

# Remarks at Kansas State University at the Alfred M. Landon Lecture Series on Public Issues

## September 9, 1982

President Acker, Governor Carlin, Governor Landon, Senators Dole and Kassebaum, members of the board of regents, faculty, the students, and distinguished guests:

It's a special pleasure to be with you today, wonderful to be back home on the range. You know, sometimes living in that big white house in Washington can leave you feeling a little fenced in and isolated. But there is a tonic: visit a State where tall wheat and prairie grass reach toward a wide open sky; be with people who are keeping our frontier spirit alive, people who work the soil but who still have time to dream beyond the farthest stars. Here in the heartland of America lives the hope of the world, and here words like "entrepreneur," "self-reliance," "personal initiative," and, yes, "generosity" describe everyday facts of life.

Right now another fact of life in this heartland is the enormous burden carried by those who produce the food and fiber essential to life itself. And I want with all my heart to see that burden lifted, to see America's farmers receive the reward they deserve. I agree with your native son, Dwight Eisenhower, who said that without a prosperous agriculture there is no prosperity in America.

I feel doubly honored to be with you here in this particular place. Kansas State University epitomizes the leadership that Abraham Lincoln wanted when he established our first land-grant colleges. Schools like Kansas State serve as an entrance to the world, not an escape from it. And you deserve great credit for the rigorous academic program you offer your students and the research efforts you are making to benefit humanity.

Today is, as has been said, also a homecoming of sorts for me. It was 15 years ago I participated in this Landon Lecture Series for the first time, so I can see and am aware of the remarkable growth of the university. And as an ex-sports announcer, I've also been following the Wildcats' victories in basketball. Now, it just happens that football was my game, and I know that there have been some trials and shall, I say, some misfortunes in football. You've tasted the agony of defeat. And I know that taste. And by coincidence, when I knew that taste, I was wearing a purple jersey at the time. But I happen to be a believer in "purple power," so go out there and turn it around. Your State motto says, Ad astra per aspera -- to the stars through difficulties.

My other honor today is joining you in paying tribute to an outstanding American -- a wise, effective, and revered leader, and a personal friend. And you know, in all my years in Hollywood, I was never a song and dance man; that's how I wound up an after-dinner speaker. [Laughter] But I just wonder if we couldn't all sing "Happy Birthday" to the best darn horseback rider in the State of Kansas -- Governor Alf Landon.

[At this point, the President led the audience in singing "Happy Birthday" to Governor Alf Landon.]

You know, I was all set to ask the Governor if he'd like to go riding today, and then suddenly I remembered about the Landon legend. He doesn't just ride the horses; he has broken the horses that he rides. And I think I'll save my strength for the Congress. [Laughter]

Governor, if you'd invite me back here to speak 5 years from now and if I should happen to be still living in the White House, you could join me on Air Force One, and we'd light the candles on your 100th birthday cake in Washington so all of America could join in the celebration.

You know, I'd be remiss if I didn't say that one of the nicest things that Alf Landon ever did for his country was to give us someone as talented and charming as his daughter Nancy, the first woman to be elected Senator from Kansas. And, you know -- Nancy -- that's a nice name. I like the name Nancy. [Laughter]

But today I want to talk about our challenge to take freedom's next step and lift mankind another rung on the ladder of human progress. And if you detected a note of optimism in those words, you read me right.

I do not dismiss the dangers of big deficits, nuclear conflict, or international terrorism. Each could destroy us if we fail to deal with them decisively. But we can and will prevail if we have the faith and the courage to believe in ourselves and in our ability to perform great deeds, as we have throughout our history.

Let's reject the nonsense that America is doomed to decline, the world sliding toward disaster no matter what we do. Like death and taxes, the doomcriers will always be with us. And they'll always be wrong about America.

Let me, if I could, just jog your memories for a moment. It was just a short time ago when those doomcriers were telling us that food and fuel supplies were running out. It was only a question of time before famine and misery would engulf America and the world. Price increases in America, they predicted, would zoom up at double-digit rates for the rest of this decade. The price of crude oil would race to \$100 a barrel. Interest rates would break all the old records and soar to 25 or 30 percent or even higher. Runaway inflation and interest rates would break the back of the free enterprise system, destroy the value of our currency, the savings of our people, and the ability of our country to project power, promote freedom, and defend peace.

But already Americans are proving every one of those predictions wrong. So many so-called experts lack faith in the American people. They just don't seem to understand there is no limit to what a proud, free people can achieve. We see it here, where the first plow turned the prairie sod and the prairie became a fertile wonder of the world. I'm told that in 1820 a farmworker produced enough food products for himself and three other people; today he feeds 77.

We're not running out of food and fuel, because we haven't run out of ideas. We're going to feed the world. We're developing new energy resources. Last year we discovered more crude oil than any time in the last 12 years. We've declared war on high interest rates and inflation, and we're winning that war. The American dollar is no longer a condemned currency; it's sought again as a rock of strength and stability. In the last 2 years, it has risen about 25 percent against other major

currencies. And yet, I can remember just a short time ago a friend returning from a trip abroad very depressed. He told me what a blow it was and how he felt, because at that time he was in places abroad where they refused to accept American money; they had lost such confidence in it.

Across the world, Americans are bringing light where there was darkness, heat where there was once only cold, and medicines where there was sickness and disease, food where there was hunger, wealth where humanity was living in squalor, and peace where there was only death and bloodshed.

So many delight in downgrading everything American when there is so much in our land to be proud of. We don't occupy any countries. We build no walls to keep our people in. But we provide more food assistance around the globe than all the other nations combined. And no other nation works harder -- or, I might add, more effectively -- than the United States to end bloodshed and suffering and bring about lasting peace in troubled areas like the Middle East.

Yes, we face awesome problems. But we can be proud of the red, white, and blue, and believe in her mission. In a world wracked by hatred, economic crisis, and political tension, America remains mankind's best hope. The eyes of mankind are on us, counting on us to protect the peace, promote new prosperity, and provide for them a better world. And all this we can do if we remember the great gifts of our Revolution: that we are one Nation under God, believing in liberty and justice for all.

One of America's most valiant, decorated soldiers, Omar Bradley, once said of freedom -- he said, "No word was ever spoken that has held out greater hope, demanded greater sacrifice, needed more to be nurtured, blessed more than the giver, damned more its destroyer, or come closer to being God's will on Earth. May America ever be its protector."

Well, let this be our banner. But to be freedom's protector, to be a force for good, we must, above all, be strong. And to be strong, we must offer leadership at all levels of government, in our communities, in our families. We must mobilize every asset we have -- spiritual, moral, educational, economic, and military -- in a crusade for national renewal.

We must restore to their place of honor the bedrock values handed down by families to serve as society's compass. Our time-tested values have never failed us when we've had the courage to live up to them. Speaking here 15 years ago, I was asked, following the speech, a question from the audience, if our young people of that day were not turning away from our traditional values. And I replied that maybe those young people just didn't think we were living up to them. There was a roar of approval from the students present that indicated agreement. They hadn't abandoned those values; they just didn't think that our older generation cared any more. So, it's up to us to make sure they realize we do.

Today I wonder sometimes if we're infecting another generation with negativism. When the tough but necessary decisions to cut back on spending are made, they're described so often in negative terms -- how much less government will spend, how many fewer benefits will be given away, how many fewer programs will survive. But cutting back on the runaway growth of

government can be a profoundly positive step, like performing necessary surgery on a patient to save his life.

This Federal Government of ours, by trying to do too much, has undercut the ability of individual people, of communities, churches, and businesses to meet the real needs of society as Americans always have met them in the past.

The time has come to rethink some of the tired old political labels that have blinded our thinking for too long. You know, we Americans have the technological genius to send astronauts to the Moon and bring them safely home, but we're having trouble making it safe for a citizen to take a walk in the evening through the park. And sometimes in the world of politics, it seems that our dialog hasn't gone much beyond "Me Tarzan, you Jane." [Laughter]

For nearly 50 years, those who have taken unto themselves the label "liberal" have argued that government has a duty to help people solve their problems -- which it does. Conservatives, on the other hand, have argued that such help can be a threat to individual freedom -- which it can. Both sides seem to agree that the two main categories of American society are government and the individual -- and never the twain shall meet.

But from our earliest days, there have been other crucial dimensions of our society that transcend these narrow labels. Look around you: There's so much more to America than government on the one hand and individuals with nowhere to turn for help but to government on the other. Between the government and the individual, there are a great number of natural, voluntary organizations which people form for themselves -- like the family, the church, the neighborhood, and the workplace, where people learn, grow, help, and prosper. And even individual citizens and institutions like the thing that I have just read -- the announcement of the largest Federal savings and loan here in Kansas which has reduced the interest rates for home mortgages down to where, once again, maybe something can happen in the homebuilding industry and people can again live that American dream of owning their own home.

The ultimate and overwhelming positive goal of my administration is to put limits on the power of government, yes, but to do it so that we liberate the powers and the real source of our national genius which will make us great again.

I said that we were a nation under God. I've always believed that this blessed land was set apart in a special way, that some divine plan placed this great continent here between the oceans to be found by people from every corner of the Earth who had a special love for freedom and the courage to uproot themselves, leave homeland and friends to come to a strange land, and where, coming here, they have created something new in all the history of mankind -- a land where man is not beholden to government; government is beholden to man.

Government exists to ensure that liberty does not become license to prey on each other. We haven't been perfect in living up to that ideal, but we've come a long way since those first settlers reached these shores asking nothing more than the freedom to worship God. They asked that He would work His will in our daily lives, so America would be a land of fairness, morality, justice, and compassion.

There was a conviction that standards of right and wrong do exist and must be lived up to. The institutions of family, community, and school would play critical roles in the shaping of character, the acquisition of knowledge, and the search for truth. We passed thousands and thousands of laws in our two centuries as a nation -- millions, maybe -- and yet if we simply adhere to the Ten Commandments that Moses brought down from the mountains -- and he didn't just bring down 10 suggestions -- and the admonition of the Man from Galilee to do unto others as you would have them do unto you, we could solve an awful lot of problems with a lot less government.

Our first President, George Washington, Father of our Country, shaper of the Constitution, and truly a wise man, believed that religion, morality, and brotherhood were the essential pillars of society, and he said you couldn't have morality without the basis of religion. And yet today we're told that to protect the first amendment we must expel God, the very source of our knowledge, from our children's classrooms. One court has recently ruled that in one place in our land children cannot say grace on their own in the school cafeteria before they eat. Now this was done as being in accord with the Constitution. But was the first amendment written to protect the American people from religion, or was it written to protect religion from government tyranny? No one will ever convince me that a moment of voluntary prayer can harm a child or threaten a school or a state. From the beginning of this administration, I've made it clear that I believe America's children have the right to begin their day the same way the Members of the United States Congress do -- with prayer.

The time has come for this Congress to give a majority of American families what they want for their children, a constitutional amendment that will make it unequivocally clear that children can hold voluntary prayer in their schools. Now I urge the Congress to work with me in passing an amendment that we can send to the States for ratification.

I know now what I'm about to say will be very controversial, but I also believe that God's greatest gift is human life and that we have a sacred duty to protect the innocent human life of an unborn child. Now I realize that this view is not shared by all. But out of all the debate on this subject has come one undisputed fact, and this, out of the debate, has been the uncertainty of when life begins. And I just happen to believe that simple morality dictates that unless and until someone can prove the unborn human is not alive, we must give it the benefit of the doubt and assume it is. And thus it should be entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

As a nation, we're struggling to guide ourselves safely through stormy seas. We need all the help we can get. I think the American people are hungry for a spiritual revival. More and more of us are beginning to sense that we can't have it both ways. We can't expect God to protect us in a crisis and just leave him over there on the shelf in our day-to-day living. I wonder if sometimes if he isn't waiting for us to wake up and that he isn't maybe running out of patience.

Within our families, neighborhoods, schools, and businesses let us continue to reach out, renewing our spirit of friendship, community service, and caring for the needy -- a spirit that flows like a deep and mighty river through the history of our nation. But to the lawbreakers and drug peddlers who would harm and prey on innocent citizens, who make our people live in fear,

we also have a message: We will demand justice, and justice includes swift and sure punishment for the guilty.

You know, someone once asked, "Which role will you play? Will you be the wrecker who walks your town, content with the labor of tearing down, or will you be the builder who works with care that your town may be better because you've been there?" With the caliber of leadership from people like your president, Duane Acker, KSU's answer is loud and clear. You have every right to be proud.

Let me give you another example of a down-home, private sector initiative that impressed me very much. Just recently -- I mentioned the savings and loan, the Federal savings and loan here -- but just recently 25 Kentucky banks voluntarily reduced their prime lending rate to around 12 percent, so local borrowers would have more investment capital to create jobs, and families could afford home mortgages. The banks also challenged other State banks to do the same. Imagine how many jobs could be created if the number of banks in America making that kind of voluntary gesture was not 25, but 50 times 25.

The strengthening of spiritual ties, binding of families, and coming together of communities is making America whole again. We are rebuilding. But we've only begun to rebuild.

As we lift our spirits, we must continue to lift the yoke of economic oppression that has penalized hard-working families, weakening our strength, threatening our security in the last 19 months or longer than that. I just started in the next sentence too early without a period. [Laughter] In the last 19 months, a coalition of Republicans and Democrats has begun to rein in a government that is careening out of control, pushing us toward economic collapse and, quite probably, the end of our way of life. This is no exaggeration. Over a 22-year period, the Federal Government has managed to balance the budget only once. It has increased spending more than 600 percent, increased taxes more than 500 percent, and mortgaged our future by pushing the national debt over \$1 trillion.

Well, the coalition that I mentioned has begun to set things right. Federal spending growth has been cut nearly in half from that suicidal 17-percent-a-year rate that it was running in 1980. Inflation has dropped from 12.4 percent to 5.4 so far this year. And prime interest rates are down from 21½ percent to 13½. Leading economic indicators, which forecast future economic activity, have been up for 4 months in a row now, and that hasn't happened for quite a while.

Yes, recovery has been sighted, but these statistics that I just mentioned are cold comfort to someone who is still out of work. Unfortunately, unemployment is just about the last indicator to turn around after a recession. The other problem is: Unemployment has been gaining on us for years. Since 1976 the unemployment rate in this country has averaged over 7 percent, far higher than in earlier, postwar years. High inflation and interest rates pushed more and more families to seek a second income. To charge that our administration is trying to reduce inflation on the backs of the unemployed is to stand truth on its head. More than anything else, it was those record interest rates and double-digit inflation that led inevitably to this recession -- and it started quite a while ago -- and that's what we're trying so hard to turn around. And until we do, we have a responsibility.

Alf Landon reminded us that in a time of trouble, "It is reasonable and nothing less than just that the government exert all its powers to prevent suffering among the less fortunate." Well, this we will do. What does it mean when we say we love America? I think it means we think, before anything else, that we love our countrymen, that we reach out with a helping and healing hand when they cry out or fall behind, and that we tell them, "Don't be afraid; you're not alone."

You may have read the passage in the Psalms which says: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." The American people have endured a long and terrible night, lasting more than a decade and filled with one economic disappointment after another. And today, that long night is ending. We will see a new dawn of hope and opportunities for all our people.

With the help of your senior Senator, Bob Dole, we've just passed a tax reform and spending reduction bill that, along with the budget resolution, can reduce projected deficits by nearly \$380 billion over the next 3 years. And we've done this without canceling the tax cut passed last year, which will save taxpayers \$335 billion in those same 3 years. That means the average family next year will pay \$788 less in personal income taxes. But we still have one major hurdle to clear. We must summon the courage to get control of the spending programs which have been the major cause in recent years of budget hemorrhaging and spiraling deficits and the high interest rates.

I've said before, balancing the budget is a little like protecting your virtue: You just have to learn to say "no." [Laughter] The Congress passed legislation in 1978 requiring the budget to be in balance by fiscal year 1981. But, like [comedian] Rodney Dangerfield, the legislation didn't "get no respect." [Laughter]

Well, it seems to me that Republicans and Democrats alike want an end to runaway government spending, even if that means pruning some popular programs. The people have something that is often in short supply in government -- common sense. And they understand that making this government live within its means will ultimately do more to protect their earnings, bring down interest rates, and put our unemployed back to work than anything else we could do.

The gist of the message I've been receiving is: "No more ifs, ands, buts, or maybes; we want an amendment to the United States Constitution making balanced budgets the law of this land, and we want that amendment now."

The Senate has done its job and brought us a step closer to a constitutional amendment. But the House leadership is keeping the bill bottled up in committee. This is no partisan issue; it's the people's will. And today we're saying to the House: "Let their voices be heard."

There's one other goal on the horizon that we should all work together to reach. We should go much further in reducing tax rates and make that whole jigsaw puzzle of a tax system more simple and fair for all. I had someone make out my income tax, and when I read it, all made out, I couldn't understand it.

Everything we're trying to do -- from eliminating wasteful spending and regulations, to reducing tax rates and returning power and resources to the States and communities and honoring the roles

of families, churches, and schools -- boils down to putting you, the American people, back in charge of your country again. We want you to enjoy more opportunities and to have a much greater say in shaping America's future.

Apply that philosophy to agriculture. American farmers were hurt badly and still have not recovered from the disruption their markets suffered from the grain embargo against the Soviet Union. We believe that government's proper role is to act as friend, partner, and promoter of American farmers and their products around the world. And, as promised, we lifted the embargo. The Soviets have accepted our offer to extend the grain agreement, requiring that they purchase at least 6 to 8 million metric tons, and we're willing to sell them a lot more.

So far, we've dispatched trade teams to 23 nations in Europe, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Far East. We're committed to opening agricultural markets in all countries. We challenge other countries, particularly our friends in Europe and Japan, to match this commitment.

Again, I want to salute Kansas State University for its invaluable research efforts and the many contributions that it makes with such programs as International Grains and the Food and Feed Grain Institute. Looking to the future, big challenges await us in the growing markets of high-valued products and in the development and mastery of electronics in the agricultural field.

We're a peaceful country. We seek a more peaceful world, where liberty and enterprise can flourish, bring greater fulfillment to people who are now deprived and oppressed. On the recent trip to Europe, I had the privilege of personally promising His Eminence Pope John Paul II that America will do everything possible for peace and for genuine arms reduction.

But to keep the peace and to keep our freedom, we must stay strong. I have seen in my lifetime, and many of you in yours, how despots took the world to the brink because they thought the spark of freedom had died in our hearts. Sons and daughters of Kansas, as well as the rest of our country, brave war heroes like Bob Dole, proved how wrong those despots were.

To those today who would charge us with being imperialistic or warmongering, let them be reminded of a little history. After World War II, we were the last great power undamaged by the war, our industry intact. We occupied Germany and Japan, our erstwhile enemies. We alone had the ultimate weapon, the atom bomb. We could have very easily dominated the world. But that's not what America's all about. We used our power as a force for good, to take freedom's next step, and with our Marshall plan lift mankind another rung. And we applied it to our erstwhile enemies as well as to our friends.

Well we can do that again, and as you have before, you can help us by leading the way. You have a special gift. I remember how the historian Carl Becker wrote about his first visit to your State, to Kansas. He didn't want to come. He missed the green hills of New England. He sat on the train and described the "dreary yards" of Kansas City. But then he noticed a young girl gazing silently out the train window for a long, long time. And finally she turned to her companion, and with deep feeling said just three words: "Dear old Kansas." And it was then that

Becker said that he realized Kansas is a State, a philosophy, a religion, and a way of life, all in one.

You have within you a deep well of goodness, strength, and inner peace that can carry America forward. And I know you will. And to all of the young people who are here today, we not only have faith in you and are going to welcome you out into this society of ours to help with the problems, but there are some of us that hope with all our hearts that we can start making payments on that massive debt so that you and those who come behind you will know that we don't intend to selfishly leave it all to you.

Thank you all very much. God bless you.

Note: The President spoke at 11:16 a.m. in the Ahearn Field House and Gymnasium at the university in Manhattan, Kans., following remarks by Governor John Carlin and Dr. Duane Acker, president of the university. Following his remarks, the President was joined at the podium by Governor Landon for the presentation to the President of a saddle blanket by Bill Rogenmoser, president of the student body.

Alfred M. Landon served as Governor of Kansas from 1933 to 1937. In 1936 he was the Republican nominee for President of the United States, but was defeated in the general election by Franklin D. Roosevelt. This was the 58th Landon Lecture. Kansas State University has conducted the series since 1966 as a tribute to Governor Landon.