



INAUGURAL ADDRESS

of

GOVERNOR

THEODORE R. McKELDIN

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ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND

*The Address of Theodore R. McKeldin
upon his inauguration as Governor of the
State of Maryland, January the 10th, 1951*

AS I assume the office of Governor, my first thought is to voice my gratitude to the citizens of Maryland who have chosen me for such exalted honor. I take up this trust, not with triumph's swollen pride, but in humility and with a profound sense of dedication.

For these are troubled times—indeed critical times. While we are gathered here in a setting of peace and serenity, amidst hallowed traditions, none of us is free from the oppressive consciousness of the military disasters and the diplomatic debacles which our nation has suffered, and of the austere and grim days ahead.

Virtually over night our national economy and planning have undergone drastic changes. More radical changes confront us. We cannot insulate ourselves from their impact, nor remain oblivious to them. Our perils have been aggravated and our margin of safety alarmingly reduced by events which have followed each other at an incredible pace.

With fervent hearts we pray that we may yet be spared the holocaust of another world war, but we cannot evade the harsh realization that at this moment the very life of the nation hangs in the balance. While those who occupy the places of authority and leadership in the nation lag behind, the people themselves are eager to be informed and inspired and to play their proper role in coping with the growing emergency.

Even if it be our benign destiny to escape the catastrophe of yet another global war, we still shall be faced with a long period of heightened tension, requiring unparalleled exertions and sacrifice.

Only thus can we create the strength from which to negotiate with our adversaries and to inspire and aid our allies.

It is not my purpose or function to enlarge upon national and international issues, or to assess the blame for what has happened. It is my duty, however, to call attention to the present grave situation, regardless of how or why it came into being, to weigh its probable effects upon the State's business and affairs, and to consider our future course.

The swift and ominous march of history has relegated to secondary importance problems which, only a few short months ago, seemed primary and urgent.

Overshadowing in its urgency all other concerns is that of civilian defense. I would be remiss if I failed to alert the people of Maryland to its magnitude and pressing importance. In civilian defense it shall be our purpose to co-operate with the Federal Government to which, in the nature of the matter, we should look for advice and aid.

Nevertheless, we in Maryland have a vital stake and a corresponding responsibility that challenges us to take immediate counsel and to formulate plans for speedy action.

We are in an exposed position. We are situated close to the Nation's capital. Important industrial and vital war plants are clustered in and near the State's metropolis. We have one of the world's largest harbors about which are grouped extensive ship-building facilities.

We cannot afford the complacency in which we have been encouraged to indulge up to now.

It is not my wish to cause undue alarm, but with each passing day it has become more evident that our conception of the scope of civilian defense has not been on a scale to match the range and extent of the problem.

In a real sense, there will be no civilian non-combatants isolated from this struggle for survival. For the pattern of modern war is such that, if it comes, it may reach our soil which heretofore has been untouched.

Enemy attack upon a community, under conditions of modern war, may mean the disruption of its electric plants, paralysis of its arteries of transportation, destruction of its water supply, multiple conflagrations and mass casualties. Unless the people are fully prepared, it may mean panic, epidemic and disaster.

A vast army of civilians must be trained and ready to respond to any foreseeable crisis and each individual must know what is expected of him. Our preparations, including the instruction of the people, must be commensurate with the magnitude of the possible emergency.

I have been giving this problem the conscientious and diligent attention which its gravity demands.

I hope to present, as promptly as possible, a program of civilian defense, comprehensive yet feasible, to meet the needs of the hour.

The Federal Government is committed to heavy new taxation to provide for national defense, the undeclared war in the Far East, and, possibly a new world conflict.

Recently enacted Federal taxes are but the forerunner of greater and heavier burdens yet to be imposed. The Federal Government may even invade areas of taxation from which the states heretofore have derived their principal revenues.

The fiscal problem of the State is further aggravated by the fact that the purchasing power of the State's income dollar has been reduced by the unchecked inflationary spiral. Precisely like the individual the State is the victim of this devaluating process.

It is, therefore, particularly imperative for the State to adopt a policy of rigid economy. To this course I already am firmly pledged.

Economy does not, however, mean indiscriminate and arbitrary cuts. That course would be easy enough but hardly wise. It is as important to sustain the essential as to curtail the non-essential. An intelligent approach to the problem, therefore, makes it particularly appropriate to give effect now to the mandate of the 1947 Legislature for the appointment of a commission on the reorganization of the State Government and its departments. Among its

objectives would be to eliminate overlapping and duplication of functions and to improve the State's fiscal practices.

As Mayor of Baltimore, I appointed such a commission with gratifying results to the City Government. The State commission which I shall name will be asked to begin its studies immediately and to report its findings and recommendations in time for action at the 1952 session of the Legislature.

Many desirable changes in the structure of the State Government which this Commission may recommend can be accomplished merely by statute. Others may well await revision of the State Constitution which the people have overwhelmingly approved and which has my hearty endorsement.

The human duty we owe to the mentally sick, the tubercular and the chronically ill, the aged and the indigent in all the recognized categories must continue as a compelling obligation of the State.

While materials and manpower are available, we will proceed with the necessary physical improvements to meet the needs of State hospitals, and every reasonable effort will be made to staff these institutions with capable and satisfied personnel.

Our schools must not only be kept at their present standard, but must be continuously improved in accordance with tested advances in education. Within the ability of our people to pay, we will encourage the school construction program in the City and Counties to accommodate the growing population of school age children and to eliminate overcrowding.

It has been my consistent belief that in the administration of public schools, politics has no place. Accordingly, it shall be my fixed policy to disregard partisanship in appointing county boards and to select men and women whose sincere and paramount interest is the educational progress of their communities.

We will strive for the advancement of our institutions of higher learning, including the University of Maryland, Morgan State College and the State Teachers Colleges. Again, however, the financial limitations of the State inevitably must be borne in mind.

Many thoughtful persons interested in our educational program have expressed concern over the heavy capital expenditures made in recent years for the Maryland State College at Princess Anne, and the further expenditures proposed for the future. The demand for economy necessitates early and careful re-examination of the Princess Anne program. Three commissions in the past fourteen years have recommended that the institution be discontinued as a land grant college. I propose that there be no further expansion of this institution until decisions can be made on the future use or disposition of the property.

An Advisory Council on Highway Construction will be appointed to review promptly the State's road building program. Already it is obvious that this program calls for more than the State can afford on the basis of present income for road purposes, and a revision is indicated. Good and safe roads we must and shall have, but at a price we can pay. The needs of national defense may also compel changes in our highway plans.

We are today faced with the dilemma of reconciling our concept of liberty with an effective defense against the insidious methods of the Communists. The rights which we accord to the individual are utilized to the extreme by these traitorous tools of a foreign power to destroy those very rights for the loyal and the law abiding.

The need for internal security has already been recognized in our State Constitution and by statute, and full and vigorous enforcement of our anti-subversive legislation is imperative. I recognize, however, that in insuring the preservation of the State we still have the obligation of safeguarding the rights of the individual. We shall continue to strive for the correct solution, and I am confident that we shall find the way that is not repugnant to the letter or spirit of our cherished Bill of Rights.

My fellow Marylanders, I summon you to high purpose, to noble duty and to great sacrifice. Assembled here in the shadow of war, in a moment fraught with grave peril, I ask that we restrain partisanship and lay aside all selfishness. Such concerns seem petty and unworthy in this hour, darkened by mounting casualty lists, bearing the names of our sons who are fighting, suffering and dying in the wintry wastes of Korea.

As I took the oath of office, less than an hour ago, I laid my hand on the Holy Bible at Second Chronicles, Chapter 7, Verse 14, which reads:

“If My people which are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land.”

In deep and sincere humility I dedicate myself to be God’s servant, and pray and ask you to pray that I may receive Divine Guidance in the important responsibilities of this high office. In these solemn days a wisdom greater than that of man is required. We are grateful that we of today may invoke as did our forebears a power not of this world to guide us and sustain us.

We love this land. It is our home—its lofty mountains and lovely valleys, its flowing rivers and majestic bay, its templed hills, its fertile fields and prosperous cities, this is our home—Maryland, my Maryland.

Here on the sacred soil of Maryland where, in the long ago, the foundations of freedom were laid by godly men, we pledge ourselves to maintain that freedom handed down to us as a blessed heritage.

Join me, my fellow citizens, in deepened devotion to the sacred cause of American liberty and let us resolve that through our zealous efforts and with the help of God we shall preserve this freedom as the last best hope of earth.

