President pro tempore Byers then presented Governor George A. Wilson, who delivered the following address:

GOVERNOR WILSON’S MESSAGE

MR. PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MEMBERS OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, FELLOW CITIZENS:

I extend my sincere congratulations to you, the chosen representatives of the people as members of the Fiftieth General Assembly of the State of Iowa.

You have been honored by selection of the electors of your respective districts to assemble here at the State Capitol to determine and declare the policies and procedure of the State in matters of public importance. Your assignment imposes at once a heavy duty and a solemn responsibility.

This meeting of representatives entrusted with authority is the solid substance of the American system of republican government under which the American people have made that progress which today commands the admiration of the whole world.

It is our duty, yours and mine, all of us, to give a new demonstration of our appreciation of freedom within the pattern of representative government.

We are fortunate, also, in the atmosphere of confidence and good will prevailing here and in the singleness of purpose that you all feel. We are of one mind as to the issues that were under discussion by the voters last year. You enter upon your duties under most favorable auspices.

This is the Fiftieth General Assembly, which indicates that our State is nearing the close of its first century of statehood. The structure built in those growing years is solid and enduring.

Your opportunity for service comes at a time which calls for all the noblest qualities of manhood in the exercise of the highest functions of citizenship.

We are engaged in adjusting our peaceful pursuits to demands that are imposed from the most distant parts of the globe. The time is therefore important for our State as one of the component parts of the American republic and of the whole of the world. Here in Iowa as everywhere that men are free to think and act there is need for unselfishness and patriotic service as never before.

Looking out from the comparatively tranquil vantage point of Iowa, we sometimes find it hard to comprehend the whole medley of conflicting world interests and clashing opinions.

But we do know, and fully understand, the seriousness of the situation as it involves our free institutions and the safety of our peaceful homes.

The Iowa General Assembly has convened in a time of great national peril through war. In the dark days of 1861-65 two special sessions were needed to provide for Iowa’s part in the supreme effort to save the union. Fortunately, Iowa made early preparation for the crisis of this time. But the present war has brought about complications no one could anticipate. It will devolve upon you to be diligent and foresighted as to many matters touching the march of our people and our allies toward a just peace through a complete victory.

I have confidence in you and have no doubt that you will measure up to the high standard needful that Iowa shall do all and more than her share in the gigantic task of winning the war. Iowa’s part is to contribute greatly to the crushing of organized destructiveness and to the permanent restoration of order to the prostrate civilization of our generation.

Necessarily our chief concern as citizens of the greatest republic ever organized by free men is to safeguard Iowa and the United States and thus to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity. We have dedicated ourselves and all we have to this cause.

We can serve humanity best by maintaining here in Iowa a strong government responsive to the public will, an industrial organization kept at the top of productive capacity, and a community spirit actuated by the finest qualities of patriotism. That we may do our share in the common cause of humanity ever seeking the higher levels, we have the duty to make secure the material and spiritual values of our own heritage.

It has been my privilege and a distinct honor to address two preceding legislative assemblies and to work with them for the common good.

Members of the Senate and of the House have cooperated splendidly and have done their work well. There has been at all times a fine spirit of cordiality. It has been a gratifying experience.

I have come to know better than ever before the unyielding determination of Iowa people to buttress the public service with honesty, integrity, and an intelligent understanding of the liberties that we prize and the rights that we are sworn to maintain.

I commend to you my successor as one with whom you will do well to counsel freely.

It is pleasant to me to know that the work I have been doing, not only relating to legislation but in the many executive activities of the office of Governor, is to fall to one who will carry on in a manner worthy of our great State.

In fulfillment of the constitutional mandate to advise you of the condition of the state and to make recommendations, I shall be brief. The condition of the State is good. The machinery of state government is running smoothly and with efficiency. The State’s finances are in better condition than ever before. Taxation is always a matter of controversy, but it is highly gratifying to note that the state does not impose any millage tax upon real property.

The report which I am required to make as to reprieves, commutations and pardons granted during the term just closing, will go to you as a separate presentation.

The budget report will be laid upon your desks as soon as printed and deserves your careful scrutiny. You have wisely followed the precedent of two years ago in formation of an unofficial committee to pass upon bills clearly non-controversial in character and to speed their passage. Appropriation bills and other bills of importance should be considered early in the session. The budget is perhaps the most important report for it touches all departments and activities. I urge you to give it careful study and consideration in every detail.

With the tremendous taxes levied and to be levied in order that the war may be brought to a final and speedy ending, may I suggest that no new or additional taxes be levied other than those necessary to help win the war, and to take care of those who have as a result of the war been placed in a position of need.

The recommendations in the budget are ample to take care of the needs of the various departments, and if the recommendations are followed these needs can be met without any new or additional taxes, if the amount of the recommendations are increased materially, then as a matter of course new taxes must be levied.

The reports of various departments of the State will also be available to you in printed form. They will inform you of many matters about which you will be called upon to legislate. You will find the heads of departments ready and willing to give you information as to the workings of the state government, and you will find them genuinely interested in the welfare of the State.

In the first year of clash of arms, Iowa provided upwards of 100,000 men for the armed forces of the army and navy of the United States and other branches of the service. Our sons and brothers are found in every camp and on every training field.

They are on the ships and trailing the long air lanes to the scenes of conflict. They are in the jungles and deserts of Africa and Asia, on the bare beaches of the South Seas, guarding the ice-bound coasts of the far North, and standing shoulder to shoulder with the men of Britain, China, Russia, France and other freedom loving countries.

We owe it to the men and boys and women of Iowa who have offered their services and their lives in defense of our liberties and our homes, and are in fact making the greatest sacrifice of which American citizens are capable, that the State of Iowa and the people of Iowa show our appreciation in all ways appropriate.

Our armed strength in the fighting lines and back of the battle fronts is our contribution to a cause that far transcends all other obligations of our time. Let us give our fighting forces and their families and their children ample assurance that their sacrifice will not be forgotten. All honor to everyone who contributes in any way to the winning of the war.

Iowa, the greatest agricultural state, is deeply engrossed in the mighty problem of production of food for war use. We have done much for the encouragement and promotion of good farming. The magnificent response of all persons engaged in agriculture is reflected in the record-breaking output of food products when most needed.

We must make sure that the productive capacity of Iowa is maintained at the peak.

Iowa industry and labor have responded with equal promptness and patriotism. To the managers and the workers of our factories, small and large, great credit is due. When the story of Iowa’s part in the war effort can be fully told, their singleness of purpose, their laying aside of petty problems in the interest of full devotion to their tasks will fill a heartening chapter.

Prior to December of 1941, large numbers of Iowa National Guardsmen were within the borders of the State, available for call in any emergency.

Following the treacherous Japanese attack upon our nation, and pursuant to authority granted by the Forty-ninth General Assembly, there was organized by executive order, the Iowa State Guard, to assume the functions of these men who were immediately recalled to Federal service.

The Iowa State Guard has had an average strength of 172 officers and 2,100 enlisted men. On active duty at Camp Dodge is the First Military Police Battalion with an average strength of 22 officers and 210 enlisted men. To all of these men, who give readily of their time and abilities for patriotic service, the State of Iowa is indebted.

As individuals and as an organization, they have reached a high state of efficiency.

In a letter dated June 10, 1942, to the Adjutant General of Iowa, Major General John F. Williams, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, stated: “I can say to you frankly and honestly that while I have visited practically every state in the Union this year and have seen the State Guard installations in nearly all of them, I have seen none that surpasses yours.”

The Iowa State Guard deserves the support of the people of the State. It should be maintained for the duration of this conflict.

The report of the Iowa Industrial and Defense Commission will be printed in the Journal. The Forty-ninth General Assembly provided for this work, which has been effectively and efficiently done. The Commission has given attention to fitting Iowa industry into the scheme of war production, an intricate task involving many details.

Since the declaration of war, the Commission has been called upon by the executive of the State and the Federal government for numerous services, all of which have been readily given, with the cooperation of thousands of patriotic citizens of the State. Their tireless efforts command our admiration and support.

No mention of the patriotic work of volunteer civilians would be complete without recognizing the immense job undertaken by the Selective Service Boards of the State and by other boards and croups dealing with war programs.

All answering at the call of the nation, doing their utmost for the success of their assigned work, and drawing no compensation from whatever source, these men and these women have indeed served beyond the ordinary requirements of civilian duty. To them, we are grateful.

By strict adherence to the laws adopted by the General Assembly, the Insurance Department has been eminently successful in orderly reduction of the amount of farm tenancy in the State. Millions of acres of corporate-owned land have become the family-owned farmsteads. Encouragement to the ownership of the land by the men and women who till it is a continuing problem, ever entitled to your serious study and helpful action.

The program of conservation has moved steadily forward. It must always be so, for the good of our land and for the welfare of our friends of the streams and woodlands.

Iowa can well feel just pride in the progress which has been made in the last four years in the construction of farm-to-market roads, and in the improvement and maintenance of our primary road system.

For the duration of the war, restrictions on materials will curtail the work which may be done on our roads.

The post-war program of road building, and problems of financing resulting from gasoline rationing, may well have your attention to the end that we anticipate the needs for both roads and employment when by the force of our arms victory is ours.

New building construction authorized by the Forty-ninth General Assembly was delayed by the pressure of the war effort. The funds appropriated therefor are intact and should remain so. Consideration might well be given to the investment of these and any additional funds appropriated for such purposes in United States bonds, and to the authorization of a post-war program meeting the intent suggested above.

The Forty-eighth General Assembly passed the State Car Dispatcher bill for central control of all state-owned vehicles. As a result of this action the State has operated such motor vehicles at greatly reduced cost, averaging two and one-half cents per mile for passenger cars, including administrative cost and depreciation. The success of the program is further attested by the fact that more than 80 cars have been sold and not replaced.

With the growing seriousness of the world conflict, the advisability of early and extensive official preparations for the Centennial of Iowa Statehood diminished. The year 1946, however, should be hailed by all Iowa, our glorious history reviewed, our great accomplishments set forth in witness of our eternal gratitude to Divine guidance and the heritage bestowed upon us by our forefathers.

In previous messages to the Forty-eighth and Forty-ninth General Assemblies, I made recommendations as to betterments in the functioning of the various departments and in some cases reorganization and consolidation. Many of the recommendations were acted upon favorably, and my experience in administration has convinced me that these changes were to the good. I believe that we have been and are continuing to make steady progress toward improvement in the functioning of our government both as to the State and in local matters.

The desire of Iowa people generally that the educational system be kept at the highest standard led to the creation by the last General Assembly of a committee to study the school laws and to recommend improvement and such changes as would give Iowa the best possible in the field of education. There was also established another committee to recommend modernizing the rules and practice of the courts of the State with a view to improved administration.

These two committees are composed of men and women competent and well informed in their respective fields and they have been diligent in the study of the two subjects to the end that recommendations made will be of real value. These reports will be on file and printed copies will be in your hands. I take pleasure in calling them to your attention.

I return again to a thought I have previously expressed and to reiterate and emphasize the same as forcibly as lies within my power. It is especially timely in view of the world chaos involving the breaking down of social and political structures and the search for restoration and rebuilding.

In my address to the General Assembly four years ago, upon taking of the office of chief executive, I stated:

“It is my firm belief that the three branches of government—legislative, judicial and executive—are as important and essential today as they were when first established by our patriotic forefathers, and I shall do all in my power to see that no one of them encroaches on the duties or prerogatives of any other.”

Again, two years ago, on the same subject, I said:

“Now as never before must we insist that the three branches of government—the executive, legislative and judicial—be preserved, each enjoying and exercising the powers delegated to it, none engaging the unworthiness of encroachment upon the prerogatives of the other. A surrender now, by anyone, of its rights, means the imminent downfall of the republican system of free government in the United States.”

After four years of service in the executive branch of the government of Iowa, and having had the opportunity of service also in judicial and legislative positions, I am more firmly convinced of the wisdom and foresight of our forefathers when they established a republic in which the three branches of government were to be forever separate and distinct each from the other.

The future of our republic, and of the states formed in the same pattern, and the freedom of our people can be most certainly safeguarded by continuation of this wise separation of governmental powers by the scrupulous devotion of those who are clothed with responsibility. The vigilance imposed by the crisis of world war must extend to a firm determination to absolutely reject any and every proposal to destroy or weaken these fundamentals of free government by and for the people.

Those of our rights surrendered under the pressure of war and emergency to the executive must upon the termination of the war and emergency be restored to the people intact.

I am sure you will permit me a closing word of sincere thanks to you, and to your predecessors in legislative assemblies, and to the people of Iowa whose servants we all are, for the fine spirit of cooperation at all times prevailing here, for the eagerness of all to serve the public interest, and the desire manifest at all times that our moral, spiritual and material resources shall be made use of for the common good.

Looking back over the years since first I was privileged to serve in the legislative halls, I can truthfully say that the unity and harmony of Iowa people has been tremendously impressed upon me. The carrying on of the wholesome traditions of Iowa is at least partly in your hands. I beseech you to give every measure and every proposal that comes before you earnest study and thoughtful consideration and to jealously guard against the intrusion of selfish interests or destructive elements.

The people of Iowa want good government. They are loyal to all American ideals and institutions.

You as the representatives of the Iowa people can and will contribute much to the general welfare, in this terrible time of universal distress and wavering emotions, by building firmly on the solid foundations of this great State.

I am bidding farewell to a work for the State of Iowa and the people that has been a delight to me. I shall continue to serve my native state in another field. I will try to take to the capitol of our great nation, the candor and frankness and clearness of thinking that is inspired by the boundless prairies of my native state.

I shall make effort at all times to obtain expression in terms of national action of the unqualified opposition of Iowa people to waste and extravagance and political favoritism in the spending of public funds.

I shall endeavor to reduce to the essential minimum the red tape and bureaucracy of government, and promote in all ways the common sense economy that we have been able to apply in the Hawkeye State.

Steadfastly, as a spokesman for Iowa people, I shall consider it my duty to insist that the honesty and integrity of Iowa fields and shops prevail in the business councils at Washington. In doing this I will need your, and the people of the State’s, support. God bless all of you.