

Revised Nov. 2022

Transcript of 1966 gubernatorial inaugural speech by Governor John A. Burns, delivered on December 5, 1966. Transcribed from an official publication of the remarks by Perry Arrasmith, 2022, under the auspices of the School of Communication & Information, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.

The 1966 Inaugural Address of John A. Burns December 5, 1966

My Fellow Citizens:

Four years ago, we gathered here, in this historic place, to commemorate the acceptance of high office and the beginning of a new administration. I pledged then to seek the full attainment of those goals for which you had expressed your deep desire. Indeed, in keeping with these goals, I also promised change.

Today, unlike that last inaugural day, we mark not an ending and a beginning but a continuation and an enrichment. We pause ceremoniously only to take stock and to measure our progress and then to set out afresh on our charted course.

Yet change is no less upon us and will be further required if our continuing quest for a “New Hawaii” is to be fully realized.

Today, we also dedicate ourselves to the unending search for ever-new goals. While we have come far in the attainment of those ends we set forth four years ago, our progress to date is less relevant than the march before us. We now address ourselves to the task of building confidently upon past achievements and to convert new hopes and new ideas to firm reality.

Lest we forget, as a united people, we must first seek a goal that is forever new—to nurture our most precious resource, our children. Their future and the future of our State are, in essence, one and inseparable. We shall, therefore, continue to urge the expenditure of every available dollar to provide our children with the best education—the very best education—wherever they may live—in the city or in the country, on Oahu or on the Neighbor Islands, in Kahala or in Kalihi.

Indeed, in every phase of the full development of our school system and our University, we shall decline to settle for the ordinary. Rather, our commitment to educational excellence shall know no limits. We shall seek to insure that no qualified young citizen shall be denied opportunity for higher education because of lack of funds. If, as Horace Mann observed more than a century ago, education is, in fact, the “great equalizer of the conditions of men,” it is only fitting that it be equally accessible to rich and poor alike.

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Consonant with this, Hawaii—you and I—must also seek to assure gainful employment for every citizen who is willing and able to work. In this respect, the record of the present serves as a growing challenge for the future and its enlarged population.

We will, therefore, continue to press an aggressive program of attracting and encouraging the expansion of those industries that promise our people the widest and best employment opportunities. Under a program of selective industrial development, we shall pursue, in particular, those industries, such as those oriented to ocean sciences, which will add new dimensions to our economy and enhance our prosperity and world prestige. We shall lend such industries every assistance it is appropriate for government to offer. In fact, we shall spare no effort to generate employment opportunities which will provide increasing numbers of our citizens with a better life.

Our goal of full employment actually goes even further and strongly suggests an obligation on the part of government to assist in the maximum development of each and every individual's innate talents and abilities. A man's labor should earn him self-esteem as well as just wages. With this in mind, we are pledged to provide every worker, regardless of previous education, the opportunity to acquire new skills and new satisfaction through participation in State-supported training programs of the highest quality.

In all our efforts to build and maintain a flourishing economy, we must not lose sight of our other basic human needs. The treasures of our natural beauty must be preserved and cultivated for all to enjoy. New recreational areas and parks must be fashioned to retain our island way of life and to provide facilities for the pleasant and meaningful use of our increased leisure time.

The beauty of nature not only refreshes but invariably leads to new achievements in the fields of culture and the arts. It would be tragic, indeed, for Hawaii—with its richness in cultural understanding and appreciation—to fail in this respect. With common resolve, we will not fail.

Our concern for the orderly development of our material resources will be coupled with equal, if not greater, concern for the full flowering of our human resources. This administration has not been timorous in this pursuit. We will continue to eschew timidity in the name of political prudence, which is not to say that we will plunge brashly into new fields for the sheer glory of the game.

Let it be remembered that, in all of our pledges, we do not promise change merely for the sake of change, but only to meet the legitimate needs of our people and our changing institutions.

We must be ever mindful that our government must serve all our people—the young and the old, the banker and the baker, the professions and the laborers, the backward as well as the brilliant.

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Here, let those who question our fundamental policy be reminded that “civility,” as President Kennedy said, “is not a sign of weakness.” The highest office of our State should be graced with equal concern for all who are represented by that office.

What we seek is to elevate each to his highest standard and to insure just reward for his initiative and his imagination and his industry. For we know that:

- The forces we set in motion are as important as the gains we achieve.
- The energies we release are as important as the goals we attain.
- The minds we enlighten are as important as the money we expend.

Thus, faithful to our assigned responsibilities, we shall, through efficiency and economy, seek to utilize prudently the revenue generated by our expanding economy, and thereby avoid undue imposition of any additional burdens on our taxpayers, in brief, we shall continue, as in the past, to provide the best possible government at the lowest possible cost.

Now, out of concern with our own needs and aspirations, let us not be distracted from our vital role in the Pacific community of nations. Our heritage and Aloha spirit uniquely qualify us for Pan-Pacific leadership and new destiny. Our people have already stepped into the vanguard of Pacific affairs. But there is much more we can do and which we must do to assume our rightful place in the Pacific sun.

President Johnson, in his recent visit to Hawaii, announced his hope for an early international conference on education and cited our University, with its East-West Center, as an ideal site. Next May, the Pacific Conference on Problems of Urban Growth will be held here under joint State-Federal sponsorship. Our community and business leaders are stirring interest in a Pan-Pacific exposition tentatively scheduled for it to coincide with our 75th year under the American flag.

Can anyone doubt that exciting days of challenge and construction await us in this rapidly emerging area of the world? The fire has been kindled, the torch has been passed into our hands. Let us hold it ever higher as a beacon for all to see.

Finally, my fellow citizens, let us be ever mindful of our role in the world at large. Infant state though we are, age-old are the cultures in which we have our roots. Though we are but one part of a great nation, to millions we symbolize a separate spirit—a modern version of the New World once sought by Europe... a new vision of the cooperation and enlightened unity that all mankind must surely find one day. In an age of newly created nations, in a time of domestic as well as

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international strife and conflict, let us demonstrate increasing pride in Hawaii's past and in the lofty ideals she now" provides the world. By the same token, we must not let our pride become overweening or distract us from the work at hand and the work that stretches ahead. Rather, let us be the first to be ever true to our own ideals, and the last to abandon the way to fulfill these ideals.

And so, on this inspiring occasion, save for the ever present few who continue to cling to outdated matters, it is increasingly clear that a new day—brighter than ever in an always bright State—awaits our beloved Hawaii. Indeed, this day is so imbued with unique opportunities for the enrichment of all our lives that our mission is clear and demanding.

During the past four years, I have benefitted from your wise counsel, profited from your constructive criticisms, and been inspired by your confidence and support. Whatever progress has been made, whatever gains have been realized, and whatever opportunities remain to be seized are due to you—and you alone. Progress is not a self-sustaining matter. Political leadership can be instrumental and even crucial. But fundamentally, you, the people, must have the will to move ahead, to work for a better life, and to break the bonds of tradition when they become restrictive and inhibit creative growth.

Greatness is your heritage; the pursuit of excellence your means of attaining it.

In again taking the oath of office as your Governor, I am humbled by your continuing faith in me and in my colleagues. I am also inspired by your decision to continue the pursuit of a noble enterprise. I accept your mandate to move Hawaii forward along the course you have chosen.

Let us then move forward together with renewed vigor and vision—with new faith and new hope, both at home and abroad.

Let us join together to continue the work we have begun, to meet new duty with fresh determination, to accept future challenge with bold imagination, and, with renewed faith, to convert today's dreams into tomorrow's living reality.

Let us go forth to build the New Hawaii.

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