

January 10, 1989

GOVERNOR ORR: Thank you. Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, ladies and gentlemen of the Legislature, distinguished guests, and fellow Nebraskans, I did appreciate the opportunity to visit with you last week and to welcome you back for this 1989 legislative session. As I mentioned then, your presence creates a sense of energy and excitement in the halls of this beautiful Capitol. I am looking forward to a productive session, a session on which we can build on the accomplishments of the last two years, and I'm looking forward to renewing old friendships and establishing new ones. So again, this gives me an opportunity to say to each of you, welcome back. It is my privilege today to report to you on the State of the State and present a budget for the operations of state government over the next biennium. And in so doing we have to carefully examine the many roles of state government - and the most important role that we have is to listen to the voices of all the people. Father Val Peter, Executive Director of Boys Town in Omaha, eloquently reminds us that a sensitive ear is needed to understand Nebraska. He said it this way: "Any one can sit and look at the seashore and be inspired because it shouts at you. So do the mountains. But the prairie only whispers. You must listen closely and never miss the message." At times in state government it would be easy for us to hear only the seashore and the mountains...the special interest groups and the power structures, but it is clear that we must listen also to the whispers of the prairie...to the young families, the grandparents, the small business owners, the wage earners, and our children because they all have a part in setting the course to keep Nebraska on the move. The past months have been a time to listen to the concerns and hear the suggestions, and...yes...see the visions that come from the people who live on the prairie. With the directors of many state agencies I have traveled across our state--to the familiar gathering spots of rural Nebraska to the think-tanks of urban industrialized areas--to the volunteer service clubs in the smallest of Nebraska communities--to the company presidents who serve on our chamber boards and development boards. We've had the opportunity to listen to the people from all walks of life in their home town settings--to hear the whispers of the prairie from a proud people, fiercely loyal Nebraskans who want the best for the future of their communities. These gatherings were an opportunity to exchange ideas and to hear first-hand the wants and the needs of our fellow Nebraskans. It was necessary to listen closely so that we wouldn't miss the message. Through the mid-1980's there was a great deal of concern, and many