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Inaugural Address

A. O. Stanley
Governor, Commonwealth of Kentucky

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Inaugural Address of Governor A. O. Stanley.

"Ladies and Gentlemen—Profoundly grateful to my partial countrymen my appreciation shall be evidenced not by my words, but my needs, by an assiduous application to the grave responsibilities and arduous duties incident to the exalted station to which you have elected me.

“We are here to conduct the people's business, to collect the revenues necessary to the discharge of that business with wisdom and justice and to see that they are honestly and economically disbursed. To liquidate a heavy deficit, if possible, without increasing the burden of taxation, will require the greatest care and discretion in the appropriation and expenditure of public funds,
"There is an insistent demand for more business and less politics in the administration of fiscal affairs. Speaking accurately, it is impossible to sever business and politics, for politics in its last analysis is the art of transacting the business of organized society and whenever the government of a city, state or nation is not conducted upon strict principles, it is always bad politics and usually bad morals as well. The same basic and elementary principles upon which all large business enterprises are operated apply to the management of public affairs. The astute financier conducts a great enterprise by the employment of just so many persons as are necessary to its successful operation. Every superfluous employe is an evidence of its incapacity of those who retain him, and the amount he receives is a waste of the legitimate profits of the business.

"In the conduct of the people's business the same sensible rule should apply. No man has an inherent right to be maintained at the expense of the public. Every superfluous office from the meanest to the highest should be immediately abolished without regard to the personal excellence or the political alliances of the holder of that position. Every dollar taken from the public by the drastic power of taxation is a trust fund to be held inviolate and used only for the common weal, and the public officer who creates or assists in creating a useless office or in maintaining it betrays his trust and is as culpable as the guardian who distributes the property of his ward among his necessitous friends.

"As I see it, the first duty of this administration is to determine just what offices are essential—absolutely essential—to the transaction of the business of the Commonwealth. When this determination has been made, the offices should be filled with an eye single to the fitness of the man for the place, and no man is fit for any place who does not possess intelligence, integrity and capacity for labor.

"A Governor or other public official should exercise the same care and the same discernment in securing a maximum of service at a minimum of cost as expected of the president or the overseer of some private business employing hundreds of men and expending millions of money. No man and no woman should be permitted to draw one dollar from the public treasury who does not actually render a good and sufficient equivalent for that dollar in services actually
performed. The man or woman who draws a salary from the public treasury without honestly and faithfully performing the duties incumbent upon the holder of the position assumed, inflicts an injury upon the State infinitely greater than if the recipient had actually purloined that amount from the public purse, for the reason that those who do earn the amounts they receive are discouraged and demoralized by the presence of others more generously rewarded and who do little or nothing to deserve it. It is my sincere hope that this administration will make the most careful scrutiny into every branch of the public service and wherever any person is found to have held an office and to have performed none of the duties incident to it, then that office should be instantly abolished. You need no better proof of its uselessness than that.

“No business built upon any other foundation than the granite base of simple and common honesty can or should long succeed. No amount of energy or acumen, however acute, will in the end save it from the disaster it deserves, and just as it is incumbent upon business associations to meet and to keep their obligations without equivocation or delay, so it is the duty and should be the fixed policy of political parties to keep inviolate every pledge made by such organizations.

“The platform pledges made by the duly accredited representatives of a party in convention assembled, are as binding upon the nominees of that party when elected to office as a note or bond, or a contract under seal. That political organization which fails to so regard its pledges, will invite and will deserve, defeat and repudiation at the hands of an honest and self-respecting electorate. The Democratic party in its recent convention has made certain specific promises to the people, has agreed to enact and to enforce progressive legislation demanded by an enlightened public opinion, and I have every reason to believe that the able and patriotic men whom it selected and whom the people have elected to office, will hasten to keep these pledges and to inaugurate these reforms.

“We will be called upon to aid in the construction and extension of public highways; in the improvement of our public school system; the enactment of anti-trust legislation; to pass laws designed to better compensate workmen for injuries received in the course of
their employment; to pass a corrupt practices and an anti-pass act; to amend and revise our prison contract system; in short, to fulfill honestly and adequately every pledge given the people of the State.

"'Duty,' said General Lee, 'is the noblest word in the language,' and duty has been best defined as 'obedience to the law out of respect for the law.' He who renders obedience to the statutes only because he fears detection and the pains and penalties incident to conviction differs in courage rather than in character from him who actually violates them. The foundation of all law and order, that upon which all good government and all free government is builded, is respect for constituted authority, a sincere appreciation of the sanctity of the law and a willing and reverent obedience to it.

"It is peculiarly incumbent upon a Governor of Kentucky to exert all the authority, all the power vested in him, for the maintenance of the majesty of the law. Nothing will do more to render property secure and to invite investment from other States for the development of our varied and immeasurable natural resources than a wholesome public opinion encouraged and sustained by public officials which will not tolerate lawlessness and which will demand the rigorous punishment of those engaged in acts of mob violence without regard to the alleged provocation. No man and no set of men having genuine respect for courts and legislative assemblies, and for those intrusted with the duty of enacting and interpreting and executing the law, ever refused to permit the law to take its course or ever attempted to take into their own ruthless hands the punishment of crime or the regulation of a community.

"Those invested with authority will be implicitly obeyed only when they are respected, and they will not be respected unless they deserve respect. You may enforce obedience but you cannot compel deference. Let legislation be corrupted at its fountain head, let those invested with supreme power—the authority to enact and to amend the laws of their country—be continually approached by the secret emissaries of corrupt and sinister interests; let bills be introduced and laws enacted not for the protection, but for the scientific plundering of the public; let men, without any visible means of support, without any legitimate business or profession, any occupation except the persistent and pernicious meddling with legislative
assemblies, operate in impudent and utter defiance of law and decency; let their insolent splendor evidence the extent of their nefarious prosperity; and respect for the lawmaker is impossible. This cancer must be torn out by the roots before it infects with its deadly virus every fibre of the body politic. The party which first placed the seal of its approval upon this administration instructed it in no uncertain terms to eradicate this appalling evil.

"'We believe,' says the Democratic platform of 1915, 'that no government, State or National, should be privately owned or privately controlled, and that the practice of solicitation by politicians and lobbyists of aid from particular groups or business interests on the understanding, explicit or implied, that the first care of the government must be for these particular interests is destructive of every principle of free and honest government. We unqualifiedly condemn the practices of the secret and corrupt lobbyist and pledge the party to a determined effort to eradicate these pernicious and baneful influences from the legislative assemblies by the enactment of stringent laws with severe penalties against the secret use of money or the promise of political preferment conditioned upon the betrayal of the public interest by public servants.'

"I am convinced that it is essential that public faith in public officials should be restored, and no man deserves the confidence of his constituents who is the supre-serviceable tool of some secret and opulent benefactor who is not the earnest, disinterested and incorruptible servant of the people who elected him. Every great interest and every enterprise has the same right to be heard before legislative committees considering laws affecting their business that they have in courts of justice when suing and being sued. It is their privilege and often their duty to send before such assemblies learned and capable men to explain the operation and effect of contemplated legislation. To refuse to hear such representatives would be to deny the right of petition, but they should appeal to the reason and the conscience of statesmen and not to their fear or their cupidity. Laws should be enacted which will protect the reputable agents of legitimate business while inflicting the severest pains and penalties upon the known and shameless corruptionist.

"'The least that can be acknowledged of the law is this, that her
voice is the harmony of the universe.' It is because the law in its enactment, in its interpretation and its execution is a sacred thing, the most sacred of all institutions not divine upon this earth, that I earnestly insist that those temporarily invested with authority shall be removed as far as possible from temptation, from the threats and the blandishment of the professional corruptionist, that the people, trusting the integrity of public officials, may grow in reverence for public institutions, may feel an instinctive abhorrence for the vicious and the violent who ruthlessly deface or desecrate them.

"To the protection of the persons and property of all men, rich and poor alike, to the maintenance of the law in its majesty and to its execution without fear or favor, I here dedicate mind and heart and all that is in me, and may He who determines the destiny of States and nations strengthen and direct me in the discharge of the difficult and arduous duties I am about to assume."

PERSONAL.

Jeff. T. Jones, of the class of 1915, and John S. Deering, of the class of 1916, have formed a partnership in the collecting business. Their offices are in the Trust Building, in Lexington, Ky., and they report that their business is good.

Douglas Felix, who graduated from the A. B. Department in 1913, and from the Law Department of Yale University in 1915, has established himself at Louisville, Ky.

Everett Matthews, a graduate of this department, is practicing law at Liberty, Ky.

"Congressman David Kincheloe, of Kentucky, has prepared a bill for the forthcoming Congress which will give Federal aid to local road building. The bill will assure the counties of the State $2.00 for each dollar raised by local taxation, as the State already appropriates $1.00 for each dollar raised by the county."—Uniontown Telegram.