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SECOND INAUGURAL ADDRESS of GOVERNOR WENDELL R. ANDERSON



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STATE OF MINNESOTA

To the 69th Session
of the Legislature of Minnesota

January 8, 1975

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SECOND INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF
GOVERNOR WENDELL R. ANDERSON

JANUARY 8, 1975

Mr. Chief Justice and members of the Court, Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, members of the Legislature and fellow citizens of Minnesota:

These proceedings are more than a ceremony. They represent more than the inauguration of elected officials.

This is also a day to inaugurate ideas. Our duty is to assume responsibility, not merely office; to be leaders and not just custodians.

Every Governor, at the outset of every term, has stood here for the purpose of defining where we stand - as a people, and as a government. Each Governor has done so in the light not only of past history, but of the events of the day as well.

Other inaugurations have taken place in the midst of crisis. Other governments have known the ravages of war, depression, and the loss of confidence in leadership.

We begin this new government - this 69th session of the Minnesota Legislature - in a period of severe national

economic distress.

Officially, we are told that over 7.1 percent of the American work force is idle. But it's more serious than that.

In some states unemployment is more than 10 percent. Among the young of our inner cities, it's over 35 percent and getting worse.

More Americans are unemployed today than at any time since 1940.

Food costs 30 percent more today than it did just 22 months ago.

A new construction loan can cost as much as 18 percent simple interest.

And bankruptcies are up, both personal and business.

These are hard facts. These are urgent facts. We recite them with dismay, but with resolve as well, because truth is always the threshold of renewal.

Just as it is important to face the hard facts about our economy, it is equally important to remember the basic strength of our people.

Despite everything, we can be optimistic. We can be optimistic about our economic system - our system of government and the political system on which it depends. We can be optimistic about its strength and resilience.

Our system remains today the best framework for human advancement in all history. Our basic institutions still provide the best tools for problem-solving ever devised.

And we can be optimistic about the nature of our people. Americans have a talent and a genius for dealing with economic issues.

We can be optimistic, too, now that we must come to the end of an era of waste. The prolonged and unchecked extravagance in every aspect of national life is drawing to a close. Every one of us knows too well the excesses of our recent past.

But waste is still everywhere. You can see it on the freeways. Thousands of cars stalled bumper to bumper, each with one passenger - the driver. You can see it on an airplane, in which 15 passengers fly across the country in a 747 built to hold hundreds.

Then we reward that waste with tax dollars to subsidize those airplanes.

To drive by a high school that is in great financial need today is to see a parking lot, filled with hundreds of cars belonging to the students. That is the sort of choice we have been making between private waste and public need.

At last we know we can't afford this waste. We can't afford it in our own lives, and we can't afford it in the programs and policies of government.

Let us be grateful that we are forced now to re-examine - under the harshest light - every program, every habit, every commitment.

We are being forced to do what we should have been doing all along: to completely rethink our values.

There is no longer money for everything. We can afford neither the luxury of folly nor the folly of luxury.

What's happened to us? Why must we charge our poorest Americans more money for food stamps at the same

time we nearly double foreign military aid?

When there's not enough money to insure clean drinking water for our people, why must our nation continue to prop up and fawn over President Park of South Korea at a cost of a billion American dollars a year?

We have given South Korea the fifth largest army in the world. And what has been received in return? Just two weeks ago, President Park did present a medal to Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina.

Must we allow another 3,184 Minnesota dairy farmers to go out of business this year - as we did last year? Why must the money for a decent farm program be sacrificed at home so that General Thieu can continue to defend his oppressive regime?

Is it really a first priority of the oldest democracy in the world to provide military hardware and handouts for dictators and corrupt generals anywhere?

We understand our international obligations. We are not, nor can we ever be again, any form of isolationists. But it is the underwriting of corrupt dictatorships around the world that has in fact isolated

this country from the hope and the allegiance of decent men and women all over the earth.

We all believe in a strong America. We must be able and equipped to defend ourselves. Only fools and weaklings would think otherwise.

But a strong America is more than missiles and military aid. For me and for you, a strong America is productive jobs, decent housing for our people, fair prices for both our farmers and consumers, clean air and water, the opportunity for a decent education no matter where you live, whether you're rich or poor or whatever the color of your skin.

For me, a strong America begins with people living in hope and confidence that they can share in the economic and social greatness of this nation.

I have more faith by far in the strength and confidence and hope of the American people than I do in the power of a B-1 bomber or a new submarine.

This country is spending 3.1 billion dollars on a space program this year.

If we must decide between funding a 3.1 billion

dollar space program and funding for sewage disposal, then the moon will have to wait.

Perhaps we'd be better off if the resources of our government and the attention of our people were riveted on a program to explore the space in which human beings must live here on earth.

The time for token answers and temporary remedies is over. The problems we face are more than superficial. The solutions we propose cannot be superficial either.

As John Denver has told us:

It's time and time and time again
to find another way. It's time to
gather forces and get out of yesterday.¹

So let us face our most urgent problem.

In 1972, we spent less than 4 billion dollars to import oil into this country. Last year we sent over 25 billion dollars out of our country to satisfy our need and our greed.

¹ From "Circus," by John Denver, Michael Johnson and Laurie Kuehn. Copyright 1969 and 1971, Cherry Lane Music Company, New York, New York.

What does it mean to spend 25 billion dollars for imported oil?

Let us know that every gallon of oil that is imported into this country at inflated prices cheats the future of the children of this land.

Every gallon of oil that is imported into this country at inflated prices makes that social security payment, that pension check, that weekly salary smaller, even if the printed numbers are bigger.

It means the additional dollars we spend on the handicapped won't bring them the better care we want.

It means that a new contract for more wages doesn't give you more money and probably gives you less money.

Every day that we continue to send that money to those oil countries means more denial and sacrifice for the poor, the blacks, the Indians, the old, the handicapped, all those whose needs are urgent and unmet.

A tax cut, more money for social security, public employment programs are fine, but they are just economic

band-aids unless we face up to the problems of imported oil.

We must recognize at the beginning that all our economic and social gains are fantasies until we control inflation as a national policy.

And we must tell ourselves the truth. We will never control inflation in this country so long as a single drop of unnecessary imported oil is bought for American consumption.

The choices are simple.

We can keep on doing exactly what we are doing, which is just about nothing. And we all know that.

We've adjusted our speed and our thermostats and we import expensive oil. That's our program.

What can we do? What must we do?

If we really are serious about stopping inflation and waste and bringing economic stability and justice back to America, we must eliminate our gluttonous appetite for someone else's oil.

There are only three ways to do it - rationing, higher prices, or a tough allocation system. And it could take all three.

But if we were willing to do that, then our President could say with confidence, in the near future, to all the foreign oil producers:

"We don't want your oil anymore, we don't need your oil anymore, and we won't buy your oil anymore."

He won't be able to say that unless we start to sacrifice now.

And surely this kind of sacrifice makes more sense than all the loose talk about using military force to insure a supply of cheap imported oil.

I'm willing to make that sacrifice, and I believe the American people are willing to make that sacrifice, because we all know it is a choice between economic chaos and economic stability. We can't have economic stability in this country until we can stop depending on imported oil.

And until we do that, we can't spend those 25 billion American dollars a year on American social and

economic justice.

That is the reason, here in this nearly landlocked state in the American midwest, that we are talking today about our national and international economic crisis, our national and international oil crisis.

That economic crisis has affected nearly every decision I have made in preparing the budget recommendations I will bring to you next week.

That economic crisis will hang over the heads of every legislator in this room during every minute of your deliberations in the months ahead. It will affect every decision you make.

I have spoken of national priorities. But these times demand our thoughtful attention as well to priorities for state government and state funds.

I will return here next week with specific recommendations for the budgeting of our resources for the next two years.

But I want to tell you today that those recommendations will concentrate on the most fundamental, useful, and productive efforts of state government in Minnesota.

For example, education.

Wherever I go, I see the educational commitment of the State of Minnesota changing the lives of people for the better.

This is obviously a time of austerity. Some would use that as an excuse to reduce our commitment to education and to our young people.

I reject that.

In times of difficulty and austerity, our commitment to education must be even greater. It is education and enlightenment that help us find our way again.

Our state system of education has produced scientists with the training and skill to develop grains that withstand the mysterious diseases and rusts of India and Africa.

And surely it must have been more difficult to develop, to grasp a procedure to transplant kidneys from one human being to another than it would be to find a substitute for oil.

When World War II began, we lost our supply of rubber. We made synthetic tires, and today they're better tires.

I am convinced that somewhere in Minnesota today there is a young man or woman who is going to produce a better engine, or achieve better productivity for our soil, who will find a new source of energy or a better way to use the energy we have.

If only we give them the education for it.

And we're going to do that.

Today we are spending approximately 1.3 billion dollars of state funds to support elementary and secondary education.

Next week, I will ask the Legislature for 360 million dollars of additional funds, an increase of over 27 percent.

That will allow us to set state school aids at \$910 for the first year and \$970 for the second year of the biennium, and improve our other aids as well.

The details will be contained in my budget address. But I want you to know today that we will be seeking a substantial commitment to the quality of Minnesota education.

We must also give special attention to our housing needs.

I have a prejudice.

I believe that pride in home ownership is one of the great strengths of our society.

People who own their homes have a stake in their neighborhoods. They are concerned about their schools. They want to make their communities work. Home ownership supports the quality neighborhoods and communities our children deserve.

More than 70 percent of our Minnesota citizens own their own homes.

But this cornerstone of our quality of life is being threatened today.

The sad truth is that the average American can't build a house, can't buy a home, can't get a loan, can't save, can't move ahead toward a better vision. That's not the American dream.

The national housing policy of the past 30 years has been cut to ribbons. They are not even ribbons - about all that remains is the red tape.

On the one hand, workers who build housing are unemployed all across this country. And on the other hand, there's a housing shortage.

Unemployment won't build the homes we need. High interest rates won't build the homes we need, or put construction workers back on the job again.

The role of government should be to help people into decent housing. The role of government should be to encourage home improvement and not penalize it.

We have been trying to do that here in this state. We already have a 600 million dollar state housing program. But I am going to ask the Legislature for an additional direct appropriation of 45 million dollars so that more

of our citizens have a chance to find a good place to live at a price they can afford to pay.

Another priority of this legislative session must be to control the property tax pressure on the homes we already have.

We made a magnificent commitment to our senior citizens when we froze their property taxes two years ago. They are safe from the threat of rising property taxes, and I'm grateful that we froze their taxes when we did.

In fact, no state has done a better job of reducing the burden of the most regressive, most unfair tax we have - the property tax on our homes and farms and businesses.

But now, because of runaway inflation, that effort is in danger.

That's why I am endorsing the Tax Study Commission recommendation for income-adjusted property tax relief, and I will be recommending it in my budget message.

This effort to help Minnesota citizens resist the pressure of property taxes is the most important tax

commitment we can make.

But perhaps the greatest economic threat of all to the individual family in Minnesota is the threat of prolonged serious illness.

There is no economic suffering so great and so long lasting as that which occurs when an individual or loved one is struck down by a catastrophic illness or accident.

There is no way to anticipate such catastrophes, and no way to prevent them. But we can prevent families from being wiped out economically forever.

We can have an effective, practical state program to insure every Minnesota citizen against the most severe effects of catastrophic illness. I will present such a program to you next week.

We must also continue to move forward in the humane and effective treatment of Minnesota citizens who are addicted to alcohol and drugs.

We took a proper step forward in 1971 when we declared that drunkenness would no longer be a crime in Minnesota. We recognized alcoholism for the illness that it is.

But we still have more than 100,000 Minnesotans with serious alcohol problems. Half of our highway fatalities are still alcohol-related, and 60 percent of those fatalities are young people between the ages of 14 and 24.

I was shocked to learn recently that as many as 15 percent of our adolescents - including junior and senior high school students - have problems with alcohol.

We cannot let our economic problems hold back this effort.

We must have a program that saves lives and families and careers - and people.

We must have less misery and pain and tragedy and crime related to alcohol and drugs.

It won't happen unless we make a commitment to it. And I'm setting aside an additional 10 million dollars in my budget recommendations to meet that commitment.

We must also make a further commitment to the safety of our people.

Too many Minnesotans are afraid to go out alone or even be home alone at night.

Too many hand guns are available to people who should not be allowed to have them.

Too many drunken drivers are killing and maiming others on our highways.

When we release someone from prison who is still a hardened criminal, not rehabilitated, we don't help anybody.

The first function for which government is established is to protect its citizens against violence. That vigilance remains our first duty, and those who forget it do not deserve to govern.

We must commit ourselves today to toughness - against guns, against drunken drivers, against repeated offenders.

We must also maintain our efforts on behalf of the mentally handicapped children and adults of Minnesota.

Today we are spending an average of 11,680 dollars per year on each retarded citizen in our Minnesota state hospitals. For some of them, of course, we are spending even more.

We also have begun to establish community care and treatment centers - group homes and sheltered workshops and day activity centers - throughout the state.

They provide accomplishment and independence to many who would otherwise be permanent wards of the state.

We have a responsibility to continue that work - to protect the quality of our care and treatment and education of those who need special help.

To do less is to break our commitment to those who cannot help themselves. Instead, we must do more. And we will.

I will have specific recommendations for you next week.

Early next week, you and the people of Minnesota will have a unique opportunity to assess the condition of our state.

Your coming legislative seminar will provide new insights for all of us. I am confident that you will be reassured about the strength and the future of this state.

Your commitment to this special learning effort demonstrates again the Minnesota tradition of legislative excellence.

We need that excellence.

Today is difficult. Tomorrow is never easy.

In facing that tomorrow, let us remind ourselves of this:

The people of this state are strong. They are strong enough to accept the truth, however harsh, and to deal with it.

There is evident everywhere among the people, an enormous reservoir of energy and courage. Our people have faith in themselves and in the better future that they know can be achieved. They have the vision of what ought to be, and the willingness to sacrifice to achieve that vision.

Through all our history of affluence, the people knew that softness and drift and waste were not the fair expression of our national character.

Walter Lippmann said it for us:

We shall turn from the soft vices in which
a civilization decays,

We shall return to the stern virtues by which
a civilization is made,

We shall do this because at long last, we
know that we must, because finally we begin
to see that the hard way is the only enduring
way.

What we must demonstrate to our people is that our
system can do the hard things, that our political process is
the link that was intended between them and their destiny.

We must reaffirm by what we do that our political
system is the avenue, not the enemy, of our better selves.

If we can help to make people see that, then we
will indeed have inaugurated an age in which our will is
equal to our hopes.