

1543

( Governor. Luther W. Youngdahl.

THE GOALS. FOR WHICH WE STRIVE : *Mental Health*

from the Centennial Inaugural Address  
of Governor Luther W. Youngdahl.

MENTAL HEALTH - plus the introductory  
and concluding section of the full  
address delivered by Governor Youngdahl  
to the Legislature of Minnesota  
on January 6, 1949. 28p

The Governor's

CITIZENS MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE

117 University Ave., St. Paul, Minn.

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE LIBRARY  
STATE OF MINNESOTA

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF  
GOVERNOR LUTHER W. YOUNGDAHL  
DELIVERED AT A JOINT SESSION OF  
THE MINNESOTA LEGISLATURE AT  
12:15 P.M., THURSDAY, JANUARY 6, 1949

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, Members of the Fifty-Sixth Session of  
the Minnesota Legislature, and Honored Guests:

This is 1949, the great Centennial year of  
Minnesota.

A great painter whose hand produced many a work of  
art was asked "Which is your greatest painting?" The artist  
paused a moment. "My greatest painting?" The next one!"

The people of our state, in this Centennial year,  
look back upon a record of achievement. 1849-1949, a  
century of struggle and growth, a century of toil and sacrifice,  
a century in which a wilderness has been transformed into a  
great progressive commonwealth. The Centennial year marks a  
luminous place along our path; a year dedicated to the people  
who built Minnesota, to the countless unnamed pioneers who  
believed enough in her future to be pioneers; to the laborers  
in our iron mines or in the foundries of our cities; to the  
tillers of the soil who cleared a wilderness and brought out  
of it rich farms; to the vision of countless merchants and  
businessmen on our thousands of main streets; to the courage  
of the leaders of industry who launched out to new frontiers;  
to the men of various professions who helped and guided and  
counseled their fellowmen; to the homemakers, the teachers,  
the political leaders, the religious leaders - to all who have  
built homes, schools, churches, and better communities - to  
all these we pay our tribute. All these were the builders of  
Minnesota.

The temptation at any anniversary observance is to  
glorify the past at the expense of the future. We honor the  
past, without it there would be no great present, but our eyes  
are fixed upon the future. The people of Minnesota, like the  
famous painter, are being asked to name their greatest century.  
Their reply must be "The next one!"

This next century depends upon the way in which we,  
the descendants of these great pioneers, build for the future;

the way in which we, the children of those sturdy people, maintain the security, the freedom, and the democracy which we have inherited from them.

Two years ago the fighting had just officially stopped. We then faced a great challenge; we met in a critical hour of history. Today the problems are more complex and the challenge greater.

Not so long ago a group of miners were entombed in one of the Kimberly Diamond Mines in South Africa. Surrounded by unlimited riches they slowly met their death. Starving for food, thirsting for water, in need of medical assistance, deprived of spiritual comfort, diamonds were worthless.

And so it is in our world today. We are discovering that accepted values must be reappraised. We are coming to understand that our claim to distinction and progress has been based on false standards.

We have been worshipping the gods of science and material advancement until now we see ourselves trapped by the monstrous weapons we have devised. Our ability to create has surpassed our ability to utilize wisely the products of our invention.

We are learned in the art of war - we are ignorant in the art of peace. We are proficient in the art of killing - we are unskilled in the art of living. We probe and grasp the mystery of atomic fission - we reject the Golden Rule and the Sermon on the Mount. We are being entombed to our death in the diamond mine of materialism.

There must be a place in our scheme of things for those great intangible human values which cannot be represented on graphs or ledgers. Our values must stem from the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man. We must stop gauging our success by production of machines or dollars of income. We have got to understand that important as it is to produce efficiency in the factory, it is even more important to build character in its workers and to turn out a product that will strengthen our nation. No standard of living is high when jobs become drudgery and hours dreary; when rancor and bitterness exist between management and labor; when young men and women can't afford a family; when children in slums are walled off by brick from sod and sky; where there is not equality of educational opportunity for every boy and girl; where decent health conditions are not afforded to all of our people. No standard of living is high where we do not fulfill our obligation to the needy, the

aged, the crippled, the blind; the dependent and neglected children; where we fail in our duty to the individuals sick of mind; when we deny equal rights to our people because of race, creed, color, or nationality.

As we face the new century in Minnesota history we are confronted by a two-fold task; first, to mark out new horizons in human goals for which to strive. Second, to provide economic means by which these goals may be achieved.

## I. THE GOALS FOR WHICH WE STRIVE

### 1. MENTAL HEALTH

First in the consideration of our human goals is the mental health of our people. There are more than 10,500 individuals of good soul but sick in mind in our state mental hospitals. They are but the vanguard of a vast number to follow, in which - and mark this well! - will be represented one member out of every five families. Unless modern research and preventive measures are immediately introduced, a large percentage of these people will continue to constitute a major resource rushing down the drainpipe of social neglect.

Most persons have accepted without much questioning the idea, so widely prevalent, that there is some stigma attached to mental illness, that nothing can be done about it and that the unhappy victims must be put away somewhere in an institution to spend the rest of their days. These ridiculed, abused, and maligned members of our social family cannot speak for themselves. They are made mute by sickness, guarded walls, and the loss of their civil rights. Their heartbroken families are rendered equally silent by the cruel stigma which false social attitudes attach to the mentally ill. Casualties of the spirit, voiceless and powerless, their very personalities - yes, their very lives - are completely dependent on the concern, wisdom, and compassion of those of us who are more fortunate.

We need not detail here the disclosures of conditions which have shocked those of us who have visited our mental hospitals here in Minnesota; the rows upon rows of unattended human beings, regimented and neglected because of lack of help, living lives of grim monotony and deteriorating emptiness, deprived of human rights and necessities.

In other states, conditions are much the same. Nowhere is man's inhumanity to man more pronounced than in our care of the mentally ill. The mental hospital of today is only a super-structure built on the foundation of the old asylum, representing

a social monstrosity which plagues the whole nation with shame and disgrace.

It fails to return to society that high percentage of patients for whom modern psychiatry holds out hope. It similarly denies the milk of human kindness to those patients who, under present levels of scientific knowledge, are incurable. I caution here against any consideration of this problem which confines its attention solely to those deemed curable; even the most hopeless patients in our hospitals has something so precious that it cannot be judged in values other than human and divine.

The mental hospital system is the only major American social institution which has remained fundamentally unchanged since the abolition of its moral counterpart, slavery.

Our system of caring for and treating these sick human beings is outmoded. To protect society from the so-called "dangerous", to confine the helpless, to furnish a roof to house those falsely thought to be incurable - for this we would need only brick and mortar. We need only fortified buildings to lock the patients in and the public out.

But the time when the mentally ill could be put away in an institution "out of sight - out of mind", must end. I propose that we inaugurate the centennial year by pioneering to make the mental hospital in Minnesota a house of hope, rather than a habitation for the living dead. I propose that we equip our mental hospitals to give our patients the best possible care and extend to those who can be cured the fullest opportunity for rehabilitation. Many of the mentally ill in our hospitals can now be restored to health with proper treatment, we now know, and go home to live normal, useful lives.

Our human goal should be to make Minnesota the first state in the nation to reach the standards of decency as are reflected by the standards of the American Psychiatric Association.

You have in previous sessions shown your sympathies by generous appropriations for the type of system which has prevailed. At the last session you approved a comprehensive and progressive building program, much of which is now under way. This session, I trust, will take the decisive step to adopt a new approach for the care of the mentally ill. The modern therapeutic center, "the house of hope", would replace the traditional state hospital. Characterized by research and active training of personnel, it would have links with the home and community through clinics and social work services, which would in turn provide early detection, possible non-hospital treatment, post-hospital follow-up care of discharged patients, and consultative and other services to courts, schools, and welfare agencies.

The details of this program will be supplied in my budgetary message. It is based now on how cheaply we can maintain a patient for life, but on how early we can detect his illness, how actively we can treat it, and how quickly we can discharge him. It is intended to increase the number of citizens returning to enrich the lives of their communities. In time it would end the costly and vicious circle of building an ever expanding system of costly custodial building to house an ever increasing backlog of needlessly deteriorating patients.

Due to low quotas, low salaries, lack of training, and shortages of trained personnel, we have a psychiatric corps large enough to serve less than 4,000 of the 10,500 patients in our seven mental hospitals. The situation in the institutions for the mentally deficient and epileptic is similar. Without trained personnel, physical facilities are of no avail.

Therefore, I recommend that we establish a quota of psychiatric workers in our mental health system which would permit us to reach the standards of the American Psychiatric Association during this biennium.

How will we obtain this personnel? First, we must go out into the open market and offer competitive salaries; second, we must train people to fill vacancies. The budget message will contain provisions to establish in the state hospitals at Hastings and Rochester the first two units of a proposed teaching service for the state for the training of doctors and other members of the psychiatric team in short supply. Third, we must establish the 40 hour work week. Fourth, we must provide adequate housing for all employees living on the grounds.

One of the most vital posts in the psychiatric team is now held by the position, which since asylum days, has been termed "attendant". The term and function of "attendant" must be changed. The psychiatric worker for this position should be more than a mere guard and housekeeper. After additional scientific training he would be eligible for more specialized and responsible tasks.

One of the major and most justifiable criticisms against American mental hospitals pertains to the vicious caste system, typified by the double standard of diet. Unless we end the double standard of diet, we cannot expect that patients will have the feeling that the institution exists for them and not they for the institution. As a necessary step to increase the recovery rate - as a factor even more important than mere nutrition the program recommends funds, equipment, and dieticians to assure every patient a decent standard of food at least equal to that of the employees.

The program calls for adequate support of occupational, recreational and other therapies designed to end the deteriorating idleness of state hospitals. The program calls for improved living conditions, adequate clothing, linens, and other personal necessities. Certain features deal with accelerated control of tuberculosis and other communicable diseases. The death rate from tuberculosis in our institutions is twenty times that of our general population. The program also would provide for an adequate staff of chaplains to give spiritual help and counsel to the patients.

Social systems, particularly those deeply rooted in the superstitions of our asylum past, are not changed over night. The program constitutes only the bare minimum required to start us on the long road ahead. It calls only for those factors which can be absorbed administratively in the next biennium. Due to the inflationary costs of building today, as well as to the increased expenses of introducing this pioneering service, requests for capital expansion and equipment, except where vitally necessary or to complete the current building program will be deferred.

I also recommend (1) changes in the archaic terminology and content in laws relating to mental illness, and (2) statutory provisions for transfer of the mental health authority from the Department of Health to a separate bureau in the Division of Public Institutions, in which would be organized all mental health activities.

Human misery knows no geographical borders. We cannot hide behind the fact that conditions in other states are comparable to ours. We cannot hide behind the fact that no one individual is solely responsible for our "snakepits" and "bedlams". Particeps criminis. We have all participated in a social crime. Listen to the words of a grand jury investigating similar conditions in a mental hospital in another state:

"The grand jury condemns the whole system that today allows this unholy thing to exist in our state. The responsibility is widespread and it must be met. All must share in the guilt for this social crime against these innocent and helpless people. All must share in the responsibility for instituting redress of this long standing and terrible injustice."

The advance we are proposing in the frontier of mental health is the first and one of the most crucial of our human goals. Our mental hospitals may be no worse than the national average. But we must remember this; salvation comes to human society through vigorous minorities keeping alive a zealous

protest against the deification of the average. The average is not good enough. We must not rest until Minnesota achieves the preeminent place among the states of the nation in its ministrations to those who are mentally ill.

I want to say in closing this message that I shall endeavor to work with all of you during this important session in a spirit of understanding and an appreciation of the difficult problems facing us.

We cannot afford to permit political differences interfere with our common obligation to meet the needs of our people and build a stronger state. There is too much at stake.

In conclusion I should like to quote the words of a famous statesman:

"I would advise, therefore, that your legislation should be such - as will guard equally, the rights of labor and the rights of property, without running into ultraisms on either hand - as will recognize no social distinctions, except those which merit and knowledge, religion and morals, unavoidably create - as will repress crime, encourage virtue, give free scope to enterprise and industry - as will promptly, and without delay, administer to and supply all the legitimate wants of the people - laws in a word, in the formation of which will be kept steadily in view of the truth, that this Territory is destined to be a great State, rivalling in population, wealth and energy, her sisters of the Union; and that, consequently, all laws not merely local in their objects, should be framed for the future as well as the present . . . ."

Timely though they be, these words are not those of a living statesman. They are the words of Governor Alexander Ramsey as he spoke to the first Minnesota Legislative Assembly in 1849. The setting for the address of the first Governor was quite different from ours today. He spoke in no great edifice of marble, his address was delivered in a temporary capitol in the Central House, a small wooden hotel on the St. Paul river front. The hotel dining room was used for the joint session of the two legislative bodies, a flag was hoisted on the staff in front of the hotel, an Indian sat on a nearby rocky bluff and watched the proceedings.

Though outward circumstances are utterly changed, we need to emulate, as we face our next century, the courage



the vision, and the spirit of sacrifice which animated the founders of our state. The road before us today, as it was one hundred years ago, is rocky and fraught with peril. Too many of us fail to appreciate the hazards and are like the young American who arrived in Zermatt, Switzerland, and seeing the towering peak of the Matterhorn, asked, "What's the name of that big rock?" When told it was one of the most famous of the Alpine summits he asked, "Do you think I could get up there this afternoon?" Little did he know the story of the peak's costly conquest, of the lives it had taken, of the hazards still involved in the ascent. So is liberty, a decent society, a lasting peace, each a majestic mountain peak. How much do we really want them. Do we appreciate their cost? Are we willing to pay the price for them and sacrifice for them?

The pioneers of 100 years ago did not hesitate to pay the price for a strong society. They did not allow their spiritual values to be smothered beneath the false riches of material possessions. May the high idealism, the courage, the selflessness, and the implicit faith in God which characterized the founders of Minnesota inspire us. In the same spirit of consecration may we also move ahead to our next and even greater century of advancement, building together a nobler Minnesota.