

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

OF

WILLIAM LARRABEE,

GOVERNOR OF IOWA,

DELIVERED

AT HIS INAUGURATION,

JANUARY 12, 1888.

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### FELLOW-CITIZENS:

I desire to acknowledge to the people of Iowa, who have again vested me with the office of Chief Magistrate of the State, my deep appreciation of this renewed expression of their confidence. In assuming for the second time the grave responsibility of the Executive, it is my prayer that the people's support, which in the past has been so generously accorded me, may continue to aid me in the discharge of my official duties.

### AMERICAN LABOR.

The necessity of maintaining for our people the elevated social position which they now occupy, makes it the imperative duty of the government to guarantee to them, by the continuance of a wise system of protection, such liberal returns for their industry as are necessary to assert the dignity of labor among a free and enlightened people. The application of science to the trades has greatly elevated our industrial classes and has correspondingly increased their wants. The American laborer cannot and should not content himself with a mere sufficiency of food, clothing and shelter. An enlightened community, of which he is a worthy member, makes demands to which he must respond. He must make provisions for self-improvement, for the elevation of his home and the education of his children. He is a new factor in modern society, whose presence a government for the people should not ignore.

The practice of free trade, as advocated by the party in control of our federal government, has been repeatedly tried in this country, and always with the same disastrous results. It was always used as a means for reducing a surplus in the treasury, and never failed to ultimately cause a deficit both in the finances of the government and the people. Except in one or two instances, when well-known causes for a brief period suspended the operation of the general law, every inauguration of a free trade policy paralyzed the industrial interests of the country, greatly reducing the wages of laborers and causing financial depression. Free trade always has had, and, until circumstances and conditions have materially changed, always will have the same disastrous results in America. In striking contrast with such a state of affairs, protection to American industries has always secured prosperity for all interests, and has bettered the condition of the masses by enabling them to partake of all the comforts of life essential to the happiness of enlightened beings.

A general shrinkage in values, caused by the partiality of the present Administration to free trade, and the large immigration of laborers from foreign countries have produced a growing discontent among the industrial classes, especially in larger cities. Moreover, they feel keenly the injustice of an unequal division of profits between themselves and capital, and organize to effect the correction of many real and some imaginary evils. Though impelled by honest motives, they do not always find the proper remedies.

All interests of good citizens are best subserved by the security of property and the protection of individual rights, the basis of our free institutions. Labor and capital should work in harmony, and not waste their strength in useless wars; they have common interests, mutual obligations and separate rights. Capital should concede to honest labor an equitable share of their common earnings, and while it is entitled to protection, it should not be allowed to rule.

The welfare of our laboring classes and the future safety of our government urgently demand a check in the flow of criminal and pauper immigration. The future development of our resources and the healthy growth of our institutions require an increase in quality rather than in quantity of population. The present requirements for admission to American citizenship are scarcely in keeping with its dignity. Our naturalization laws should be so amended and enforced as to make moral worth an indispensable requisite for the high distinction of becoming an integral part of the most powerful and most enlightened sovereign people.

#### FREE BALLOT.

The purity of the ballot box is the bulwark of our liberties. To defile it, whether by fraud or intimidation, is to strike at the very foundation of republican government. Unless a free ballot and an honest count can be secured in every State in this Union, a national election is little more than a mockery. Hundreds of thousands of the qualified electors of the South are virtually denied the right of suffrage. The total congressional vote of the seven districts of the State of Mississippi in 1886 was 45,354; of the seven districts of South Carolina, 39,072; and of the ten districts of Georgia, 27,520, or an average of only 2,752 for each district. The number of votes cast at the same election in the eleven congressional districts of Iowa was 345,286, being an average of 31,389 votes for each district. The Constitution of the United States is thus nullified in the South, and the voice of the people is stifled; and the nullifiers, encouraged by past achievements, are now seeking to obtain control of the Senate and the Supreme Court.

Under such circumstances the good citizens of the North should no longer remain in doubt as to their duty. Regardless of political affiliations, they should demand that Congress exercise its

power to enforce by appropriate legislation the provisions of the 15th amendment to the Constitution, and guarantee to every citizen of these United States the privilege to cast his vote, free and unmolested, in accordance with his political convictions.

#### PENSIONS.

The surplus, which in the course of years has accumulated in the National Treasury, has been the cause of much anxiety to the present Administration. It appears to me that as long as any Union soldier is compelled to seek refuge in the poor-house or is found suffering for want of the necessaries of life, the treasury surplus should not create any apprehension in the minds of patriotic men. No better use could be made of the savings of the Nation than to relieve the distress and administer to the comfort of the brave veterans of the late war, who at the risk of health and life preserved the existence and asserted the supremacy of our Government.

Furthermore, the patriotism of American heroes should not be allowed to remain the cause of the poverty and misery of their wives and children or other dependent relatives. These have a right to expect that the country to which their supporters offered and sacrificed health, strength and life, will at least grant to them what alone it is in its power to grant—exemption from such suffering as is caused by poverty and want.

By pursuing this course the Nation would not only act in keeping with her own dignity, but would also sow seeds of heroism and patriotic devotion, to bear precious fruit in ages to come.

#### POSTAL TELEGRAPH.

The sentiment in favor of the establishment of a postal telegraph system by the National Government is constantly growing. While the telegraph is not likely to ever supplant the mail, it encroaches

daily upon its domain. It has made itself indispensable to modern journalism and commerce. It has, together with the railroad, shortened geographical distances, and it is the faithful sentinel that guards the safety and thereby adds to the speed of the iron horse. As a messenger for purely social communications the telegraph is as yet employed to a very limited extent, owing to the fact that the short-sighted policy of the few men who control the telegraph system of the country has by an excessive tariff placed its benefits beyond the reach of the masses.

Successful experiments have been made by other governments in the direction of operating telegraph lines in conjunction with their postal service, and there is every reason to believe that, even with a materially reduced tariff, a postal telegraph could within a few years be made self-supporting in America. While it would convert a large part of the surplus in our National Treasury into a safe and permanent investment, it would also extend the benefits of the service to all the people and open to the electric spark an unlimited field for the full development of its usefulness.

#### STATE AFFAIRS.

The progressive spirit of the people of Iowa has ever led them to take advanced positions upon all questions of progress and reform which since the birth of our State have agitated the Nation. The abolition sentiment at an early day found a fertile soil within our borders. While the heresy of States' Rights threatened the very life of the Nation, Iowa was in the front rank of the loyal States which came to her rescue and aided in asserting her supremacy. Devoted to the true spirit of freedom, she led all the states of the Union in extending the elective franchise to the colored race; and again, in these later years, she was one of the first in the sisterhood of states to abolish within her borders the slavery of intemperance. But the

work of a progressive commonwealth is never done. The body politic, like every other organism, is subject to the law of evolution. New issues constantly arise. New ideas, born of the spirit of progress, constantly battle with the musty conceptions of conservatism, prejudice and tradition; and gigantic interests, the creation of our inventive age, are constantly striving to usurp illegitimate, as well as to assert legitimate rights.

Although in a republic it is the province of the sovereign people to determine the policy of its government, it must be left to the public servants to execute the dictates of their constituency. In the execution of a conservative policy these agents of the people as a rule meet with little opposition, but when forced by irrepressible issues to confront hostile interests, they encounter an enemy who, giving no pardon and knowing no surrender, often brings to the contest all the malignity of a personal contest.

If under such circumstances an official should consult simply his feelings, he might easily be tempted to make a truce with the enemy and thus avoid an implacable conflict. But when such a step can only be taken at the sacrifice of honor, when a solemn obligation makes the conflict an imperative duty, there is no alternative, and the evil which he must attack is solely to blame for the result.

The main issue with which we are now confronted concerns the mutual relations between the people and the great corporations.

#### RAILWAY TRANSPORTATION.

While the transportation question has for many years engaged the attention of our people, the enactment of the Inter-state Commerce Law by the last Congress has of late given it particular prominence; and there is a wide-spread demand that the State Legislature supplement the Congressional act. That dealing with questions so vital to our welfare requires both wisdom and courage, there can be no doubt;

but it may safely be asserted that the representatives of our people will prove equal to the task.

In order to determine what to do, we should first know where we are and whither we are tending. Hence a retrospective view and a survey of our situation with reference to the subject in question may not be amiss. The abuses which have grown out of our modern system of transportation came to the State simultaneously with the railroads. For many years, however, the great desire of the people to secure new roads caused them to overlook these evils, and this leniency continued until a large portion of the State was provided with transportation facilities.

Then the demand upon the Legislature to correct existing abuses increased from year to year, until in 1874 it could no longer be refused. The discriminations and extortions which had so long been practiced by the railroads resulted in the enactment of what is known as the Granger Law, which established a classification and fixed maximum rates upon nearly all articles of produce and merchandise. This act was strenuously opposed by the railroad companies, reinforced by the representatives from those parts of the State which were not yet amply supplied with roads and were believed by them to be injured by such legislation.

The Granger Law remained a part of our statutes for four years, and was during this whole period resisted by all the forces that could be marshaled by the railroad companies. The law was denounced by its opponents as communistic in its tendency, destined to ruin railroad interests and hence to prevent the construction of new roads. It was contested in State and Federal courts until it was finally declared legal by the highest judicial tribunal of the Nation.

While the law was crude in some respects, it was nevertheless a great achievement, illustrating the power of the people under our sys-

tem of government to correct evils even when defended by organized capital.

Failing to defeat the law in the courts, the railroad managers again turned to the legislature and plead piteously for its repeal.

Their friends, supported by members either inclined to conservatism or representing localities disposed to hold out every possible encouragement to railroad construction, succeeded, after much argumentation, in having the Granger Law repealed and the present Commissioner law enacted in its stead.

It has often been alleged that the partial cessation of railroad construction following the enactment of the Granger Law was its legitimate result. It will be remembered, however, that the general financial depression following the panic of 1873 affected all interests, and that railroad enterprise was no more stagnant in Iowa than in other states, where these alleged causes did not operate.

It has also been stated that the law was changed in obedience to a demand of the people, but this allegation is likewise contrary to the fact. It is true, the railroads had so applied the law as to make it odious in some localities and had by their peculiar strategy succeeded in persuading some of our best public men that it was not adapted to all interests and often worked injustice; yet a majority of our people regarded it, upon the whole, as just and wholesome, and desired an amendment of several of its provisions rather than its repeal. Nevertheless, when the commissioner system was adopted, they conceded to it the right of an honest trial. Having once secured the right to establish rates, they were prepared to accept any legislation which promised an equitable adjustment of existing controversies.

To enable cities and towns to secure new roads and obtain more favorable rates through competition, laws were also enacted permitting them to vote a tax to the extent of five per cent on their assessed value to aid in the construction of projected roads. Under this law

millions of dollars were donated, and many new roads were constructed, and for a time this new policy seemed to accomplish its purpose.

Railroad managers soon learned, however, that by arrangements among themselves, such as pooling, division of territory and division of business, they could manage to maintain unreasonable rates. Owing to these various devices, there is practically no competition as to rates in the transportation business of the State. Occasionally one road will become dissatisfied with the division of the spoils and cut under the combination schedule; but a treaty is soon effected, and the old rates are restored.

The charges for transportation at present prevailing in the State are by far too high, and bear little or no relation to the cost of the service. Although steel rails can now be purchased for one-third of the price paid for the iron rails that were laid upon roads built fifteen years ago, and engines, cars and coal have depreciated in value in nearly the same proportion, local freight and passenger rates have not decreased to any perceptible degree. Railroad companies should not be allowed to reap all the profits growing out of modern inventions and the reduced cost of equipping and operating their roads. With almost equal propriety might woolen and cotton fabrics still be sold at colonial prices. But railroad managers aver that the interest paid on their bonded indebtedness and the dividends earned by their stock are not excessive, and that capital invested in railroads on the whole enjoys no larger returns than capital invested in any other enterprise. Yet the stock and indebtedness of a road is no indication of the amount actually invested in it, nor is the latter an indication of the actual present value of the road. Mr. Poor in reviewing the railroad earnings for 1883 affirms that if the fictitious capital could be eliminated from their accounts, their success as investments would have no parallel.

The railroads of Iowa have received as donations from various sources a value of over fifty million dollars. The tracts of land granted to them at various times by the Nation and the State, and by counties, municipalities and private individuals aggregate an area equal to more than one-eighth of the total area of the State. The total amount of money actually invested in Iowa roads by stockholders and bondholders probably does not average to exceed fifteen thousand dollars per mile, and the thirteen million dollars of net earnings which are annually distributed among them would be a fair profit upon twice the amount which they have actually invested.

The men who control our railroads labor under a serious delusion, inasmuch as they entertain an exaggerated opinion of the obligations under which they have placed the public. They attribute to themselves the unparalleled material progress which this country has made, and claim the wealth which by their agency has been accumulated as their reward. They reason that they are entitled to the value of the difference between various places in the prices of commodities, because they furnish the means for making the exchange. It appears to me that this argument, if carried to its logical result, would transfer the title to a large share of their income to the heirs of Mr. Watts, the inventor of the steam engine. A similar reasoning would also give to McCormick all the profits of the reaper, and to Whitney those of the cotton gin.

Owners of railroads are no more entitled to a perpetual royalty than inventors. For a certain period of time, perhaps as long as similar privileges are enjoyed by patentees, railroads should be allowed liberal returns for their capital and enterprise; and if at the end of such a period it be found that similar roads could be constructed and equipped at a reduced cost, then their rates of transportation should be proportionately reduced.

But it is urged by railroad managers that a reduction in their rates

would necessitate a reduction in the wages of their employes. Such reasoning might apply if those men were now paid a proper share of the receipts of the roads; this is not the case. Railroad employes receive a smaller percentage of the total earnings of their employers than wage-workers of other occupations. They receive little more than one-third of the total receipts of the companies, while the farmer, for instance, gives one-half of the products of his farm for its cultivation. It is but natural to suppose that railroads deal as unjustly with their employes as they do with the public, and the correction of one evil would be likely to ultimately result in the correction of the other.

Unreasonable rates are not only prejudicial to the best interests of the public, but to those of the railroad companies as well, since they constantly tempt capitalists to invest in new lines, which must needs acquire their territory at the expense of older roads.

The right of the State to fix rates can certainly not be questioned. Corporations have no rights save such as have been granted to them by the commonwealth. It must also be conceded that in the latter is ultimately lodged the power to create new corporations which would be prepared to accept the altered conditions. Railroad managers argue that if the State should undertake to establish maximum rates, it must also guarantee to their roads a minimum income. This will be found to be a fallacious argument when it is considered that although the State has passed laws prohibiting usury, it neither guarantees a minimum rate nor otherwise secures private loans.

Railroads have in the course of time usurped powers dangerous to the public welfare, and have practiced extortions perhaps less cruel, but in the aggregate more gigantic, than those of the British landlord.

It has been found necessary to limit the power of public officers to levy taxes for the maintenance of our schools and the support of

State, county and municipal government—notwithstanding the fact that those taxes are used for the benefit of the people. Yet a few railroad managers are free to meet in Chicago and levy an extra tax of one, three or even five million dollars upon the people of Iowa without giving them anything in return.

Thucydides relates how the Grecians, in olden times, engaged in the business of piracy under the command of men of great boldness and ability, and how the men so engaged both enriched themselves and supported their poor by their booty. They ravaged villages and plundered unfortified places. This was not at that time an employment of reproach, but rather exalted those piratical adventurers in the estimation of their kin. It appears that a class of persons has grown up under the refining influence of our modern age with tendencies similar to those of that sturdy race; and, strange as it may seem, some people even on our soil attribute honor to their practices.

While railroad charges should be reasonable, they should also be equitable and certain. It is impossible to conceive how trade can be established upon a sound basis with transportation charges subject to wild fluctuations and countless exceptions.

Propositions for even the smallest reductions in the custom-house tariff are always the subject of much deliberation in Congress, but freight rates are often cut, even without previous notice, to one-half, one-third, or even one-fourth of their former standard, and are again doubled, trebled or quadrupled. It is not uncommon to find that in the same train a car is hauled for one-half the rate charged for hauling another car loaded with the same article, or that one locality is systematically charged twice as much as another for the same kind of service. Railroads thus build up or tear down individuals, towns and cities, as the interests of their managers or those of their favorites may dictate; and to engage in business with any certainty of success, one is compelled to court the favors of railroad companies.

Railroads are the highways of commerce. Having supplanted the turnpikes and public roads, they should, as far as possible, be amenable to the laws that controlled them, and should be maintained by a just, certain and equitable tax levied upon those who use them. Our fathers would never have tolerated a system of collecting highway tolls or taxes, which, besides changing its tariff with every moon, recognizes privileged classes and discriminates in favor of the man who is so fortunately situated as to be able to haul five or ten times as much produce to the market as his less prosperous neighbor. Such a system is neither American nor democratic, and savors too much of the methods of the feudal lord who taxed the wayfaring public as much as his withered conscience in each individual case would permit.

Our district roads are maintained by a tax levied equitably upon all the property of the district. We do not accord special privileges to the man who year after year drives a thousand steers to the market. If any discrimination is ever made, it is made in favor of the poor tenant of the Government, who is permitted to apply his small earnings to the improvement of his newly selected and still humble home.

A policy of discrimination in matters pertaining to public business has always been regarded as dangerous to the general welfare, and scarcely a trace of such a policy can be found in the laws and institutions of either the State or the Nation.

State, county and municipal taxes are levied equitably upon all taxable property. The citizen who owns ten houses in the city, or ten farms in the country, is not and should not for that reason be favored with a special rate of taxation. For the purpose of levying taxes it matters little who owns these estates, for taxes are levied upon property and property is held for their payment.

In a similar manner freight charges attach to the commodities transported, or in other words, they are a tax levied upon them.



Hence, tariff discrimination in favor of privileged shippers are as unjust as a system of raising revenue which should prescribe a lower rate of taxation for the rich than for the poor. The exchange of the products of our soil and our factories will and must be effected. If an equitable tariff should dissatisfy such shippers as have heretofore been privileged characters, their enterprise will readily find new fields of labor, and other men, prepared to accept the new condition of things, will promptly fill their places. Neither will the public be the loser by the change nor will the volume of the transportation business be decreased.

It is impossible to compute or even approximate the loss sustained by the people of Iowa in consequence of railroad discrimination.

For years our miners have had just cause to be dissatisfied with their lot. The meager returns for their hazardous toil, decreasing from year to year, naturally led them to look for the cause of their oppression in the methods of their employers and the supposed iniquities of the law. There can be no doubt, however, that the miner simply suffers together with the operator by the discriminating and unreasonable coal tariff of our railroads, which not only confines the output of our mines to local markets, but even enables imported coal to compete with the best products of our own mines in the very heart of Iowa. Our millers fare still worse. The discriminations practiced by the railroads against them have made it impossible for them to manufacture flour for export, or even home consumption, except at a loss. Minnesota flour is often shipped to points in Iowa for less than one-third of what is charged for shipments of similar distances within the State. The injustice on the part of the railroads has forced a very large number of our millers to suspend work and has rendered their property almost worthless.

When several years ago the General Assembly in the interest of morality and good order passed a law prohibiting the manufacture of

intoxicating liquors to be used as a beverage, and thereby depreciated the value of the breweries and distilleries of the State, the act was denounced by the advocates of the liquor traffic as striking at the very birth-rights of American citizens, and its validity was tested in the highest courts of both the State and the Nation. But when a few railroad managers enter into a conspiracy to destroy by an unreasonable grain and flour tariff the milling interests of the State, built up at a cost many times greater than that of the distilleries and breweries, and furnishing employment to thousands of men; when they thus render comparatively worthless property employed in one of the most important and most successful industries of the State; and perpetrate such wrongs in violation of law and in defiance of all principles of justice no step is taken for relief, because in these many years of railroad usurpation the opinion has gained ground among our people that the abuses of these wealthy and powerful corporations are without a remedy, and must be endured with meekness and resignation, like visitations of Providence. Hundreds of other manufacturing and jobbing industries have by this unwise and unjust policy been ruined or driven out of the State, and the large number of empty shops and factories in the State are dreary monuments of railroad hostility to Iowa enterprise. Our towns and rural districts are taxed and our wholesale business is being discouraged to build up a few large cities outside of our borders.

It must not be supposed, however, that the friends of railroads and the defenders of their methods are confined to the few cities which thrive upon the tribute which the rural regions are forced to pay to them. By granting special rates, rebates, drawbacks and other favors here and there to men of influence in their respective localities, they have secured the favor of many who, after having divided with them their spoils, are ready to defend their wrongs and to advocate a policy of neutrality on the part of the State. By retaining the ablest

attorneys, by influencing the press, and by flattering and favoring politicians, they have managed for many years to prevent an open outburst of popular indignation; and their long continued success greatly added to their boldness in usurping unlawful powers and invading public rights. When it is considered that the railroad companies doing business in Iowa have an annual cash income of over one hundred million dollars, their past influence can readily be appreciated. It is not an extravagant statement that the power exerted by them has in many instances proved greater than that of the States to which they owe their corporate existence.

The body politic is composed of individuals, whose opinions concerning questions of public policy diverge with their different interests, and party bias and party jealousy often make agreement impossible upon measures of common interest.

Railroads, however, are enabled by their centralization of power and by combinations among themselves to act largely under a single management. Setting at naught the power of the State, they nullify with impunity the principles of equity which for centuries have been enunciated by the courts. Such combinations as are maintained by them would in other branches of business be considered conspiracies against the public welfare and would subject their originators to indictment.

The assertion has often been made that railroads do not take sides in politics. It is doubtless true that they do not cast their fortunes with those of political parties, but it is not true that they do not concern themselves in the affairs of the political arena. It has been for years their well-defined policy to favor their friends and punish their enemies in political contests.

These corporations have through their artfulness succeeded in appearing from time to time an indignant public. Yet a change will come. Long continued abuses and aggressions will finally arouse the

people; and law, the outgrowth of the necessities of the community, will surely, though insensibly, be moulded by public opinion. Railroads have suspended the natural laws of trade. If the appeals of justice are of no avail, the instinct of self-preservation at least should lead them to restore the free and unrestricted working of these laws. The people will not be content until existing abuses are corrected; and a persistent popular demand never fails to accomplish its object. Under our form of government the right to rule is inherent in the people. Capital and enterprise may justly claim protection, but they must also submit to proper control. The sense of justice which characterizes our people will not permit any legislation detrimental to the best interests of railroads. Iowa appreciates the services which they have rendered in the development of her great resources and acknowledges her dependence upon their co-operation in the great work of future days. However, the people have grievances and demand redress, and it devolves upon their representatives to enact such laws as promise to correct existing evils. Railroads should be consulted as to their wishes, and it is proper for their representatives to present their views upon all questions affecting their interests, but they should not attempt to dictate legislative measures. The people do not ask the passage of any law which would place railroads at a disadvantage. Nor would such legislation be advisable; there is a community of interest between the State and its public corporations, which should constantly be kept in view. The great importance of these indispensable agencies of our material progress requires that they be judiciously managed and properly controlled, and that in the adjustment of all questions which affect their interests the people be represented; and good feeling cannot be restored until railroads concede this right to the people. Freight tariffs have always been one-sided contracts. The railroads have dictated the terms, which through the force of circumstances the people have been compelled to accept. They have taxed the public to pay interest and dividends on largely ficti-

tious investments. In every transaction growing out of the relations between these corporations and the people we find an expert on one side and a novice on the other. To represent the people and to defend their rights, is the province of the Board of Railroad Commissioners. This Board has often been looked upon by the railroads as a tribunal clothed with judicial powers and charged with the duty of protecting the interests of the people and those of the railroads alike. This, however, is an erroneous conception of their functions. The Railroad Commission was created to be a committee of the people obligated to advocate their rights. Organized capital can safely be trusted to defend itself.

The Board of Railroad Commissioners should be authorized and required to exercise full and complete supervision over the railroads of the State, compelling them to comply with the laws and to furnish adequate facilities at reasonable compensation. With less than this the people of Iowa will not and should not be satisfied.

*Senators and Gentlemen of the House of Representatives:* To your careful and intelligent consideration have been entrusted the interests of nearly two million people.

The office of the legislator involves upon its incumbent great responsibility. In the conscientious discharge of duty he must subordinate all personal ambition and private interests to the welfare of the State and the needs of his constituency.

As it is your duty to care equally for all sections of the State, you should guard against local and special legislation. Your measures should not only contemplate present results, but your efforts should be directed toward securing the greatest permanent good for the commonwealth. In making appropriations for the support of the State government, you should see that it is conducted with such economy as is consistent with the efficiency of the public service.

Permit me to assure you, gentlemen, of my hearty co-operation in

all measures likely to advance the moral and material interests of the State.

Let us invoke the aid of Him who guides and controls the destinies of states and nations, and endeavor to gain the approval of the people whose eyes rest upon us, by earnest work and a faithful discharge of duty in the service of our beloved Iowa.