

INAUGURAL ADDRESS
of
GOVERNOR
WENDELL R. ANDERSON



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STATE OF MINNESOTA

To the 67th Session
of the Legislature of Minnesota

January 6, 1971

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Mr. Chief Justice, Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislature, Members of the Court, and fellow citizens of Minnesota:

I take the oath of office today mindful of a wise and ancient truth: "It is not the oath that makes us believe the man, but the man, the oath."

The people of Minnesota will judge their public servants not by their pronouncements but by their deeds.

We must begin by facing the truth, the hard truth that these are difficult times.

John Kennedy said, upon assuming office, that, "To state the facts frankly is not to despair the future nor indict the past." To state the facts frankly is to prepare to show our people that this can be a time of the greatest opportunity that we have ever known.

Other governments have had to face the problems of unemployment, inflation, a war that divides and impoverishes, a new generation impatient with injustice and delay.

But we face even more. Our people are questioning the fundamental institutions of our social order in the face of continuing unmet needs.

The catalogue of complaints is long.

The air is bad. Our people are afraid to use many of our lakes and rivers.

We cannot be sure that our children are safe from drugs anywhere in the state.

For many, decent health care costs too much - or is not even available.

There is a housing shortage, yet unemployment in the building trades is up substantially; the average young couple in Minnesota cannot afford to buy a home; those who do, find their homes threatened by high real estate taxes.

Our farmers see their livelihood, and the very existence of rural Minnesota in danger - its towns, its businesses, its basic contributions to Minnesota's way of life.

Small farms and small businesses are being enveloped by large corporations from outside our state.

Our citizens who are black or red are still the first to be unemployed - and the last to find opportunity.

Government at every level seems to flounder and drift, unable to respond to real needs, tied to the assumptions and procedures of another day.

Many doubt whether we can control or solve our problems. In every part of this state, at every age, and from every walk of life, men and women question the usefulness of government.

They doubt that our system can be responsive -- capable of new efforts and of new energy. They wonder what their government has to do with them, with their lives, with the problems that confront them every day. They speak of the government, not our government.

It was 1933, at this same place, before many of us were born, that Governor Floyd B. Olson delivered his second Inaugural Address. Economic disaster was the keynote then. Governor Olson reviewed the ugly facts of that harsh time, and saw evidence of what he called "the failure of government and our social system to function in the interests of the common happiness of the people."

That was nearly forty years ago. Decades of social and economic legislation have followed.

Yet, Olson's words can still describe our people's discontent.

The material abundance of which we hear so much does not diminish that indictment. We must say today, as Olson did then, that there has been a "failure of government and our social system to function in the interests of the common happiness of the people."

This failure, general as it is, difficult to define and describe, poses as serious a problem as any we have known.

But it also presents us with as great an opportunity. For if a paralysis of our will now frustrates our own best hopes, then a renewal of that will can bring those hopes to pass.

That is the task which we begin today: to inaugurate an age in which our will is equal to our hopes.

I believe that our people are waiting, and are ready, for such an age. They are waiting for government to catch up with them.

Never have our people known so much about the needs and the possibilities of a free society. As never before, they see beyond a quantitative standard of living; they are concerned as well with the quality of the life that each individual can lead.

Their anguish and dissatisfaction reflect a new awareness of the scope and the cost of injustice and inequity and delay.

Their awareness carries with it a willingness to work out the new, clear vision. I believe the people of this state are prepared to do what is necessary: to face facts, to make sacrifices, to experiment, to risk.

Our insights and our readiness must not be less than theirs. Whether we can meet, and justify, the expectations of those who sent us here will be the great test of these coming months.

We will fail that test unless we dare to be bold.

We will fail that test unless we break the tyranny of tradition, unless we question and change and start fresh where we must.

That is our mandate: to make our government more responsive to the people and more imaginative in the service of their needs.

But that mandate must be translated into programs. Programs that make sense. Programs that work. Programs in which the people themselves can play the largest role.

Our mandate must be translated as well into an attitude of boldness and resolve that permeates our thinking about every matter with which the state must deal.

The work we have to do is far too vast to be described in these few words or accomplished in these 120 legislative days. Our time is limited. We must establish priorities. Today, let us touch upon some areas that surely merit our first priority. Let me suggest some issues where the voice of the people seems least to have been heard.

In past legislative sessions the question was whether the state should interfere with municipalities, private corporations, or individuals who were corrupting our environment. The concern then was that profits might be cut or taxes might be increased. These too often seemed more important than bold

action to protect what we assumed were unlimited natural resources. How cautious we were, and how limited.

Now we know that our first concern must be the preservation of what we have left of the natural resources that sustain our very lives.

The people saw the problem first. They provided the leadership for us - the elected officials. Their deep concern remains unserved.

With each passing day, and with increasing anger, the people of this state sense the unchecked corruption of their environment.

They see trees dead from sulphur fumes - in a state where trees have been a limitless source of beauty and a basic part of our economy.

They see "unsafe for swimming" signs in steadily increasing numbers on lakes which gave our state its name.

Our skies are darkened, and huge piles of industrial waste are too common an aspect of our landscape.

In short, in a state made famous by the beauty of its natural environment - in a state that prides itself on the quality of its life - we have not checked the deterioration of that environment.

We must see that informed concern for the environment becomes a part of every governmental decision.

The people of our state are pleading - demanding - beseeching us - please, do something. Give our children a chance to have clean air, water - some peace and quiet - and also some fish in our lakes and streams, some birds and animals in our fields and woods.

Our first need here is a clear statement of environmental policy. The need is so compelling that it deserves to be incorporated into our state Constitution. It must be accompanied by a comprehensive, tough pollution program. It may be controversial - it will not be cheap. It will include a financing program to help fund needed sewage disposal facilities.

If we err, let it be on the side of public health. If we are too cautious, too careful - let it be caution and concern for our natural resources.

We can prevent Lake Superior from becoming a Lake Erie, if we act now. We can prevent the Mississippi from becoming an Illinois River, if we act now. We can preserve our northern wilderness in a national park, if we act now.

The public expects and will support a firm, meaningful program to save our environment. If we fail, then somebody else should be given the chance.

If preserving and restoring the general quality of our environment is among our great priorities, preventing the destruction of our human potential is surely another.

Such a major problem, urgent but unplanned for, is the shocking increase in the use of drugs.

In this last year, as I traveled around the state, no concern was voiced to me more frequently than alarm over drug abuse.

The waste and harm of drug abuse go far beyond even the shattered lives of those affected directly. It has been estimated that over fifty percent of the crime in our society is committed to finance the enormous costs of drug addiction. It is hypocritical to speak of controlling crime unless we plan as well to control the abuse of drugs.

There must be a deliberate, systematic effort on the part of government. The state should assume the major responsibility for directing and coordinating problems to control the abuse of drugs in Minnesota. The people are waiting for us to act.

This issue will be one key test of the leadership and responsiveness of government in this state. To fail the test is to foreclose a future for thousands of our citizens, and to convince hundreds of thousands of others that they cannot look to their government for leadership. I will submit to the Legislature a program to establish the governmental machinery to work toward solution of this problem.

Not all of our serious problems in Minnesota have reached the critical point as rapidly and recently as environmental quality

and drug abuse. Some have been visible for a longer time, but are taking on new dimensions because of economic, social, and technological changes in our society.

The absence of adequate housing for all our people is one of these. Increasing numbers of our citizens are unable to cope with soaring housing costs; federal programs and private industry are failing to deal effectively with the demand.

The role of state government in housing may be open to debate. But the time has passed when we can doubt that the state must play a role.

Consider the scope of the problem. Thirty percent of all housing in Minnesota is described as substandard. In 17 counties in Northern Minnesota, more than fifty percent of the housing is substandard.

In 1970, the average cost of a new family residence in Minnesota, without land, was \$24,600. In the Twin Cities metropolitan area, the cost was \$26,000.

It is estimated that to buy a new, three bedroom home in the metropolitan area, a family should have an income of \$9,600 per year. That eliminates 54% of all families in the metropolitan area -- 300,000 families who cannot afford proper housing.

Minnesota today produces fourteen thousand fewer homes each year than are required to meet our needs for housing.

And in full light of these facts we hear from our State Planning Agency the following assessment: that "there is no state housing policy in Minnesota."

No wonder the people feel that their government is out of touch with their needs.

I will propose a state housing policy and program for Minnesota in a separate message to our Legislature. The time and care we give to its deliberation will be another test of our responsiveness.

The same time and care must be devoted to putting the house of government in order.

Perhaps the clearest mandate of the last election was to reform our state legislature; to eliminate the barrier between Minnesota's people and Minnesota's government.

The legislature needs more time. With more time there is the opportunity to deal with budget problems in a reasoned and business like manner. Talk of program budgeting - eliminating waste - zero budgeting - is basically just talk, without more time. To continue to spend more than two billion dollars with little more than a cursory glance at the budget every two years, defies basic business practice and common sense. Annual sessions are overdue.

So is a reduction in the size of the Legislature. So is party designation. So are meaningful registration and financial disclosure laws governing lobbyists.

One further overdue reform goes well beyond purely organizational matters.

My own twelve years in the Legislature have left me convinced that the conduct of public officials in Minnesota - in all three branches of government - reflects a very high level of honesty and integrity.

It is for precisely this reason that we must not permit the appearance or suspicion of misconduct. Let us describe our high standards so that all may see and measure our performance by them.

I will recommend a statutory Code of Ethics for all public officials, a set of rules to eliminate the problem of conflict-of-interest, both real and apparent, for the executive branch, the legislature and the judiciary.

I will very shortly be delivering the Governor's Budget Message to a joint session of our legislature.

In that budget address, I can deal most properly with the role the state must play if we are to reduce the burden of high regressive taxes on our homes - the single most critical financial issue in our state today.

The funding of our public and private schools, the care of our handicapped, and the recreational and cultural needs of our people will also be considered in the budget message.

Special messages will address the urgent problems of rural Minnesota, the need for medical care accessible to all of our people, human rights, a new hard look at our corrections system, the needs of labor and business, transportation, the rising rate of crime, and the rest of the agenda of unfinished business of our state.

There is a great deal to be done, but I am sure that we can do it.

I have great confidence in the legislature, and rightly so. I know you.

I know our system and I know that it works.

I believe our system with all its deficiencies is still the best devised by man. No other system offers so effective a balance between order and freedom. No other system permits us such liberty to alter our own destiny.

If in this legislative session we commit every talent and every resource to meet the problems that have been avoided too long, then we can renew the people's faith in our system.

I believe that we can convince our people, young and old, rich and poor, black and red and brown and white, that government works and government works for them.

It will require the best use we can make of our talent for government and the closest working relationships we can develop with private citizens and private groups. We must ask, as Lincoln did at his inaugural "Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world?"

Together, we can close the wasteful gulf between our will and our deeds.

Together, we can reach a plane at which purposes and programs are truly one.

Together, we can reverse the enduring indictment to which Floyd Olson gave such stern expression.

Let that reversal be our mandate. Let us start today to build a state where men speak not of the failure, but of the commitment "of government and our social system to function in the interests of the common happiness of the people."

And let me say a final word about our special role at this special time. In addition to the programs that we are able to put into practice, we have another duty as well. We must be the unflinching spokesmen of moral leadership.

We must show that insensitivity and lawlessness are equal evils - and that neither will be tolerated in this state. We must know that no problem is either simple or impossible. We must

understand that our system of government will prevail and endure so long as government remains the best expression of the people themselves.

We shall see to it that it does!