

State of the State Address

of

Governor Bob Miller

at

Carson City, Nevada

January 25, 1990

We are living in one of the most exciting times in the history of the world. In Eastern Europe, democracy is the order of the day. In the Soviet Union, glasnost and perestroika have brought our best hope this century for world peace. In Berlin, the opening of a wall has opened the hearts and minds of an entire nation.

On an unprecedented scale, citizens around the world are standing up en masse to demand the human rights and liberties that we, as Americans, have cherished and defended with our lives for over 200 years.

And while world attention is focussed on the magnitude of changes occurring on the international level, it's important that we take time to direct our attention to the magnitude of changes occurring right here in Nevada.

We are living in one of the most exciting times in the history of our own state. Progress is the order of the day. We continue to lead the nation in annual population growth and economic climate. Our task at hand is to determine how we, as a state, can continue to grow at the breathtaking rate we're experiencing, and at the same time, to maintain the excellent quality of life Nevadans have enjoyed for so long.

An engraved inscription at the entrance to the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C. reads, "What is past is prologue." The line suggests that where we've come from is intrinsically linked to where we are now and where we are going.

This truism applies to the transformations occurring around the world, and to those we're experiencing right here at home.

The occasion of Nevada's 125th anniversary of statehood prompted me to take a look back into our history. I discovered striking similarities between the types of issues our predecessors faced and ones we face today.

I've decided to take this opportunity to discuss four of the most important issues we must successfully address if Nevada is to continue to grow and prosper in the decade of the nineties.

Joining us tonight, are representatives of a very special segment of Nevada's population--students from high schools across the state. I have asked you here this evening because you represent Nevada's future. And after all, who better to discuss Nevada's future with than those who will live it.

Together, we can build a strong future. But it will take a commitment from each of us, a personal commitment. Legislation alone can't make the future what we want it to be. We must each

make a commitment to take control of our destiny.

The first, and most important issue confronting us, is drug abuse. To aptly state the extent of the problem, let me read an article from today's Reno Gazette-Journal.

"The consumption of cocaine in its various forms is fast increasing in the United States, and the cocaine habit is not unlikely to soon assume greater proportions as a vice than alcoholism. It is estimated that the cocaine users in this country number fully three percent of the adult population."

Now, the rest of the story. This article isn't exactly from the Reno Gazette-Journal. And it's not from today's paper either. No, this article actually ran in the Reno EVENING Gazette and the day it ran--March 5, 1881 - one hundred and nine years ago! The only change I took the liberty of making was to switch today's most abused drug - cocaine, for the most abused drug of that day - opium.

You see, the epidemic of drugs devastating the world today isn't without precedent. One hundred years ago, our nation and our state faced a plight of a similar magnitude. The opium dens of the late 1800's are the crack houses of today.

At the turn of the century, the response of government leaders

and private citizens was swift and certain. Strict anti-drug laws were enacted, public education brought moral indignation, and people understood that drugs are anti-social and dangerous.

During this period, a remarkable figure emerged in Nevada as a true visionary - Governor Emmet D. Boyle. He served two terms as the head of our state from 1915 to 1922. He was the first governor born in Nevada and the first to graduate from our own state university.

I believe he was the first governor to fully embody the independent, progressive thinking that has come to typify Nevadans. He created our Department of Highways to improve transportation. He created the forerunner of the Colorado River Commission to protect our water interests. He created the Public Service Commission with an eye for consumers.

But I mention him now because his vision extended to the problem facing his state and his nation in the form of drugs. Governor Boyle realized that educating our children on the dangers of drugs was paramount to the solution.

To accomplish this, he won legislative approval in 1919 to set aside one half of one day a year in public schools for the sole purpose of drug and alcohol education. It was called Frances Willard Day in honor of a leading woman's rights and temperance

activist of that time.

As a result of these kinds of efforts, drug abuse in America was driven deep into decline by 1930. But constant vigilance wasn't maintained. In the 30's, our nation adopted a policy of censorship believing if people didn't talk about or hear about drugs, there wouldn't be a problem.

Drug education in public schools was discontinued. Frances Willard Day was one of the casualties. And...that strategy backfired.

In reality, all this code of silence did was spawn two generations without any knowledge of the true dangers of drugs; two generations ripe for the resurgence of drug experimentation in the 1960's.

Last week, an 18 month-old baby boy died in Nevada. This baby was born into pain and agony...addicted to crack cocaine...placed into foster care. His year and a half long struggle, against the addiction he did not cause, finally took his life.

As tragic as it is astonishing, eleven percent of the babies in this nation are born chemically dependent.

It makes me sick to know that the drug problem has become so

deeply rooted that it affects the most innocent within our society--newborns.

Our future well-being is threatened by one factor more than any other: drugs. Drugs in the home, in the workplace, in the schools...drugs in the bodies of our newborn babies.

Drug and alcohol use is involved in over 2/3rds of our reported child abuse cases. 63 percent of the prisoners in our men's maximum and medium security prisons were under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of their crimes.

Over 18,000 Nevadans were arrested for drug or alcohol related crimes in 1988. Every Nevadan was affected.

History tells us that drugs are NOT a necessary evil of society...are NOT an inevitability...do NOT have to be part of our lives. I'm telling you that drugs are NOT going to be tolerated in Nevada.

With the help of the Legislature, Nevada has taken a major step forward by creating a Drug Czar and a commission to coordinate Nevada's war on drugs.

But a Drug Czar and thirteen commissioners cannot win this war by themselves. It will take all one million, two hundred thousand

Nevadans...pulling together. That's why, tonight, I challenge each and every Nevadan to enlist in the war on drugs by making a personal commitment in your own life.

The war against drugs can't be fought solely in the legislature, in the jails, and in the rehabilitation centers; it must begin in the home--your home. It starts with your personal commitment. A commitment that says drugs will not invade this body and destroy this life.

Our success will start with a drug-free body, and expand to a drug-free house, a drug-free block, then a neighborhood, then a community and ultimately, a drug-free state.

We need to attack this enemy from all angles. I'm calling on our churches and synagogues to bring this message to our families. I'm calling on our businesses to reinforce this message in the work place. I'm calling on our service organizations and clubs to bring this message to the community.

And don't think for a second that winning this war is impossible.

If you had predicted as recently as one year ago, that the Berlin Wall would come down and that Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and now Yugoslavia, would back away from

Communism and move toward free elections, people would have said it's impossible. Well, I predict we will win the war on drugs, and victory will come the same way it has in Eastern Europe - on a grass roots level.

I KNOW it can work. We've seen tangible proof right here at home. Just think back ten years ago to the public attitudes about drinking and driving. People bragged about how they made it home after all they had to drink. It was an insult to suggest that a friend might have had too much to drink.

All that changed. Why? Not because government did anything great. It changed because a housewife named Candy Lightner started a group called Mothers Against Drunk Driving. She struck a responsive chord in a lot of people, and the entire nation joined in the chorus.

My friend, John Walsh, did the same thing to public consciousness regarding missing, exploited, and abused children. We can do the same to drugs.

I make the commitment right now to visit each of the 17 school districts in the state this year, just to speak, educate, and encourage our kids on this subject--in essence, creating 17 Frances Willard Days.

Join me...help me...stand up with me...against drugs in Nevada. Once we all make a personal commitment, the question changes from "if" we can stop drugs, to "how soon?"

The ill-effects of substance abuse have spilled over into our schools. They have done so by destroying healthy family environments that are so essential to learning and achieving. By sinking their teeth into the heart of the family unit, drugs and alcohol have broken marriages, broken spirits and broken concentration. All this, at a time when our nation's children need to be even better educated and better equipped to face stiff competition from around the world.

As long as I'm Governor, education will remain this state's top priority. It has to. The quality of your future is defined, more than anything else, by the quality of the education that you receive. This is one area where government does have a lead role to play. And while we made great strides during the last legislative session, we need to do more. And we cannot wait until the next legislative session to do it.

Just last weekend, I called together 130 leaders of the education community from across Nevada for a Governor's Planning Conference on Education. We came away with a blueprint for change which is both aggressive and oriented toward you--our young people. Many of those changes are going to require legislative

review and action. This will take time.

However, three of the recommendations deserve immediate attention. I call them the three "R's" of education in the 90's: Reduce classroom sizes; Return parents to schools; and Reorganize schools from within.

In last year's legislative session, we took the important first step towards reducing classroom sizes. We are now making progress in reaching our stated goal of no more than 15 students with each teacher in the first three grades.

The second "R," Returning parents to school, can't be over emphasized. I believe most parents truly want to be more involved in their children's education; many don't know how. School professionals must, therefore, reach out to encourage this participation.

This leads us to the third and perhaps most important "R," Reorganization of schools from within.

No one knows the particular needs of a school better than the teachers, parents, and students.

Right now our school districts are centralized and too far removed from day to day school life. Each school is different.

Each school knows itself best. Each school should, therefore, decide for itself.

Tonight, I'm calling on each school district to give more authority to their schools. Innovative ideas like this will create a better system of education.

But, a well-educated, drug-free Nevada will be worth nothing if we don't have fresh air to breathe, enough water to drink, and clean, safe parks for our children to play in.

Our ability...indeed our willingness...to address environmental issues is another serious challenge facing Nevada during the 90's. Nevada's environment essentially has been neglected and abused over much of its 125 years of existence.

In the 19th century, our rivers were poisoned with mercury byproducts from prosperous but cavalier industries. Our streams were choked with sawdust from lumber mills. Our forests were denuded. Our skies were blackened by processing mills.

No thought was given to long term impact. Progress was the order of the day. Sound familiar? Today, we must demand accountability.

Those of us who live here realize that Nevada is endowed with

abundant natural beauty and majesty. We must fight to protect Nevada's environment from becoming what too many outsiders believe it already is--a wasteland. On this front, the battle line must be drawn at Yucca Mountain.

No other state has supported and participated in our national defense any more than we have. But believe me, no other state has ever been more bullied and endangered than we have, as the target of the nation's high-level nuclear waste repository.

Last month, we saw our first tangible evidence that the resolve and determination of Nevada's citizenry is getting through to Washington, D.C. In December, the Department of Energy announced it has decided to reevaluate the entire nuclear waste program and the Yucca Mountain project, in particular. That same month, the D.O.E. asked the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to relax the safety standards and requirements for the site selection process.

Why did they do this? They did it because by existing standards, Yucca Mountain is a square peg being forced into a round hole. Yucca Mountain is not a scientifically safe location for the repository.

Thanks to your legislators, we sent a clear message to Congress that Nevada has vetoed the Yucca Mountain project. Due

to their lack of formal response, we feel the DOE is now DOA at Yucca Mountain.

But we must never underestimate the determination of the DOE to strap us with this time bomb.

Just yesterday, the DOE's brazen attitude was illustrated again. They nominated a man to head their nuclear program who has publicly stated that science is unimportant in the site selection process.

Today, the DOE filed suit in Las Vegas to force us into issuing permits so they can begin their site studies at Yucca Mountain.

There is no question that this process will be tied up in the court system for years. The judge who will ultimately rule on this case is probably still a high school student like you.

Your generation will inherit this battle. You must maintain a constant watch. The environmental legacy you inherit and, in turn, pass on to your children, depends on your vigilance.

And just as that legacy hinges upon our ability to prevent this man-made disaster from occurring, so, too, must we protect the God-given resources we have from being taken away.

Last year, the Legislature passed a bill to allow the voters of this state to decide whether Nevada should issue bonds to protect and preserve our natural resources. That item will appear on the November ballot as Question 5. We need new parks. We need to restore wetlands. We need to develop and improve fish and wildlife habitats.

I urge everyone to vote to protect Nevada's environment. Vote yes on Question 5.

Now, another area in which Nevada has played an important role in our nation's history--transportation. Do you know what America's first transcontinental railroad, first transcontinental highway, first transcontinental airmail run, and first transcontinental auto race have in common? You guessed it. They all ran right through our state. In fact, the original Reno Arch was built in 1926 in symbolic celebration of the transcontinental highway linking east with west.

Transportation is one area where our tremendous growth has taken its toll. Nevada has identified over \$4.5 billion worth of urgent highway construction needs, yet we have only \$2 billion in identifiable revenues.

Against that backdrop, we now have Congress threatening to gut

federal funding for Nevada's highway construction needs. Next year, they will vote on a new federal funding formula. On a percentage basis, Nevada could be the nation's biggest loser.

We are taking steps to fight back. We've hired expert transportation consultants to work closely with our congressional delegation in Washington. In addition, I've requested, and been appointed, to serve on a Western Governors' Association task force that will speak on behalf of the common interests of the Western States. As a group, our message will carry considerably more clout.

I am also working with our congressional delegation to convene transportation summits in both Northern and Southern Nevada that will improve communication and develop a coordinated plan.

The first will be held on February 15th in Las Vegas. The second will be held in early spring in Reno. And I will convey our concerns to U.S. Secretary of Transportation Skinner when I meet with him face to face in Washington, D.C., on February 27th.

As I said earlier, I truly believe this is the most exciting, dynamic period in our state's history.

I love Nevada, and I know you do, too. My duty as Governor is to match the vision and courage of great leaders like Emmet D.

Boyle.

My duty is to do everything within my power to provide you with a quality of life even better than the one left by our predecessors.

To me, that means protecting the beauty of our environment.

To me, that means providing the best education possible.

To me, that means freedom to enjoy this quality of life in a drug-free Nevada.

Thank you and good night.