Lieutenant Governor B. B. Hickenlooper, President of the Joint Convention, presiding, then presented Governor George A. Wilson, who delivered the following message:

GOVERNOR’S INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chief Justice, Senators, Representatives and Fellow Citizens:

We are at the threshold of Iowa’s second century. It is a good time to take stock of our material and cultural achievements, and to chart our future course. We will do well, if we can duplicate the triumphs so dear to memory, but if we fulfill the real obligations of our heritage, we will have here a homeland far surpassing the dreams of the pioneers. The anniversary celebration of territorial beginning has been unique. The historical significance of the event evoked a spontaneous response, which clearly shows that Iowa people are delightfully aware of the glory that is ours through the toil and sacrifice of our ancestors. Every line of approach to Iowa’s history affords a view filled with inspiration. The story of Iowa is that of the transforming of a wilderness of hidden wealth into a commonwealth of fascinating beauty, teeming with the honorable activities of an industrious people. It is the story of the wisdom and industry of man overcoming the inertia of the ages. It is an epic adorned with all that makes life worth while.

As, with just pride, we view the past, we turn to look upon a panorama of world life which presents strange contrast with our glorious past. The very dangers with which it seems fraught challenge us to give the best that is in us. The forces of evil are clamorous and defiant and put the noble virtues of man on the defensive. In many places in the world, emotion has banished reason and clear thinking; hate has overwhelmed love; and the Divine in man seems to have taken a holiday.

A few citadels of liberty remain, of which our America is the towering figure and encourages us to hope that the Divine plan for human happiness will yet prevail. For the oppressed peoples of the world, our hearts bleed in sympathy and our generosity is limited only by our resources; but we relax not in our vigilance for the protection of liberty at home.

All wars are not now fought with powder and shell. The process of boring from within has become a perfected art. Never in our history has there been such effort to arouse class antagonism. Group organizations appeal for group favoritism—not for the common good. Protestations of humanitarian objectives frequently prove to be mere cloaks for tyranny. Exalted patriotism is pretended as an apology for religious and racial persecution.

However, we cherish an unshaken faith in the capacity of a free people to maintain freedom while governing themselves justly. We believe that all governmental machinery should be used in the service of the people, and that all should have the utmost individual liberty consistent with the common welfare. A century and a half of government, based on those principles, we believe has proved itself. Methods may require revision, but not principles. Just remember this: Radical departure from the American principles of a free people, no matter how cleverly concealed, nor how richly baited, have the final objective of a feudalistic philosophy, which compel obedience to a governing state or a dominating personality.

Detached, as we are in Iowa, from the troubled world, are we not in position to show to our neighbors and to the world an example of honest and efficient government by a free people?

You and I are the servants of the people. Let no one assume otherwise. You are met to interpret the people’s will and to shape it into laws, when necessary. It is my duty to suggest—not to direct. As conditions change, adjustments must be made. Statutes hastily and ill-advisedly adopted should be revised and strengthened, or repealed. New ideas should be scrutinized with great care and adopted only when we are satisfied of their necessity and usefulness. Special interests will suggest special legislation. Consider all such carefully, with relation to its effect on the whole people. We should be firm in the determination to place governmental affairs of Iowa on a sound, honest and economical basis.

May I take you into my confidence and frankly confess that there are so many issues of great importance to the people that I have found it difficult to determine what matters to consider in the short time I am to detain you? Many, many subjects to which I shall not refer require and should have serious consideration. However, we will counsel together and cooperate with each other, to the end that we may bring to the people of the state of Iowa such a government that it can be truly said, “In all that is good, Iowa affords the best.”

How wise our forbears planned. How anxious they were that everyone should have a place in the scheme of government. How careful they were to keep government close to the people. That which the state can do better than the Federal Government should be left to the state. That which the towns or county units can best do should be left to them. It follows naturally with the plan of making government simpler, more responsive, more efficient.

We will not agree as to every detail. The right to think differently is sacred and should need no guaranty. Some there are who favor a contrary policy. There are places where the people seem to have agreed not to disagree about anything. We do not crave that for our fair commonwealth. We want for the people of Iowa that they shall be the masters of their own household.

Iowa should have a sufficient number of public servants to attend to public business and no more. The elimination of useless bureaus and commissions, the consolidation of various departments and bureaus, has been delayed too long. You need but to look about you and you will discover that there are duplications of inspection, overlapping of agencies for the collection of taxes, in the control and examination of financial institutions and securities, in auditing and accounting, in social security services, and in many other functions of government.

The consolidation of governmental agencies means improved services, increased efficiency, and much saving to the taxpayers.

May I publicly acknowledge the gratitude of the people of Iowa to the members of the legislature for their promptness in taking action to meet this problem.

Equality of opportunity of education is an Iowa tradition. Robert Lucas, our first territorial governor, emphasized the necessity of providing for a school system. As a result, the history of the one hundred years past is resplendent in the development of our schools and colleges.

There is much to be done if the schools and colleges are to keep up with the demands of modern life and serve our rising generation. And we want nothing less. All admit that education is the backbone of free government. But it is not enough to say that our state has the least percentage of illiteracy and then blind our eyes to problems needing attention. We want our program of education to advance and to be adequate to meet present day needs. Improvement in the financing of our schools, in the welfare of teachers and pupils and in the complete divorcing of our schools from politics, should no longer be delayed. We would be derelict in our duty did we not pause long enough to pay high tribute to the teachers in our schools and colleges, whose sacrifices and whole-hearted devotion have contributed so much towards the enduring values of education. Mistake it not, they are the sustaining force of free government, the bulwark of democracy.

No one pretends here in Iowa that everything is “rosy” with the farmers. No one pretends that we can solve our problems alone. We realize that the great question is national in scope. I believe that we should hold fast to the good features we now have and that we should, as a state, urge upon the nation that the Iowa farmer should have his fair share of the national income.

I am not sure that anyone particular program can bring that about. Perhaps it will take a combination of programs, which must include conservation, industrial use of farm products, expansion of foreign markets, equalization of the tariff and lower interest rates, and the adequate handling of farm surpluses.

But I think we can agree that the farm question is not yet completely solved and still remains acute. There must be a solution, and Iowa, as a state, must ever look forward to, and ever demand, her place of equality with her industrial sister states. It shall be my earnest effort as Governor always to seek for agricultural Iowa the remedies necessary for her economic improvement.

Through no fault of their own, many of our best farmers were compelled by force of circumstance to give up their farms to holders of loans. As a result, corporations have acquired vast holdings. We suggest that your efforts be directed to the end that the laws may be liberalized so that disposition of these lands may be had more readily on contract with a reasonable payment down and equitable annual payments thereafter. Let us use every effort to make possible the transfer of the soil to the man who tills it. Let us encourage farmstead ownership and discourage farm tenancy.

We have built a grand system of arterial highways. Much has been accomplished in building so-called “feeder” primary roads. Our county trunk roads have received attention. But there still remains the strip of mud from the farm to the surfaced road. Provision for this part of the farm-to-market road needs your serious attention.

Whether Iowa shall retain its leadership as an agricultural state is dependent upon the wise husbandry of our natural resources and the administration of sane conservation principles. The wealth of our state is founded on the permanency of the supply of our basic resources. Funds made available for restoration and preservation of these resources should never be made a matter of political partisanship, and should be administered for the benefit of the whole state.

Iowa has an ever-growing stake in industry. In several years the value of our manufactured product has equalled the value of our agricultural output. Agriculture, a raw material producing industry, requires the consumptive power of a healthy manufacturing industry. Each is essential to the other. Both must be afforded opportunity in Iowa. We should encourage the processing of our beef, pork, corn, oats, and other field crops within the borders of our own state. The science departments of our colleges are continually at work developing new products from agricultural wastes and surpluses, which may and soon will be commercially produced in Iowa. We urge the continuation of this splendid work. If we can preserve our existing industries and by our encouragement induce new ones to locate in Iowa, we can go far to solve the surplus problem of agriculture, and to relieve the pressing problem of unemployment.

This result can be accomplished only if we in Iowa maintain fair and equitable relations between employees and employers. Each must recognize that their problems are common. While perhaps old-fashioned, I still hold to the belief that most of the difficulties and differences between labor and industry can be, and with proper encouragement, will be settled at the conference table. The interruption of payrolls—from whatever cause—not alone injures the factory and stops wages to employees, but seriously interferes with all community enterprise.

Industry prospers with contented, well-paid labor.

Labor prospers with steady jobs.

The community prospers when harmony in industry prevails.

“Cooperation” should be the watchword.

We must campaign aggressively to recognize, preserve and advertise to the nation Iowa’s resources and opportunities. Such effort is within the proper scope of governmental activity.

Due to a lack of correlation, the many existing agencies not only do not work toward a common goal in development of the resources of our commonwealth, but are actually working at cross purpose, thereby eliminating definite benefits available through the activity of one agency.

Our efforts must be organized and unified so that the maximum efficiency can be obtained.

The strength and power of democracy is founded on individual initiative. Here in Iowa we have developed the most equitable distribution of wealth in the world. Much of our prosperity and happiness is due to the free enterprise of our local merchants along Main Street. We should be alert to prevent any unfair trade practices which will inequitably hamper the continued growth of local business and enterprise.

The law relative to old age assistance should receive your careful consideration to the end that the administration thereof be made sympathetic, more efficient, more prompt in operation and the payments thereunder more equitable and more adequate.

The amount of rental now being paid for quarters within which to house the governmental functions should be closely investigated by you, and in so doing you should give serious consideration as to whether it may be more economical to build state buildings to house these governmental agencies and at the same time confine them to the limits of state property, where they may be closely and conveniently located with respect to other departments.

It has been and is the custom now to permit certain administrative offices and commissions to retain a percentage of the money collected by them for expenses of their administration. This is an unwise procedure, one that should not be continued. Its working of times tends towards extravagance and is a delegation of a power and responsibility that clearly lodges with the legislative branch of government.

If I sense it right, the Iowa taxpayers are willing that their employees in public office be paid fair salaries for useful services. Plain honesty requires that those same public servants return full value for the tax money received.

We must and will enforce the laws of the state, and observe our obligations to better the conditions of the people. We pledge ourselves to set the example, no matter whether as private citizens or public officials. Violations will not be condoned, nor will neglect or indifference to public duty be tolerated. As your Chief Executive, I shall overlook neither malfeasance, nonfeasance, nor neglect, nor shall I countenance graft or corruption, I care not how slight or how inconsequential. I shall always welcome the counsel and advice of the people of the state who are interested in the betterment of government. To those having the desire to misuse the government for their own advancement or financial gain, the doors of the Executive shall not only be closed, but the forces of government shall be ready to make battle.

We pledge ourselves to treat public office as a public trust. We believe that honesty is still a cardinal principle. We assure the people of the state that, insofar as we are capable, public business, whether it be large or small, shall be done in an economical way. Economy means elimination of waste.

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.

In conclusion, may I say that the need of today is for clear thinking and courageous resolve at the family altar. We need the spirit of the Iowa trail-blazers. We should restore their way of mutual helpfulness. We should have honest administration of just laws, with fair consideration to every interest and every person, sympathetic assistance in times of stress to agriculture, labor and every industry. Government must be truly the servant of the people.

I assume the responsibilities of this high office. I am without rancor or ill-will towards anyone. With your help, and the help of all the people, and with Divine guidance, we can make a worth-while contribution to the welfare of our generation.