

Revised Nov. 2022

Transcript of 1962 gubernatorial inaugural speech by Governor John A. Burns, delivered on December 3, 1962. 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 1962 Inaugural Address of John A. Burns December 3, 1962

My Fellow Citizens:

Today we repeat the ceremony associated with democratic governments throughout the world. The responsibilities for executing the duties of high office—that office which most embodies the hopes and aspirations of every segment of our population—passes into new hands. By free decision the people of this State have made known their choice.

To my predecessor, Governor William F. Quinn, I extend my best wishes. Your sincere efforts on behalf of Hawaii are deeply appreciated by all. God speed you in your future endeavors.

I am humbled by the high trust the people of Hawaii have placed in me. I am deeply grateful. No one with an early background of modest circumstance such as mine could escape the singular compliment paid me by election to the high office of Governor of the State of Hawaii.

I shall not forget your trust. I shall not forget that I am charged with an urgent mandate to execute a clearly delineated program. In the days to follow, we shall strive together to bring our goals and ideals into reality.

First, I am pledged to secure for the people of Hawaii fair and equitable taxation. I am pledged to eradicate that one abuse which more than any other divides a people into classes, sets one against another, and by the resulting internal disharmony, distracts a people from united effort toward a common good.

Second, I am pledged to the people of Hawaii to work for a more favorable climate for business, to encourage small business, to utilize the available offices of government for meeting the needs of business and to remove illegal barriers to their rapid growth. A thriving business and industrial community are our only means of providing employment for our youth, of providing for maximum expression of their precious talents for the good of all. To that end I am obliged to protect and nurture the private enterprise system, for it places a premium on creativity and innovation. Moreover, by the discipline of open competition we best insure services and fair prices to us all.

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Third, I am pledged to place a broader foundation under our economy by developing programs for placing our lands into their fullest and best use for all the peoples of our State. I am pledged to eradicate a practice which allows unproductive land to aggravate our land shortage, to inflate land prices, to avoid paying its share of the cost of government when all the while its value is increased by improvements wrought on productive lands. I am committed to do this with reasonable haste and in fairness to all parties—for our goal is productivity not vindictiveness, and we are all one people.

Fourth, I am pledged to secure for our people a greater measure of self-determination in their counties and municipalities. I have subscribed to that philosophy of government which would place at the local level those powers of self-government not better reserved to a higher level. That philosophy is calculated to foster ingenuity at the local level, and to provide a channel there for its expression in the solving of local problems and the meeting of local opportunities.

I have subscribed to an elected school board, to the right of counties to set their own tax levies and assessments. I advocate these proposals in recognition of our people's discretion and faith in their ability to rise nobly to the opportunities and obligations of freedom.

I have subscribed to an inter-island ferry system so that the opportunities of self-determination in business will be within reach of all the peoples of our Islands. I propose to challenge our people with the vision of new frontiers on Neighbor Islands and to make opportunities for development within each county of our State more nearly identical.

Fifth, I am pledged to move Hawaii with all prudent haste into a position to ride the crest of the oncoming wave of Pacific trade. I am committed to a program for developing in Hawaii a center for stimulating greater exchanges between the peoples of the Pacific Basin, for providing services which would facilitate that exchange and attract the future Pacific trader to come to Hawaii for his negotiations. For Hawaii is at the hub of the great wheel of the Pacific.

Embodied in our people is the very blood of the Pacific peoples, the understanding of their cultures, a feel for their needs. In the harmonious blending of peoples through understanding and trust, we have no peers. Though, through the long history of immigration to these shores the Hawaiian people became outnumbered, they still conquered all with their warmth, their generosity, their spirit of aloha, of brotherhood. They have given to all our people the potentiality of becoming the greatest ambassadors on the face of the earth.

The rightness of our role in the Pacific is thus insured. We have or can develop the skills, whether business, technical or academic, for ours have been an industrious and intelligent people, and our insular nature has in many ways taught us to act with self-reliance and autonomy.

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For all these qualities we can find expression. In our East-West Center we have already started a fine public relations facility, and this must be expanded in scope and concept.

Moreover, within the Pacific Basin great changes are taking place. As a result of the dramatic success of the European Common Market in providing self-sufficiency within the European community, new trade arrangements are forthcoming. Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and now Japan are obliged to look more to the Pacific for markets and raw materials. Even the United States has been obliged to transfer to the President extraordinary powers to regulate tariffs, thus better to compete and maintain a balance of trade. Add to this the yearning of the underdeveloped Pacific nations to enjoy the fruits of our technological age and their need to find markets for their raw materials. Then consider the threat of Communism, backed by the growing power of China, should the Free World prove unable to satisfy the needs and aspirations of emerging nations.

The conclusion is inescapable: there must be a dramatic upsurge in Pacific trade, in commerce, in understanding, in trust, in good intent. Bold endeavors must be undertaken, answers must be found. Let us welcome this challenge, confident in our own potentialities and in our ability to meet each new obstacle with wisdom and courage. Let us not be timid.

I have left until now my sixth and perhaps most important pledge—to provide for our children the best possible education. We must insure that pressing current needs do not distract us from our basic need—to safeguard our children's future through education.

As we move into our East-West role, our educational institutions must anticipate and play a leading part in the development of our evolving opportunities. We must insure that in the controversy of child versus money, the child comes first.

In all these things I have pledged *change*. That has been the mandate to me and to my party. To that we are committed. But just as the past is embodied in the present, so also is the future. From the elements of the present, we must select those many things capable of forming a better tomorrow, and thus shape our future with deeds in time. In bringing change, we must exercise due restraint.

It will be my aim to raise no more revenue than will be necessary to promote those goals for which the people have expressed their desire.

I shall endeavor to encourage the able, dedicated government worker to grow and develop and advance. It shall be my policy throughout the many departments of my Administration to encourage creativity, efficiency and economy.

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We who hold government office, whether as elective, appointive or civil servants, are afforded a high privilege. For to us is given the opportunity to meet that divine injunction: "He who would be greatest among you must be the servant of all."

Finally, it will be my desire to perform my duties in bringing about those goals to which I am pledged in such manner as will promote the best interests of all segments of the community, by reconciling our fellow citizens to those partial sacrifices which they must unavoidably make for the preservation of the greater good.

For, as Thomas Jefferson has said: "All... will bear in mind this sacred principle, that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will, to be rightful, must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, and to violate which would be oppression.

It is my fervent prayer to the Almighty that He will rule over all my actions and inspire the hearts of my fellow citizens of Hawaii so that together we may make wise and fullest use of the manifold gifts He has given us in this our land of singular blessings.

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