Lieutenant Governor Evans, President of the Senate presiding, presented Governor Beardsley, who delivered the following inaugural address:

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF  
GOVERNOR WILLIAM S. BEARDSLEY

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Senators and Representatives of the Fifty-third General Assembly, Mr. Chief Justice, Ladies and Gentlemen:

In taking this solemn oath to support the Constitution of the United States and of the State of Iowa, I am profoundly impressed with the great responsibility reposed in me by the voters of this great state. I am happy to be a citizen of Iowa. I love her farm homes, her beautiful towns, her cities, and most of all her people.

One has to experience the weight of this obligation to feel the full impact of its significance. To me, it is the assumption of a very real responsibility. In accepting this great honor, I do so with humility and with a high resolve that my every effort shall be devoted to the public welfare. May God give me strength, wisdom and guidance in the performance of my duties as Governor of this great Commonwealth.

To you, the chosen representatives of the people, as members of the Fifty-third General Assembly of the State of Iowa, I extend my most sincere congratulations. The electors of your respective counties and districts have honored you by selecting you to assemble here to consider, adopt, and declare the policies of the state in matters of public importance.

The right of the people to select you is a privilege enjoyed only in a free country and it is our duty, yours and mine, all of us, to demonstrate our appreciation of that freedom by devoting our every effort to the accomplishment of legislation which will contribute to the public welfare.

We are mindful of the issues that were discussed and under discussion by the voters last year. You, as the representatives of the people, have received a directive from the electorate on these issues, and you and I must devote our best efforts, to the end that the will of the people will be accomplished in the public interest.

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 law. It is my duty to suggest, not to direct. We should be firm in the determination to place the governmental affairs of Iowa on a sound, progressive and economical basis.

We must take time to pause and reflect upon where we are in our growth and development as a people and a state. We have been blessed by a vigorous soil, fertile and productive. We have utilized and maintained it well. We, however, must not think of our past accomplishments, but what is best for the future. We must think also of the resources of our people with an intelligent firmness and a strong belief in the democratic process, and a desire for all segments of our social, economic, and political society to grow and prosper together.

We find that seldom in our history has such a large percentage of our people interested themselves in the problems of state government. This is most desirable, for when we have people interested in government and the problems of our society, we have the firmest foundation of democratic principles established.

There are so many issues of great importance to the people of this state that I have found it very difficult to determine what matters to consider in the time permitted here. Many subjects to which I shall not refer require and should have serious consideration.

I will, from time to time, as this Session of the General Assembly progresses, respectfully submit to you such suggestions as I may have with respect to such matters for your consideration.

We must counsel together and cooperate with each other, to the end that we may bring to the people of the State of Iowa such a program of accomplishment as will be directly in the public interest.

TAXATION

The subject of taxation is always of paramount interest, and in line with my campaign policies, I recommend that there should be a thorough study of our entire taxing system aimed at bringing about the basic principles of equality commensurate with ability to pay. This study should cover major phases of our taxes, that is, property, corporation, income and sales.

I also recommend that this tax study should have high priority in your activities. In line with this type of basic thinking, and conforming to the wishes of the people of Iowa, I ask the removal of sales tax on food. Iowa is the greatest food producing state in the Union and Iowa levies an excise tax on food. The most forward states do not levy such a tax, others have abolished it. I make this suggestion after careful study of fiscal policies and feel that it will not jeopardize our financial position.

In your consideration of the budget and making the appropriations it would be my suggestion that you should first establish in the general fund of the state a fund to be known as “TAX STABILIZING RESERVE” for the purpose of supporting the cost of government in lean years.

This reserve should be sufficiently adequate to maintain our financial stability through economic cycles during periods when the current revenue is insufficient to meet the necessary cost of maintaining and operating the state government. Safeguards should be set up so that this reserve will be available for use when the current revenue is less than the cost of state government. Such a reserve would be a guarantee against the necessity of the levying of a property tax when people are less able to pay. It would also guarantee and protect a sound operation of our institutions and needed services for the people of the state in the lean years.

SOLDIER’S BONUS

The people of Iowa have overwhelmingly approved the Soldier’s Bonus and the issuance of Soldier’s Bonus Bonds. In doing this they have, in a small way, shown their appreciation of the sacrifices made by our veterans in the preservation of this democracy. No payment, however large, could ever pay our debt of gratitude for sacrifices made by these fighting men and women—either to them or their families.

Our World War II veterans have demonstrated their willingness to assume responsibility, and they will be the leaders of tomorrow.

It is our duty to them and to all the people of Iowa to make every effort to retire the Soldier’s Bonus Bonds promptly. It would be a mistake to finance too much of this obligation out of current surplus. However, after a substantial Tax Stabilizing Reserve has been set aside and all allocations from the General Fund have been carefully determined, I recommend that such amounts as are not necessary to guarantee the sound financial position of the state be applied to the retirement of Soldier’s Bonus Bonds. Additional funds for the retirement of these bonds might also be made available from unallocated current revenues.

Prompt retirement of such a debt is not only good business practice, but will result in substantial savings in interest.

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

There is much that we can do to give the people of Iowa MORE for their tax dollars.

We are committed to a businesslike, efficient administration. In our efforts to assure proper performance of all the necessary functions of state government, we must, therefore, be constantly on guard against the ever-present danger of overlapping and duplication of services.

We should eliminate all unnecessary bureaus and commissions. Wherever practical, offices and departments engaged in related functions should be consolidated.

We must make a continuous effort to effect every possible economy in the business administration and fiscal policy of our state government.

This will not be easy. It will require constant vigilance by our Legislative committees, efficient management by the heads of all departments and commissions, and the sincere effort of every state employee.

From time to time I will make suggestions for your consideration having as their purpose the achievement of efficiency and sound economies.

ROADS

I believe we are all agreed on the need for an accelerated road construction program in Iowa. The people of our state are demanding immediate action. We have critical problems in our primary road system, in our secondary road system and in streets of cities and towns. The state has a responsibility in both its primary and secondary system. Neither one should be favored at the expense of the other.

In order to handle the increasing load of traffic and to meet the needs of today, we must find the means for providing additional funds for the construction and maintenance of our primary and secondary road systems.

We should be most concerned about our farm-to-market roads. These are the roads which bring town and country together. They are the roads over which the millions of tons of agricultural products are brought to market. They are the arteries through which flows the very life blood of our state economy.

The Fifty-second General Assembly laid the plans for an all-weather secondary road system which will eventually cover 34,000 miles. But the time for merely planning is long past. It is our job to begin converting that plan into actual roads.

The Highway Investigation Committee’s report is available for your study. In considering this report, I hope that you will recognize the need for a continuing farm-to-market road program and take the necessary steps to make sure that an adequate percentage of our road funds are definitely ear-marked for secondary roads.

Our primary road system deserves equal attention. Some of our heavily traveled highways must be resurfaced or widened, some new roads are needed and in a few instances primary roads should be relocated. Here again, the increased cost of maintenance and improvements will require your careful study.

If we see to it that necessary funds are provided—if we concentrate on getting the maximum mileage from every dollar expended—and if secondary road funds are allocated on a fair and equitable basis we can meet the demands of our people for an integrated all-weather road system that will serve the entire state.

EDUCATION

One of the very important problems facing us is that of adequate education for our youth. To meet the challenge of this modern world we must have an educated citizenry.

Iowa has been coasting too long on its reputation for literacy. The mere ability to read and write will not take care of us in this Technical Age. When our very lives may depend upon our mastery of science and technical skills, there should be no question about our support of education. And the state has a definite and inescapable responsibility in this matter.

The Fifty-first and Fifty-second General Assemblies committed the State of Iowa to the principle of state support to education. And this principle was again approved by the electorate last year. It is the will of the people.

I recommend state aid in an amount equal to one-fourth of the total costs of education, to be allocated on a replacement and equalization basis. This means enough state aid to give definite relief to the property taxpayer. This program should be made permanent so that indirect taxes will be made available to the degree that all uncertainty regarding adequate school support will be removed.

In allocating the funds made available by this General Assembly for the purpose of state aid to schools, the funds should be so distributed for general aid, equalization, transportation, the agricultural land tax credit and aid to handicapped children, on a basis that is fair and equitable to all types of school districts in the state.

And finally, we must take definite steps to make the teaching profession more attractive in Iowa. Its contribution to the lives of our future citizens, emphasizes the enduring importance of this profession in our cultural, social and economic development.

CONSERVATION AND FLOOD CONTROL

Iowa is at the heart of the greatest agricultural nation in the world. Our agriculture produces one-tenth of all the foodstuffs produced in the 48 states of the union. This tremendous production of new wealth has a great effect on the economy of the state and the nation. This economic force is a result of the skill and technical ability of the farmers which finally can function only because of the state’s blessing of its greatest resources—soil and water.

These resources must receive special consideration if they are to be conserved for posterity and if the cultural and economic heritage of the state is to endure. We must promote a broad flood control program that will keep the streams clear, the rain where it falls, and the top soil where it belongs.

Our water resources have suffered seriously from lack of sound policies and understanding management. The underground water table has fallen in some sections of the state to a point where it approaches a state disaster. Flood control is a primary objective. Cut over timber lands have remained idle without replanting: Pollution, soil erosion, and health are closely related to our social and economic future. Recreation, fish and wildlife, industry, and hydroelectric power are contenders for priorities in the use of our water resources.

We cannot maintain pure streams to meet these needs unless legislation is enacted to prevent the dumping of sewage and other elements of pollution into our streams. In the future, in addition to providing pure water, the rivers of the state must provide a greater share of fishing and other recreational facilities. Such a program should be, insofar as is possible, integrated with sound soil conservation programs on adjoining lands if maximum values are to be obtained.

There are at present 92 soil conservation districts established in the state. This represents substantial progress and a great improvement in the attitude of the Iowa farmer toward sound soil conservation practices, but in many cases an over-all program may be jeopardized by the failure of a few to comply.

To correct this weakness, we should take steps to conserve for posterity, our greatest natural heritage, the soil of Iowa.

Since there is some duplication in the functions of the various conservation agencies, there should be a closer working relationship between these groups. Iowa, with the nation’s most completely farmed land surface, has been too slow in applying good land management practices designed to prevent further destruction of its rich soil. During the last year, the state has had a study committee which has surveyed the problem of flood control and has made a report to this Legislature. This report contains much of value. It has been a practice in Iowa for decades to constantly create new commissions, boards and departments without thought of the relationship of many problems.

In considering the problem of flood control, soil conservation and conservation as regards wildlife, fish, game and natural resources, we find that they are related problems. For instance: With the application of sound land practices in soil conservation, by nailing the rain drop where it falls and by making the water walk instead of run, we immediately reduce flood control problems. We must, therefore, come to the conclusion that all conservation services should be coordinated if we are going to find a solution to our problem. In doing this, we should create a Council of Natural Resources, staffed with competent technical help.

This Natural Resources Council would not be saddled with administrative duties, nor would it, as a Natural Resources Council, be susceptible to the pressure of politics. Rather it would operate to give Iowa the full benefit of technical recommendations concerning the scientific approach, the coordinated approach, to the entire field of conservation.

Such a council would include a geologist for mineral resources, a biologist for animal life, a hydrographer for water resources, an agronomist, a botanist, and an economist. All data relative to our resources already in the hands of the several agencies should be made available to this council. Additional facts needed for competent judging would be gathered by the administrative agency most closely associated with the specific program.

Findings of this council would be made available for the guidance of the executive and legislative branches, executive agencies in the conservation field, and to the general public.

I consider such a council, unencumbered by private or political pressures, as a primary and basic step if we are to solve completely our growing conservation problems.

LABOR AND CONCILIATION

We have great industries within our state and we look forward to further industrial development. If that is to be attained, it is absolutely necessary that we have a harmonious relationship between labor and management. The problems of labor and management quite properly are a field of human relationship in which we must make progress. We must recognize the fact that we have within the borders of Iowa workers who are not excelled by the citizenry of any state or nation in the world and that also, fortunately, our industrial leaders are of the highest type. The State of Iowa should foster a program which makes for gain and advancement in the field of labor-management relationship. We recognize the principle of collective bargaining. We insist that both labor and management assume their responsibilities as well as assert their rights. We must always be mindful of the public interest in this relation. It follows, then, that both labor and management must be able to bargain as equals. This Legislature should enact legislation to make this possible and to the end that this may be attained. I seriously recommend that the proper committees of the House and Senate consult with leaders in labor, in industry and outstanding forward looking citizens of the state for suggestions as to a program which will bring about such results.

Iowa must approach all its problems in a manner of rationality. Rationality based upon education. I feel that there is a lag between the thinking of management and labor to meet the problems of group relationships. I propose that we set up a pilot program under the Board of Education to continuously train management and labor, if we are to maintain the vigor of our Iowa industrial society and to study the problems of human engineering.

I believe that efficiency can be achieved and services be improved if a consolidation of the Labor Department, Industrial Commission, and Mine Inspection Departments be effected in a Department of Labor and Industry under a director with such assistants as may be necessary.

To improve relationship between labor and management and to promote industrial peace and progress for workers and industry alike I propose that the state establish a conciliation or mediation service under the direction of this department of labor and industry. The development of a state conciliation service can do much to bring about industrial peace and eliminate disagreement and misunderstanding in labor-management relationship. I propose that this service be of the simplest type, not a large trained full time staff, but that the director may designate outstanding citizens in any community in the state and from all walks of life as conciliators; men who are dedicated to service and the cause of industrial peace.

HUMAN NEEDS

Recognition of the human needs of our state is of utmost importance to all our citizens. In the last eight years, the State of Iowa has increased appropriations for maintenance and support of Board of Control institutions more than 250 per cent.

Still, we have not made the progress that is desirable. This clearly demonstrates that mere appropriation of money in itself is not the answer. We must improve the conditions in the Board of Control institutions by getting better methods of administration and advanced practices. Approximately 40 patients per month are being committed to our mental institutions who are neither senile nor violently insane. In the name of humanitarianism, a method should be worked out which will restore these mentally ill before they reach the stage of commitment to our institutions.

The programs of old age assistance and aid to dependent children should be reviewed and they should be adequately provided for to meet the problems caused by changes in economic and social conditions. This subject will be given further attention in my budget message.

BUDGET

Because of the great importance of budget matters and the financial affairs of the state, I intend in the presentation of the budget estimate and the report of the financial condition of the state to make a more specific analysis of financial and budgetary items and will discuss them at greater length with you. My budget recommendations are in the hands of the printer and will within a few days be delivered to each of you.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, may I again say that of necessity it has been impossible for me to discuss many subjects which will require your attention and receive your serious consideration. Some of these I will discuss with you from time to time.

It shall be my purpose, as the governor of this state, to work with you. I want to be on your team and that of all of my colleagues in office. I shall cooperate with you, seek your counsel, and be readily accessible at all times to discuss with you the problems of the people which are your problems and mine. May our deliberations be seasoned with faith and foresight to the end that they may result in the formulation and enactment of legislation which mark our labors with accomplishment.

It is a great responsibility we are impelled to shoulder, but with the obligation comes the opportunity to do great work for the common good.

May our God and Father give us wisdom and guide us in the performance of our responsibilities.