in all matters. I shall insist on the examination and re-examination of administrative procedures in order to attain the greatest efficiency. I shall strive to exercise the utmost care in appointment of capable employees, in training them to do their jobs, and in supervising their work to the end that they are neither wasteful nor idle. I believe that every state employee should be properly paid, and should enjoy security against old age under a program comparable to that of employees of other levels of government and employees of sound successful business organizations. I want our employees to be proud to work for the State of Nebraska. I want them to be respected as persons holding important positions of public trust.

Public Welfare

Let me speak of public welfare. Our state government has a primary duty to do everything reasonably within its power for the needy elderly people who cannot work, the unfortunate who are sick or disabled, and the dependent children, and for the rehabilitation of the handicapped, to prevent or reduce dependency. Particularly, we should take advantage of federal financial assistance provided for by the amendments to the Vocational Rehabilitation Act passed by the 83rd Congress and signed last August by President Eisenhower.

The care and treatment of the mentally ill is primarily a responsibility of the states. The determination by the states to attack this great problem, fundamentally, resulted in the calling of a National Governors' Conference on Mental Health that met last February. Governors, state legislators, mental health officers and professional leaders joined together for the first time to discuss means of attacking this problem which takes a great toll of our resources, both human and material. The Governors attending the conference adopted a 10 point program which I commend to you for consideration in this field of legislation.

As Governor, I shall cooperate fully with you concerning all matters of public welfare. I shall take a direct and personal interest in all institutions that care for our people. It shall be my duty not only to understand how our institutions are operated but to take appropriate action within the scope of my authority to see that they are operated efficiently and

that the persons in them receive proper treatment.

Education

We all recognize that among our best investments is the education of our children—the citizens who will be charged with providing a sound self government tomorrow. Every child is entitled to an equal opportunity for a good education. That includes the opportunity to attend college as well as high school. We should maintain a strong state university and strong state normal schools. I believe school district reorganization should be accelerated. It results in elimination of duplicated expense, lower cost per pupil, and lower cost per class room, and at the same time brings higher teaching standards with better school facilities.

We can rightfully look with optimism for betterment of the schools of Nebraska under the supervision of the newly elected six member State Board of Education. I am very grateful for the high calibre of the persons elected to that board last November. We shall join with them in giving support to a sound educational program with adequately trained, properly paid teachers.

Natural Resources

Probably no other area in the world is so abundantly blessed with the fundamental natural resources without which man is helpless—good earth, clear water, pure air and abundant sunshine. Because of these, Nebraska has become a great livestock and agricultural producer, and has attracted business enterprises that process and market those products for human consumption throughout the world. Together with these, Nebraska

has many mineral resources (including oil and gas) which are assuming more importance in our economic life.

As elected public servants of the people of Nebraska, we must recognize that we are but trustees of many of these resources. In this capacity we must provide legislation and sound government to encourage the development and wisest use of these resources, to prevent their waste, and to enable the general public to realize the greatest possible good from them. This is an area of tremendous importance, where a great deal of pioneering remains to be done by Nebraska and her sister states. We must not neglect it.

Nebraska has properly developed many of its resources. We need now to encourage the location of more industry in our state by providing laws and a tax structure that will encourage *new* industry to come to Nebraska and to keep Nebraska an attractive place for those homegrown industries which are here and are developing our resources.

The greatest "Natural Resource" of the State of Nebraska is its people. A mixing bowl of people of different states and national origins, Nebraska through 87 years of statehood has closely guarded the dignity of the individual. We must continue to conserve and protect this sacred endowment. I plead with you to scrutinize very closely any legislation which would enmesh our people in more and closer regulation. Instead, strive always to encourage Nebraskans in the ways and rewards of freedom.

Highways

Motor vehicle travel is of concern to all Nebraskans. Safety on our highways is an objective devoutly to be sought. State government alone cannot insure safety, but we must do our part. Safety arises from three factors:

1. Safe roads—we must build them with safety in mind.
2. Reasonable regulations properly enforced—these we must provide by legislation and administration.
3. Self discipline—we must instill self discipline—and courtesy—in all licensed operators so that safety consciousness steers every vehicle.

All three of these factors, together, can mean traffic safety. The absence of any one of them will only foster the great tragedy of our time—death, injury and destruction by motor vehicle accidents.

Our law places upon your Honorable Body the task of deciding what overall policies shall govern road building and maintenance. You must determine what sums shall be spent for these purposes. The paramount consideration in this, of course, should be to balance the needs and demands of our people against their ability to pay. I have faith that your decisions will be for the benefit of all of the people and I promise you that the executive branch of government will do all in its power to carry out your policies and obtain the best roads for every tax dollar spent.

There Are Other Problems

Nebraska has a world famous Capitol. Nebraskans everywhere are rightfully

proud of it. With your assistance, I shall insist that it be used for the best interests of the state and that it be properly maintained.

The world situation requires that our people be ever alert against attack and that our civilian defense program be a good one. You wisely placed this function in the Military Department last session. While policy making in civilian defense is in the Federal Government, we should be alert in implementing these policies on the state level.

Your Honorable Body has long recognized that the State and its citizens should extend a helping hand to those who served their country so well. I trust you will continue to recognize this obligation.

We have a state of fine people with bounteous resources. We in Nebraska are enjoying a heretofore unequalled economic health. I am honored to have been chosen as Governor of this great state. I accept that high office with humility but with eager determination to share with you the responsibility of giving our people sound self-government anchored to fundamental human rights. We shall be guided by the principles of economy and efficiency. Let us ask for tax dollars sparingly and invest them wisely. Let us see that our government is kept close to the people, and that public officials are responsible to the people and responsive to their needs and desires. In that spirit let us strive for the broadest possible understanding of state problems. May God grant us the wisdom and strength to do our job well.