

Inaugural Address of Governor Howard M Gore

March 4, 1925

My Fellow Countrymen: It is with a feeling of appreciation mingled with solemn responsibility that I pay my respects to you, the citizens of the great State of West Virginia. We are passing through an unusual period of social, business, and economic adjustment. The problems with which we are dealing are not the expressions of the natural unfolding of the industrial and social life of the nation. They are the legacies that come to us as a result of the dislocations wrought upon a peaceful nation suddenly precipitated into the midst of a great world conflict.

In meeting the problems of war the success of our sacrificial efforts was accomplished only by sympathetic cooperation and zealous purpose on the part of all the citizens from every walk of life. The problems of peace are no less complex and present no less difficulties than those of war. And the will to meet the problems of peace must be as sturdy and at times even as heroic as that which we exemplified in meeting the emergencies of war.

Only a few days since, my Mother admonished me that only those public officials who consecrate themselves unreservedly to the tasks before them are worthy of a place in the hearts of their fellow countrymen. She reminded me of the words of my chief, the President of the United States, who said: "We do not need more material development; we need more spiritual development. We do not need more intellectual power; we need more moral power. We do not need more knowledge; we need more character. We do not need more law; we need more religion. We do not need more of the things that are seen; we need more of the things that are unseen."

Just a little while ago when I took the oath of office, with the admonitions of my Mother and my President associated in my thought, I committed myself to the tasks to which you have assigned me, with the belief that while the letter of the law has its place, yet enduring purpose and moral power after all are the great forces that have steadily unfolded to each succeeding generation a heritage richer than the last. So let me join here with you in common faith and hope that a way will be found to promote those activities that are essential to the peace, progress and prosperity of our people. Tolerance and faith in ourselves and in our neighbors are essential. Convictions based upon prejudices and lack of information tend to courses that are unwise. Opinionated and controversial discussions confuse rather than clarify. They hinder rather than help. As in adjusting other matters of life, the safe course is to properly analyze in healthy conference the factors that bear on the question in mind. In this way an intelligent course may be determined and pursued. And above all, common sense and justice must be the masters at all our council tables.

During my services with the Federal Government I had the privilege to observe and intimately study at close range problems national in scope. Our problems here in West Virginia, although perhaps accentuated by the diversity of our activities, are not unlike those that confront the people of our sister states or those that confront the National Government. It was with a sense of pride and complete confidence that I assured the President of the United States that the people of our mountain state could be relied upon to coordinate their genius and fortitude with the people

of sister states to the end that history may record that we were as wise in peace as we had been patriotic in war.

As a broad general rule it is unwise to embark upon any policy affecting any major undertaking of the state until we have first had the benefit of the thought of the masses with respect to that particular policy. My training and experience have made me believe that whenever a public official keeps within the conception of those who are daily carrying on the essential activities in their respective communities, he will seldom reach conclusions that defeat the public interest. He has the knowledge also that within this conception the life, liberty and the property of every man, woman and child are safe and secure unto them.

You ask what is my policy and what is my program. I have no policy save the rule of right and reason. My program is to apply these principles to the solution of each issue as it comes before us for consideration.

Taxation has been a super problem with all States and Nations since the beginning of organized government. As people become more intelligent they demand better living conditions and improved environments in which to rear their children. And so in this age in meeting the demands for better educational facilities, improved roads and other comforts and conveniences of the time, we have found the cost of government steadily increasing. Today, the burden of taxation has reached the stage where its effects upon our economic structure are disturbing. In a great many sections of this country, and in some sections of our own State, taxation amounts virtually to confiscation of the earning power of certain classes of property. It does not require an expert economist to conclude that this has the effect of defeating our normal progress. How to meet the growing needs of the State without retarding progress is the problem that challenges our best thought and judgment.

A new capitol is in the course of construction, and the point has been reached where the funds made available by State property sales are nearing exhaustion. Before we can go further with this essential project, it is necessary to draw from the tax resources of the State. We have recently authorized the issuance of an additional \$20,000,000 in road bonds and this means that there must be additional revenue to meet the sinking fund and interest charges. As these new roads are completed, maintenance charges will increase. It has been our experience in the National Government that constant attention to the upkeep of the road quickly assumes almost as much importance as the building of the roads themselves. It would be economically unwise to fail to give this phase of our road program the attention which it demands. Practically all our State institutions, educational, eleemosynary and otherwise, are in need of additional facilities in order to satisfactorily carry on their activities. It is my information that funds made available for the State constabulary at the last legislature will soon be exhausted.

Many other activities of the State present similar problems. However, those mentioned are sufficient to indicate the intricate and disturbing situations that face this administration as it assumes office. The way is not entirely clear, but no problem confronts us that will not yield to intelligent thought and cooperation in devising ways to meet it.

While I fully appreciate the necessity of providing additional revenue to meet the conditions I have just outlined, yet I am not unmindful of the more imperative duty of holding the burden of taxation to a minimum. It is my judgment that all tax levying bodies should be limited to proper metes and bounds in order that the totalized sum to be collected may not amount to unreasonable figures. It is my belief that it would be unwise at this time to make any increase in our direct tax for State purposes. The same is true for county and district taxes where a commensurate figure has already been attained. It is my purpose to recommend legislation that will have this effect. I shall insist that there be no increase in the ordinary expenses of our State government. Such additional funds as may be vitally necessary to meet imperative needs must be reduced to the lowest minimum consistent with sound public policy. Intelligent economy must be practiced not only by our State Government but by the officials of every political subdivision thereof - county and district - if we are to find a way to meet our tax problem. Cooperation will be invited and insisted upon on the part of all administrative officials to the furtherance of this end.

At the time the \$50,000,000 bond issue was ratified there was mapped out a definite program of State highways and the legislature directed the procedure for the expenditure of this sum. If it appears now that available funds will not be sufficient to complete the State road system in whole or in part, the time to revise and readjust our program is now.

To my mind it would be far better that we make these adjustments now than to have the confusion, disappointment, and misunderstanding that would be the natural consequence of proceeding without taking into consideration the effects of conditions that clearly present themselves.

A question of major importance to the well-being of our State is the relationship existing between capital and labor. This question, like that of taxation, is ages old. It has been my observation that acute controversies between these groups have frequently been due to a lack of understanding by the one, of the problems of the other. Upon several occasions I have been called upon to assist in the settlement of questions of this character. With negligible exception, one of the major difficulties in each instance was due to a misconception of one group or the other with respect to the attitude of the other party to the controversy. Where a calm, dispassionate consideration of the matters in dispute is had, little difficulty is experienced in finding a basis of adjustment that all parties may accept.

We should ever be mindful of the fact that we can have creature comforts, schools, roads, and accumulate capital assets on which to base the expansion of our enterprises, by being able to put into the channels of commerce the products of our hands and minds, profitably. To do this we must have peace and intelligent relationship between all groups contributing to our business and industrial life. We must ever keep in mind that that which defeats these ends, in the last analysis, envelops and affects the interests of practically all. Speaking in the broadest sense the ill effects of disturbance and turmoil, before they find their final lodgment, involve the prosperity and opportunity of the citizens as a whole.

It is my information that in certain sections of the State persons paid by individuals or concerns are vested with the same or similar police authority as that exercised by regularly constituted

officers of the law. Such authority can be vested safely in but one agency, and that is, government itself, and encroachments upon the authority of government I do not and will not approve.

I shall harken to the call of the rights of those who make this State a home - a thing to be loved - for themselves and for their children. Those who come among us for any other purpose must bear in mind that the welfare of the citizen and the State can not be made a matter of secondary importance in any of their activities.

As a matter of policy, whenever the interests of any person or group of persons, organized or otherwise are under consideration, the persons whose interests are involved will be given proper opportunity to be heard before conclusive action is taken. But professional lobbyists who ply their trade and seek to shape the course of public affairs by the exertion of unwholesome influence will have no place at our council tables.

Woman's gentle and elevating influence has materially contributed to a more acceptable standard of political life in this State and Nation. Given the right of suffrage, she has accepted it as a duty rather than as a privilege. Her participation in the affairs of State should not be a superficial one. During the next four years she will be freely and gladly invited to participate in the consideration of matters of general public interest, and in addition shall have special recognition along lines for which she has a peculiar training and fitness.

The progress of a State or Nation can be measured in a large degree by the importance it attaches to the education of its children. The door of opportunity should not be closed to any boy or girl who will equip himself or herself to enter therein. Society finds a satisfying place for those who make an acceptable contribution to the life of the community of which they are a part. It is the duty of West Virginia to provide such training and opportunity for the boys and girls of every community as will equip them to make that acceptable contribution.

The time available will not permit a discussion, here, of many subjects of major importance to the citizens of the State. However, I have sought to give you the rule and guide that will control in the discharge of the duties that I here and now assume.

In conclusion, we as a people must keep constantly before us that no State or Nation, or individual, for that matter, can forget God and still safely thread a way through dangers seen and unseen. Reverence for God and His great order of things, and the teachings of the lowly Nazarene symbolize the inspiring forces that have led humanity through the changing scenes of the ages, step by step, to the golden opportunity that is potentially ours. Let us approach the tasks that are before us - unafraid.