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INAUGURAL ADDRESS

- OF -

HIS EXCELLENCY,

JAMES B. GRANT,

GOVERNOR OF COLORADO,

- TO THE -

FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- OF THE -

STATE OF COLORADO.

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TUESDAY, JANUARY 9TH, 1883.  
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DENVER:  
THE TIMES: PUBLIC PRINTER.  
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*Gentlemen of the Senate and of the House of Representatives :*

You have assembled here to-day to witness the inauguration of the state officers chosen at the recent election. In accordance with an established custom it becomes my duty to deliver an inaugural address. In view of the fact that my predecessor, in pursuance of the provisions of the constitution, has submitted to you his biennial message, and as his familiarity with the various state institutions has enabled him to give you an accurate account of their workings and requirements and also enabled him to make such suggestions and recommendations touching legislative matters now before you as the public good seemed to require, there is but little for me to do on this occasion except in a public manner to accept the responsibilities of the office and to pledge to the people of the State, through their representatives, a determination to see that the laws are enforced, and to faithfully discharge all duties of a public nature that may devolve upon me. You can hardly expect to have the duties of the office performed in a manner more acceptable to the people than they have been under the guidance of my distinguished predecessor. His long public career, his unselfish devotion to the public interests, the unbounded confidence of the people in his integrity and ability, and the unprecedented prosperity of the State under his administration, should commend his suggestions and recommendations to your earnest and careful consideration. So far as the material interests of the State are concerned, you have assembled under more favorable auspices than any previous legisla-

tive assembly in this State. The various State institutions and all the diversified industries springing from an active, enterprising population, have passed the formative and experimental state, and we are now enjoying a period of prosperity that could have scarcely been anticipated by the early settlers of the State. The people have entrusted to you the privilege of making their laws and of providing means for their enforcement. The prosperity of a State depends rather upon the character than upon the quantity of the legislation. Hasty and ill-advised legislation tends to diminish the respect entertained for the law, and to destroy its efficacy in promoting the purposes for which it is intended. The rapid development of the mining and smelting industries, the steady growth of the agricultural and stock interests, and the growing needs of the various State institutions, all tend to render your duties more onerous and exacting. In order that you might do your constituents full justice my predecessor has suggested to you the necessity of extending your deliberations beyond the limit now fixed by the constitution. In view of the fact that we have no idle classes in this state to whom we are willing to entrust the cares and duties of legislation, and as every member of this Assembly is doubtless spending his time here at the sacrifice of his individual interests, I would suggest to you the propriety of an amendment to the constitution, extending the sessions of the legislature to a period not less than than sixty and not more than ninety days; and providing for the members of the Assembly salaries sufficient, at least, to meet the ordinary and necessary expenses of remaining at the capitol during the session of the Legislature.

Owing to the defective nature of certain parts of the State Constitution, it has been expedient to discuss the question of calling a convention for the purpose of framing a new Constitution. I hardly think the defects of the present Constitution of so gross a character as to warrant its displacement by a new one, which on experiment might prove equally as defective as the old one. It has been stated that the present Constitution contains most that is desirable in the constitutions of the older States of the Union.

By proper legislative amendments proposed in a constitutional way, it can certainly be so modified as to meet our growing requirements. In framing this instrument the pioneers were not unmindful of the dangers incident to the growth of an ambitious young State, and those articles alone providing against rendering county and municipal aid to railway and other corporations, have placed the people of the State under lasting obligations to the fathers of the present Constitution. It may not be a perfect document, but if we live up to its requirements most of us will find all the law we need, and under its provisions life and property will be amply protected.

Large tracts of land have been donated by the general Government to the State of Colorado for the benefit of its educational and charitable institutions. Most of this land at the present time is utterly worthless for agricultural purposes, and will forever remain so unless some step is taken by the State to store in reservoirs the water flowing from the mountains during the winter months. Agriculture will remain a profitable source of industry in this State as long as we find it necessary to ship in annually five to six million dollars in farm products. Any measure looking to the redemption of these lands from their present worthless condition is worthy of your careful attention.

While the other interests of the State are in a growing and prosperous condition, mining for the precious metals is still our chief industry, and attracts more people and more capital to the State than all other interests combined. There is no occasion for any special legislation looking to the advancement of the mining interests. The product of the mines is being gradually increased every year. Through the energy and enterprise of our railway managers the distant and seemingly inaccessible mining camps have been brought within easy reach of the cities in the valley, and the miner can now get his supplies regularly at all seasons of the year, and can find a ready market for his ores in different parts of the State. The difficulties experienced in establishing titles to mining property has proven a fruitful source of litigation, and

has doubtless deterred many capitalists from investing in mines, but since these titles are secured under Federal laws, the Legislature is powerless to remedy the evil. While the occupation of mining is inseparably connected with many hazards and dangers, it is my belief that many of the accidents which are of frequent occurrence might be avoided by the passage of a law imposing the observance of rules and regulations therein prescribed. The dangers and liabilities to accidents incident to the working and development of mines should, as far as possible, be removed. By enacting such a law, and having a competent person to rigidly enforce its observance, you will confer a great service to a large class of your constituents.

By an express provision of the constitution mines and mining claims are exempt from taxation for a period of ten years from its adoption. The net proceeds of the mines and the surface improvements are excepted from this exemption clause. Under the exemption surface improvements have been subject to taxation, but owing to the want of some legislative enactment for its enforcement the collection of taxes on the net proceeds of the mines has been impracticable. As a consequence of this defect in the revenue laws of the State, a vast amount of property has eluded its proportion of the public burden for the past six years. During the last four years the mines of Lake county alone have paid more than \$15,000,000 in dividends. At least \$10,000,000 of this amount passed into the hands of non-residents of the State. I do not object to this, but I am certainly at a loss to find a just and adequate reason for exempting the net proceeds of so profitable an industry as mining from its proportionate share of the burdens of taxation. In 1879 the Little Pittsburg mine paid a million dollars to its proprietors, and paid less than \$1,000 in taxes. If at that time any merchant in Leadville had made a million dollars from his mercantile pursuits, he would have paid at least \$50,000 in taxes. Had the laws of the State been properly framed the public revenue from this source would have materially aided in discharging the State, county and municipal expense, and would have proportionately decreased the rate of contribution to the public

purse which is imposed on all other classes of property. This state of things will continue until some method of ascertaining the amount of the net proceeds of the mines and making an assessment thereon is adopted by the General Assembly. The State of Nevada under similar conditions made provision for collecting a similar revenue, and I earnestly recommend to you the passage of such an act during the present session.

The National Mining and Industrial Exposition, the first session of which was held in this city last summer, is an enterprise worthy of mention here and of encouragement by the people. The best interests of the State and of the mining States and Territories adjoining Colorado will be materially advanced and promoted by the continuance of these exhibitions from year to year. In this connection it is gratifying to know that the promoters of the enterprise have the hearty co-operation of the vast mineral-producing section of the Great West.

The legislature is empowered with the privilege of regulating the compensation of district, county and precinct officers. The system of paying these officers by fees attached to the offices is a pernicious one and often leads to a serious drain upon the public revenue, and in many cases to outright robbery on the poorer classes of people. Many of these officers by means of this fee system derive a yearly income exceeding the salaries of the most useful and distinguished federal officers. The evil has become so grave that it should no longer escape your serious consideration. A great good can be accomplished and a vicious system eradicated by attaching graded salaries to these positions and requiring all fees to be turned into the county and municipal treasuries.

During the territorial days our elections were held in the month of September of each year. When Colorado was admitted into the Union as a state the time of elections was changed to correspond with the time fixed by congress for the election of congressmen. It must be apparent that the Tuesday after the first Monday in November is too late a period to hold elections in this state,

for the reason that in the mountain counties, which comprise nearly one-half of its area, heavy snows begin to fall early in October, and by November, travel on account of snow on the mountains is so greatly impeded, that a large number of the voters in these counties are practically disfranchised. Then again, the thousands of men who enter the mountains in the spring to locate mines and prospect are compelled to desist before November on account of the snows and leave for some town where they may spend the winter. The great mass of these men are disfranchised, because in the majority of instances they are compelled to leave the county in which they are employed during the summer and early fall months before November on account of the snows, and they cannot gain a residence in other counties in time to vote, because of the provision requiring them to reside in a county three months before the day of election. This accounts for the great disparity between the voting population, as shown by the last census, and the number of those who actually vote. Not less than forty per cent. of the qualified voters of the State are disfranchised on account of the late day on which our elections are held. The remedy if your body should deem one desirable, is quite apparent. Before any change in time can be made Congress must pass a law changing the time for the election of Congressmen in Colorado. If Congress would enact a law permitting the voters of Colorado to elect their Congressman in September, except in the year of the Presidential election, your body could change the time for holding our State and county elections to correspond with that date, so that for three years out of every four our State elections would be held in September, while in the Presidential year they would be held in November. If your body would memorialize Congress at once to make such a change in the time for electing a congressman, that body would speedily do so, and in ample time to permit you to pass a law changing the time of our elections to correspond with the date fixed by Congress. The objects to be gained by such a change are manifold. Particularly it would enable all the legal voting population to exercise the most sacred of all the rights of citizenship, and we would stand before the country as a stronger and more populous common-



wealth than the light vote now polled each year would indicate. We should poll not less than 85,000 legal votes, while chiefly on account of the lateness of the day of election, the total vote polled is a little over 50,000.

While upon the subject of elections, I would suggest that more stringent laws be passed to secure purity in elections. While every possible obstacle should be removed from the casting of ballots by legal voters, every possible obstacle should be thrown in the way of illegal voting and tampering with ballots after they have been cast. Rigid laws should be enacted to prevent employers from influencing in any way employes in exercising the right of suffrage. No voting precinct should contain more than five hundred voters. The distribution of fraudulent ballots should be severely punished; the peddling of ballots nearer than ten feet to the polling places should be made an offense, ballots should be required to be uniform in size, type and paper; no person should be permitted to accompany another to the ballot box for the purpose of seeing what ballot he casts. These and many other protections should be thrown around the voter and the ballot box, to the end that the choice of the untrammelled and legal voters of the State should prevail, and honest and capable men be selected for places of trust.

Owing to the want of proper legislation there are foreign corporations doing business in the State that are relieved from the burden of contributing to the public revenue. While enjoying the protection of our laws and the privilege of doing business here, they have thus far been exempted from the responsibilities of the property holder. Every species of property that is exempt from taxation necessarily increases the burdens of those who are required to aid in support of government. Many of the older States of the Union have provided means for taxing the gross receipts of foreign corporations doing business within their limits. I would recommend the subject to your earnest consideration. By compelling all classes of property not constitutionally exempt from taxation to pay its proportion to the public fund, and by holding public officers of all grades to the strictest ac-

countability, and by discountenancing all expenditures not absolutely essential to the discharge of the public functions, can many of the county organizations of the State find relief, and by this means the property holder will obtain relief from the growing burdens of public expenditure.

I have no specific suggestions to make with reference to the management of the various State institutions. The satisfactory progress made by these institutions during the past two years is highly creditable to the officers in charge of them. They are dependent entirely upon the State for their support and maintenance, and I would suggest to you the necessity of making appropriations commensurate with their growing needs and requirements.

In conclusion permit me to express my gratitude to the people of the State for the honor that they have conferred upon me in electing me to the chief executive office of the State. By a strict and conscientious attention to the duties of the office, I shall endeavor to show that the honor has not been unworthily bestowed, and I shall ever be found ready to co-operate with the members of the Assembly in the furtherance of any measure which has for its purpose the promotion of the public welfare.

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