

Madison, Wisconsin  
January 5, 1959

## INAUGURAL ADDRESS

I am here today to speak briefly about the future — the future of Wisconsin and its citizens. To those who supported me — I shall work hard to justify your confidence. To those who were disappointed in the outcome I give my assurance that this administration will work unceasingly to promote the welfare of all the people of Wisconsin. No group, large or small, will be favored over any other.

In almost every formal speech on important occasions the speaker likes to tell us that we now stand at some great crossroads. The direction we take, he informs us, will determine the fate of mankind for all time to come. This kind of speechmaking has been going on for many centuries. Strangely, if not humorously, each of our speakers knows the road to take but no two of them agree on which one it must be.

Perhaps each is right in his own way. There is no single, simple solution to all of our problems. Furthermore, no matter how hard we strive the affairs of society refuse to be settled with any reasonable degree of finality. The test of survival for representative government is how well it can meet the continuing challenges of changing times.

This means more than just passive drifting. It means positive, creative adaptation; utilization of the forces of change to promote the well being of our citizens.

We live in a dangerous age. In strategic areas of the world the democratic ideals to which we are dedicated are under relentless attack.

Many of the problems associated with that struggle are beyond the reach of state government. But it is equally true that the sound and progressive resolution of issues on the state, county, and local levels will go far toward strengthening the inner fortress of freedom. Certainly history confirms that our own state of Wisconsin has in the past made tremendous contributions toward fortifying the social and economic foundations of American life.

Some of the assaults against our democratic way of life, it must be remembered, are a direct concern of state and local government. These words of the late Robert Marion LaFollette, Sr., are amazingly appropriate today:

"We have long rested comfortably in this country upon the assumption that because our form of government was democratic, it was therefore automatically producing democratic results. Now, there is nothing mysteriously potent about the forms and names of democratic institutions that should make them self-operative. Tyranny and oppression are just as possible under democratic forms as under any other. We are slow to realize that democ-



racy is a life; and involves continual struggle. It is only as those of every generation who love democracy resist with all their might the encroachments of its enemies that the ideals of representative government can even be nearly approximated."

The late Senator LaFollette's words come as a stern reminder that political leadership in our system must accept the responsibility to lead.

It must answer swiftly and decisively any form of tyranny and oppression. It must help formulate the purpose, direction, and program that will translate the aspirations of our people into reality. This is easy when the cause is popular — difficult when it is not. I hope for the courage to make those hard decisions which distinguish responsible leadership from irresponsible demagoguery.

### **New Problems for State Governments**

For many reasons there is more urgency in our situation today than at any other time in this century.

Some of the problems we face are of our own making. Many more are the natural outgrowth of an economic, industrial, and cultural revolution which has virtually engulfed us in the past twenty-five years. Moreover, this revolution, which has set a pace too fast for us to accommodate it, continues to increase its tempo month by month and year by year.

Each year we have a larger number of school age children; each year a larger percentage of them demand the educational opportunities we are pledged to offer them.

The number, size, and speed of our automobiles has outmoded the highways and congested our city streets.

The rapid growth and expansion of our metropolitan areas has thrown cities, villages, towns, and counties into confusion and conflict.

Mental illness has become a more pressing problem simply because advances in science have given us better insight into its nature and treatment.

More people and more leisure have put an ever-increasing burden upon our recreation resources. We need more parks and playgrounds, more wetlands, more stream improvement, better use of our lakes and streams, and more careful husbanding of our wilderness areas.

This is but a fleeting mention of a few of our problems, but it offers a glimpse of the scope and magnitude of the issues before us.

### **Archaic Machinery of Government**

Unfortunately we are handicapped in meeting our problems by archaic governmental structures at both the state and local level. If we are to have the tools for effective action we must bring modern methods and efficient organization to our governmental units.

Another problem plagues us at every turn. It is not only the question of how many more dollars we need to provide essential services, but more puzzling and provocative, where will the dollars come from? This issue must be faced sooner or later whether we like it or not. I propose that we face it now, in



two ways. First, by a comprehensive analysis and revision of our tax structure; second, by vigorous encouragement of economic growth and industrial expansion. In the long pull our hopes and plans for raising the necessary dollars without increasing taxes too sharply will depend upon our rate of economic growth. Here is our area of hope for the most fruitful effort.

In the meantime we still face the immediate problem of paying for critically needed services out of a revenue structure producing insufficient dollars.

We can close our eyes, but the problem will not go away. To those who would neglect our schools, our colleges, and public welfare activities and institutions, our highways and conservation resources, I say this — we spend more money on cigarettes, liquor, cosmetics and other luxuries than the total cost of our state government. If we have not completely lost our sense of values in the fast pace of this modern world, then the question in its proper perspective is really this — are we willing to give up a few personal luxuries in exchange for a creative investment in our future?

While the issues I have discussed here speak loudly for the necessity of bold action, I shall not seek action for the sake of motion or change for the sake of doing something different. Rather, I simply suggest that we can reflect with Lincoln that "The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. We must think anew and act anew."

### Problems Are Not Partisan

To meet our problems I shall, in the course of time, make a series of proposals for action by the legislature. They will be made in a non-partisan spirit, and I am hopeful they will be weighed and considered in the same spirit. The major problem areas I have mentioned today are non-partisan in character. While we all have differences over the approach to a solution, our differences, I hope, will arise from honest individual conviction.

I would ask only one thing of the citizens of Wisconsin: when you believe we are right, support us; when you believe we are wrong, oppose us; but let us all have a free and open discussion of our problems so that we can work toward an honest adjustment of differences without sacrifice of principles. This is the key to every successful democratic society the world has known.

I ask no more of my political opponents than of my friends. If each of you will support our proposals as far as your own conscience carries you and halt opposition at the border of mere partisanship, the gain will be great for the citizens of our state.

An exciting and challenging future lies before us. The decisions made this year will provide the impetus for the progress of the future or the chains that will shackle us to the "dogmas of the quiet past."

I can think of no better expression of our situation than the words written by Franklin D. Roosevelt shortly before his death: "The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with a strong and active faith."

This is the note on which I would end — that we move forward with a strong and active faith to build today for a better tomorrow. Working to-



gether — you who have elected us and we who have been elected — we can make Wisconsin once again the proud pioneer in the quest for a more abundant and more significant life for all our people, whatever their race or color or creed. This is the goal to which I am dedicated as I assume the office of Governor of Wisconsin.

