

The Governor's Message

Governor Ray set precedent when he stepped to the rostrum in the House chamber shortly after 1:30 p.m. to address a joint session of the 1970 legislature on its opening day. Not only was an Iowa General Assembly meeting annually for the first time, but also an Iowa Governor was appearing for the first time before the second regular session of an Iowa General Assembly.

With the breaking of new ground, no one knew quite what to expect. Would the Governor use the occasion to report on the state's economic health, as Governors are required to do at the first session of each General Assembly? Would he use it to outline the legislation he hoped the session would pass, as Governors do traditionally in their inaugural addresses at the first regular session? Or would he do both?

One thing legislators wanted to hear was the Governor's views on the pressing fiscal problems facing virtually all governmental units from the courthouse to the statehouse. The Republican majority in 1969 had carried out his "no general tax increase" pledge to the letter, although it was against the better judgment of some of its members. Now pleas for financial help were being

sounded by officials at every level of government. Moreover, irate farmers were forming groups in some areas to protest rising property taxes and to demand that part of the burden be shifted to other sources.

In the field of education, the Board of Regents had raised student tuitions and added a so-called "surcharge" on a "temporary" basis when the appropriation to operate the schools for the 1969-71 biennium fell short of what members felt was needed. This action not only hit students and parents in the pocketbook, it also raised hackles on legislators who felt the appropriation was adequate and that the tuition hike and surcharge were unnecessary.

Iowa public schools at the secondary level were demanding more state aid so they could go easier on the property taxpayer. Iowa municipalities were protesting the 30-mill limit the law allows them to levy against property. Either the limit should be lifted, city officials said, or they should be given the option of levying taxes on incomes, earnings, sales and wheels, to provide the funds needed to carry out normal services. Counties, too, wanted help. But it seemed the state was in no position to help, for State Comptroller Marvin Selden already was estimating there would be only \$1.2 million in the state's till as of June 30, 1971. And Democrats were predicting a deficit.

The picture was anything but bright, therefore,

when Governor Ray faced the Sixty-Third General Assembly on January 12, 1970. He was well aware of it and he wasted little time letting the legislature know where he stood on the money issue.

"While the surplus at the end of the biennium will be thin," he said, "we are operating within our means and we did not raise taxes. I am as insistent today as I was a year ago that we will not have a general tax increase, and I am confident that the recent revenue and expenditure figures released by the state comptroller's office support my position that this can be accomplished."

Some adjustments within departmental budgets had been necessary, Governor Ray said, and "it may be necessary to submit some readjustments to you in the form of amendments to current appropriations," but: "I stand firm that there shall be no general tax increase, and I will not approve one this session. Within our present tax structure, however, we will continue to press for additional revenue and funds from sources not anticipated a year ago."

For example, he continued, revenues can be affected by changes in the federal income tax law, federal revenue sharing could become a reality and implementation of efficiency-improving recommendations by the Governor's Economy Committee could save millions of dollars for use elsewhere. If any additional funds should become

available, Governor Ray said they should go first for these purposes:

1. Additional assistance to old age recipients.
2. Aid to municipalities for matching funds to construct sewage plants to help control pollution.

Governor Ray promised that any appropriation shifts he might recommend during the session would be accompanied by a method to fund them. Having made his position clear in reporting on the state's condition, Governor Ray turned the spotlight on issues he felt needed legislative attention. In some cases they were items included in his first inaugural address that the 1969 legislature never got around to enacting; in others they were being presented for the first time. Regardless of their label, they presented a formidable and challenging work program for the 1970 session.

In the area of better government, Governor Ray repeated his 1969 request for creation of the office of ombudsman so Mr. John Q. Public would have a place to take his grievances against government. He also pointed to money-saving recommendations made by the Governor's Economy Committee that would help carry out his 1969 plea to stretch tax dollars. He specifically asked the legislature to restructure the Iowa Liquor Control Commission, to issue automobile license plates for five-year periods instead of annually, and to shift the marketing division from the Department of Agriculture to "other agencies" to effect a saving of \$4.2

million or more. He also asked the legislature to increase benefits for employees under the Iowa Public Employees Retirement System, for an incentive awards program for state employees, and for four-year terms for elective state officials who now serve two-year terms.

Local government was next on his list and the Governor asked the legislature to give municipalities the authority to levy optional local taxes. He also favored:

Sharing with municipalities the cost of sewage treatment facilities to qualify for Federal matching funds.

Giving an office created in 1969 to work with municipalities and counties the name "Department of Local Affairs."

Correcting a flaw in the 1969 bill increasing salaries of certain county officers.

On the subject "Law Enforcement, Public Safety, and the Courts," the Governor recommended:

Completion of revisions in the drafting of criminal penalty laws, including sex offender laws, as quickly as possible.

Establishment of a state crime laboratory.

A unified court system.

An increase in salaries of highway patrol members.

Photographs on drivers licenses and voluntary identification cards for non-drivers.

Repeal of the restriction that only a resident of a city may be hired as chief of police in that city.

Creation of an area jail system.

A formula for functional classification of highways.

Turning to "Transportation," the Governor called for:

A new Department of Transportation, consolidating all subdivisions dealing with that area of government.

Clarification of truck reciprocity laws. If this can't be done, he warned, he would support pre-emptive Federal legislation, even though it might be undesirable, because it would offer a solution of a problem that "has reached a staggering level of complexity" so far as states are concerned.

The legislature to be prepared to receive a state railroad regulation proposal, depending on the outcome of Congressional legislation in this field.

On "Education," the Governor reviewed the work of his Educational Advisory Committee, which is to offer recommendations affecting the state's over-all school system to the Sixty-Fourth General Assembly. The report is expected to include a recommendation on the feasibility of a new state college in Western Iowa. Governor Ray praised the legislature for adopting his 1969 proposal to award tuition grants for needy students attending private colleges in Iowa. He said 1,913 grants were allocated during the first year of the program, which had helped "to instill new life into Iowa's invaluable private institutions of higher education."

In the area of "Health and Welfare," Governor Ray reviewed the work incentive, rubella vaccine, alcoholism, and drug abuse programs. He recommended adoption of a family court division in the

district court system and called for revision of the state's divorce law.

Focusing on "Economic Development," Governor Ray said his administration is emphasizing "improved marketing programs for our agricultural industry" and he praised business and industry for cooperation with the Iowa Development Commission to create 11,000 new jobs in 1969 compared to 7,000 in 1968. The state is constantly working to promote tourism the governor reminded legislators. In the economic development area he specifically requested:

An increase in benefits under the workmen's compensation law.

Protection of employees from losing wages they have earned.

A collective bargaining rights law for state employees.

Under the subject, "Better Living," Governor Ray praised legislative leaders for pledging the session's attention to bills concerned with people. In this connection he called for stronger pollution control laws, for consolidating the Iowa Water and Iowa Air Pollution Control Commissions. Finally, he asked that eminent domain laws be changed to give more protection to the landowner involved.

Under the heading, "Youth," Governor Ray said his summer Youth Opportunity Program involved 22 projects and gave employment to 1,100 disadvantaged youth. He then renewed his 1969

plea for lowering the voting age. In his inaugural address he had not mentioned a specific minimum age but this time he set it at 19.

Governor Ray did not miss the opportunity to congratulate these first annual-session legislators for "being trail-blazers of history," and for having accomplished much in the interim between sessions that should help keep the session productive and short.

"It is fitting," he said, "that this innovation of annual sessions should occur at the beginning of a new decade. Our minds boggle at grasping the changes in human life which have taken place just in the last 10 years, and they would boggle more if they could foresee the changes which will take place in the next decade of even swifter accelerating transformation. The increase in population in the next 30 years will equal that of the last 970 years. Iowa is not itself a victim of this population proliferation, but Iowa and Iowans cannot escape its many unsettling and even potentially devastating consequences."

Governor Ray observed that at a meeting in Boston over the year-end, leading scientists had passed a resolution calling for concentration on problems of violence, armaments, war, pollution, hunger, malnutrition, and the quality of life in the Seventies. Then, saying some have predicted this decade offers "the last, best chance for a new age," he reminded legislators "we have a joint

responsibility to help guide this commonwealth and its people wisely into the Seventies."

Legislation commonly is a hard, grinding "nuts and bolts job," he continued, "but we can bring a new dimension and a fresh gleam to those nuts and bolts if we frame them in the context of our broader purposes, our deeper commitments. This is the true significance of the new state symbol and accompanying theme: 'Iowa—A Place to Grow.' "

So the opening day of Iowa's first annual session drew to a close. It was a session that would end on April 16 after 95 days—partly productive and partly passive, particularly on tax reform.