

Inaugural Address

Edmund G. "Pat" Brown

32nd Governor, Democrat
(1959-1967)

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Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chief Justice, Governor and Mrs. Knight, Members of the Legislature, and my fellow Californians:

Where democracy lives, free people speak in strong voices. Last November, a free people called for a new vision for California. We begin today the solemn duty and high privilege of translating that vision into public policy and into law.

The election reaffirms our conviction that the people of California are resolved to move forward with courage and confidence. Offered reaction by the radical right, the voters emphatically declined. Offered government by retreat, the people preferred progress. Clearly then, our duty is to bring to California the forward force of responsible liberalism.

The essence of liberalism is a genuine concern and deep respect for all the people. Not monuments or institutions or associations, but people. Not one race, or one creed, or one nationality, but all the people. When people come first and special privilege is scorned, government is truly liberal.

In a liberal atmosphere, the individual stands secure against invasion of his dignity or intrusion on his conscience. He has the right to require justice and fair play, the right to demand protection from economic abuse and selfish threats to his security. At the same time, government must not, in naïve good intention, stifle his initiative or smother his growth. Men must indeed have freedom to breathe the air of self-respect.

A liberal program must also be a responsible program, a reasonable, rational, realistic program. We must know how much it will cost and where the money is coming from. Benefits must be measured against burdens. A program which pampers the people or threatens our solvency is as irresponsible as the one which ignores a vital need. But we will always remember that there is a difference between responsibility and timidity, and we are resolved to be governed more by our hopes than by our fears.

In the path of responsible liberalism, we walk in the giant footsteps of such memorable governors as Hughes and Roosevelt in New York, Wilson in New Jersey, LaFollette in Wisconsin, Altgeld and Stevenson in Illinois, and Johnson and Warren in California. Let us mark their example and set our sights to match their achievements.

Here in California, the explosive growth of our population and economy strains the fabric of government. Between election and inauguration, our population increased by 75,000

people. We must accept both the perils and the promise of this magnificent growth. No longer can we afford to stay on dead center, unresponsive and inert. I pledge a confident, pioneering leadership, ready to welcome growth, pursue its promise, and prepare for tomorrow.

A liberal's duty to be responsible has a special meaning in view of the grim crisis we face in the budget. From last year's budget, our bleak legacy is a 100 million dollar deficit. For several years, our State has spent more than it has taken in, and now almost all of our reserves and special funds are exhausted.

I am resolved that our new administration will face our financial responsibilities without flinching. Before the end of the month, I will recommend an economy-minded budget, and a courageous and fair program to obtain new revenues. I pledge, however, that we will not sacrifice essential services or narrow our vision for California.

Throughout the world, the cynical creed of Communism slanders democracy with the charge that men are too greedy, too ignorant, or too lazy to govern themselves. Let us, in our respect and concern for all the people, resolve to prove anew that representative government is the best government. Let us forge a program which will liberate our human resources and demonstrate the renewed vigor of American society. In this way, we will answer the slanders of Communism and expose its evil design.

This is a day of proper pride as well as earnest dedication for California Democrats. Not for 20 years, and only once before in this century, has a Democratic Governor made the inaugural address to the Legislature. And not since 1889 has there been a majority of Democrats in both houses of the Legislature.

The job of government, however, is not a narrowly partisan undertaking. I pledge my full co-operation to Democrats and Republicans alike. I know most of you personally, and I consider this to be one of the ablest legislative bodies in the United States. My door will always be open so that we can consider together our common problems of State Government. We must understand each other, trust each other, and work together in harmony. Where the good of the people is involved, I will expect the support of the distinguished members of both parties, and I hope by my actions to merit it.

In this connection, I express my deep appreciation to Governor Knight, to Mrs. Knight, and to the entire executive family for the genuine co-operation afforded me in the transfer of the functions and duties of this high office.

In obedience to the Constitution, I turn now to specific recommendations. I lay before you a program which in my considered judgment meets the test of being both liberal and responsible.

First. Guarantee Equal Job Opportunities. Discrimination in employment is a stain upon the image of California. We must recognize that conduct which degrades any member of

society, degrades society as a whole. Every man must finally see the necessity of protecting the rights of others as the most effective security for his own.

I therefore urge you to enact legislation to bar discrimination by an employer or a labor union on grounds of race, creed, national origin, or age. We should provide the means for conciliation, public education, and enforcement to insure that there are no arbitrary barriers to useful and productive employment. In truth we are, and in practice we must be, one people, equal in privilege and opportunity. This is our moral duty.

Second. Protect the Consumer. We are all consumers. Yet, we have never been able to speak in a single voice because we are disorganized and our needs are so diverse. Without a forceful spokesman in government, we have little defense against highly-organized special interests. I therefore recommend legislation providing for the appointment of a Consumers' Advocate, who should be empowered to advance the consumers' interest by public education and by representation before government agencies.

I also urge you to enact legislation to protect people from installment racketeers. Every year, thousands of Californians are deceived into signing sales contracts which contain unfair provisions and result in outrageous carrying charges. We need new laws to wipe out these vicious practices. We need them fair, strong, and soon.

Third. Encourage Economic Development. To keep our economy strong, we need new industries, new payrolls, and new jobs for our expanding population. Accordingly, I recommend legislation for the establishment of an Agency for Economic Development to launch a vigorous program to bring business here. By augmenting private efforts to attract new industries, this agency will invigorate our economy and enrich our lives.

Fourth. Safeguard Workers' Rights. The voters have firmly rejected the so-called right-to-work law. In a new and objective atmosphere, let us move forward to strengthen the integrity of the collective bargaining process. I will soon send you a special message outlining my legislative proposals in detail. May I say now, however, that I intend to recommend:

Legislation under which employees in intrastate commerce can choose a bargaining representation;

Legislation specifically outlawing bribes to union officials;

Legislation setting up safeguards concerning union meetings and elections, and providing for the recall of union officers for misconduct;

Legislation preventing loans by unions to their officers, and requiring union officers and management consultants to file financial statements; and

Legislation governing the relationship between a local union and its parent organization.

Such laws would be safeguards against the irresponsible minority whose conduct damages all of labor. But there must be no punitive measures against free and responsible unions, which have brought untold progress and improved living conditions to our State. Cripple the responsible union and all of the people will suffer. Strengthen the responsible union and labor can contribute its full energy to the new vision for California.

Fifth. Increase Social Insurance and Public Welfare. In the stern judgment of history, our greatness as a State will largely depend on our sense of responsibility to the elderly, the sick, the needy, the injured, and the unemployed. I reject the outdated notion that concern for these people is not the business of government.

I believe that the level of unemployment insurance benefits clearly should be raised. At 1959 prices, no family can meet its basic needs on the \$40 per week maximum. In the last year, there has been forceful evidence that thousands of workers are left stranded if benefit payments are limited to 26 weeks when recessions last longer. We should lengthen the period of coverage, at least whenever unemployment has reached a given percentage of the work force.

Turning to the Workmen's Compensation Law, I recommend that we take prompt action to correct the striking inadequacy in the vocational rehabilitation provisions for injured workers. In addition, the amount and duration of benefits may well need to be increased. The same is true of disability benefits.

In the field of public welfare, we should improve the operation of the 1957 Medical Care Program and insure that it fulfills its important purpose. One obvious shortcoming in the program is its failure to extend to persons now enrolled in the Aid-to-Disabled Program. For the disabled person, the need for medical care is especially great and compelling.

Our new laws in the field of social insurance and public welfare must be responsible as well as liberal. Thus, we must stop short of an extreme, isolated position which would discourage the entry of new wealth and industry and thus injure our economy and our people alike. But short of this extreme, we will remember that social insurance and public welfare benefits go directly into our life stream and that we serve our economy as well as our humanitarian principles by making California a leader in this field.

Sixth. Establish a Minimum Wage. I urge you to enact legislation which will establish \$1.25 an hour as the minimum wage for California workers not covered by the federal law. Minimum wage laws assure a worker that he will be paid enough to maintain himself in health and decency. Elementary fairness dictates that this protection should not be denied a person because of the happenstance that he is employed in a local business. Moreover, a minimum wage law will protect ethical employers from the unfair competition of those who would pay substandard wages.

Seventh. Reform Election Practices. Because elections are the strong heartbeat of democracy, the reform of election practices deserves a top priority. I urge you to abolish

cross-filing in primary elections, and thus strengthen representative government by making our parties more responsible and more responsive to the will of the people.

I also urge you to strengthen our laws providing for disclosure of campaign funds. The gaps in the present law threaten the integrity of our democratic processes.

In this electronic age, we continue to count ballots by primitive methods. I recommend that existing statutes be broadened to encourage electronic tabulation of votes in all counties of the State. We must also find a way to shorten our political campaigns and stop every election from being an endurance contest, both for the candidates and the voters. When we improve the election process, we strengthen democracy.

Eighth. Promote Efficiency in Government. I urge you to adopt legislation to enable us to reorganize and streamline State Government. Specifically, I believe that the Governor should be authorized to prepare and transmit to the Legislature plans for the reorganization of the executive branch of the State Government. I also pledge my wholehearted support for your efforts to improve the organization and operation of state agencies.

Not since 1928 have we made a thorough and penetrating analysis of the structure of our State Government. Today each citizen pays the price of a government which has developed haphazardly in a piecemeal response to the pressure of growth. We are burdened by layer upon layer of patchwork agencies, and confusing lines of authority. The time has come for us to modernize State Government and improve its service to our people.

Ninth. Control Crime. Crime and narcotics are ugly companions. Driven by fear and guilt, the criminal seeks escape through the use of narcotics; in turn, the addict steals to support his costly habit.

As a new approach to this complex problem, I urge you to authorize the Department of Corrections to establish pilot units for narcotic treatment and control in key areas of the State. This program would provide diagnostic testing and psychiatric aid for addicts released on parole or probation. By providing these new tools for control and rehabilitation, we take a promising and pioneering step toward narcotics control. We only endorse futility if we do no more in this field than renew procedures which time has already proven unsuccessful.

Our prisons are dangerously overcrowded. This not only magnifies the hazards of riots and breakouts, but inevitably produces the frustration of idleness. In meeting this problem, our first responsibility is the protection of society. We must initiate new studies to identify those prisoners who should never be released to prey again on an innocent public. We should also determine whether some prisoners are now kept confined after punishment has served its purpose. In addition, we should establish new forestry camps and industrial training programs so that after release, every man can offer society an effective skill and regular work habits.

Today's prisoners were yesterday's delinquents. The California Youth Authority has pioneered in the field of youth correction, but now we must press forward in the prevention of delinquency. To that end, I will immediately take personal leadership of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Children and Youth to study the early causes of one of society's most difficult problems. If we can find a way to reach the promise and the core of goodness in our emotionally disturbed children, we strike at the roots of crime.

Tenth. Improve Quality in Education. Both our Constitution and our conscience enjoin us to invest money in young minds, our greatest natural resources. Specifically, our growth requires us to meet these needs in public education: 18,000 new teachers a year, when we now graduate 11,000; 5,000 new classrooms a year, when we now build 2,500; facilities for 400,000 college and university students in 1970, when we now have space and equipment for but 100,000.

These needs are the challenge of growth. Let us meet them with adult dedication and ingenuity. We can attract and retain good teachers, if we offer practical training, adequate professional salaries, and new levels of community confidence and respect. We must also find the means to provide the physical plants as well as the intellectual climate for learning.

In turn, we have the right to require that our schools shall provide genuine education in a well-taught, disciplined curriculum. Every child deserves the chance to grow in fundamental knowledge, in special and technical skills, and in insight. I am determined that California will have the best public schools in the United States. I am persuaded, as I am confident you are, that whatever we invest in free public education is returned, manyfold, to our economy and to the strength of our democratic government.

Eleventh. Protect Public Health. We live in an era marked by new cures for old diseases and by dramatic new dangers to our health. Air pollution is a statewide menace. It threatens the health of people not only in Los Angeles, but in every heavily populated region of the State. We must recognize that our attack on smog cannot stop at county lines.

I therefore ask that you supply additional funds for concentrated research on the dangerous effects of smog on people. I call upon the automobile industry to expand and accelerate its research on smog prevention. I want to serve notice on every industry and every person involved that my administration will take effective action to protect the people of the State. People are more important than dollars.

Exposure to radiation from nuclear fallout and industrial accidents now threatens all of us. We should provide funds for the State Department of Public Health to maintain a constant guard against dangerous levels of radioactivity in air, water, food, and sewage.

In addition, I urge that California follow the example of other alert states and establish a co-ordinator[sic] of the many phases of atomic energy development now in process in several existing state agencies. Failure to act and plan in atomic matters, which are so

promising to our progress and so critical for our safety, would be both irresponsible and dangerous.

I also recommend that the Legislature provide funds for the continuation of the Department of Public Health's program to combat alcoholism and promote temperance.

Fifteen years as a law enforcement officer have convinced me that although other problems may be better publicized, none causes more suffering and despair than alcoholism.

Twelfth. Improve the Administration of Justice. There is a logjam in our California courts. In Los Angeles County alone, the backlog of civil cases climbed to nearly 16,000 in 1958. Each case has to wait in line well over a year after it is ready for trial. In other counties, the situation is even worse. Last October when Chief Justice Warren called attention to this crisis in the courts, we were forcefully reminded that justice delayed, frequently is justice denied.

Automobile accidents spawn a major portion of the congestion in our courts. For the accident victims, the net result is a grave social loss. After years of delay and uncertainty, the majority will recover nothing, and financial distress will be added to their pain and suffering. Those who eventually win their cases may not be able to collect their judgments, and what they do recover will have to be shared with others.

Three decades ago, California pioneered in establishing an expert commission to handle industrial accidents. Now, the time has come for us to weigh the wisdom of an Automobile Accident Commission to hear and determine claims arising out of auto accidents. If a commission modeled after our Industrial Accident Commission could provide a prompt remedy and fair compensation for the accident victim, we would reduce suffering and hardship. If the commission could gain an insight into the causes of accidents and issue safety orders, we would cut down the carnage on the highways. If, through the creation of such a commission, we could enable our courts to keep abreast of their dockets, we would take a long step toward our goal of equal justice under law.

The limits of this inaugural occasion do not permit a detailed statement of all that is in my mind and heart today. During the course of this session, I will bring you recommendations on traffic safety, billboards, the redevelopment law, improvements in our recreational program, and other matters.

Before the end of January, I will send you a major message on water. Development of our water resources is crucial to every segment of our State—the ranchers in our mountain areas, the farmers who make California the Nation's leading agricultural producer, and the homeowners in our population which will grow to 20 million by 1970. No problem has occupied more of my time in the weeks since election than water. Striking progress has been made. I can tell you now that I will soon present a water program which is rational, realistic, and responsive to the needs of all the people of the State.

I will also soon announce appointment of a Governor's Commission on Metropolitan Problems. For the 85 percent of our people who live in urban communities, local government is often inefficient, costly, and confusing because the necessary services are rendered by overlapping and competing agencies. The congestion of our streets symbolizes the necessity for a new and co-ordinated[sic] approach to the pressing problems in our cities. Any approach to these problems must respect our tradition of community responsibility and the high quality of our local officials, but I am convinced that we should make a concerted attack on these acute and chronic problems.

Looking beyond these specific matters, let us recall the warning of the Bible that where there is no vision, the people perish. Today we see successful industries accepting this judgment. They search out their most creative minds and put them to work studying distant horizons.

I propose that California follow industry's example and become the first state in the nation to set up a specific research and development program. I propose that we seek out our most creative minds both in and out of State Government and put them to work on a wide range of long-term problems, such as our crowded airways, the plight of workers frozen in their jobs by pensions which cannot be transferred, discrimination in housing, the defects of the present health insurance program, and on to new problems on the frontiers of space.

As I conclude, I would observe that providence seems intent on making us a great people in a great State. This destiny of greatness requires of us our best laws and fairest administration. Let us lead with confidence and compassion as we draw the lines of the new vision for California. May we pray to God that our virtues grow with California and be durable, and that our vision for California be liberal and responsible.