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Inaugural Address

George Moscone

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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
SAN FRANCISCO

JOSEPH L. ALIOTO



The Inaugural Committee
requests the honor of your presence
at the Inauguration of

George Moscone

as Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco
on Thursday, the Eighth of January

Nineteen Hundred Seventy-six

at 11:30 a.m.

The Rotunda of City Hall

R.S.V.P.

Please present this
invitation for seating

Inaugural Address
George R. Moscone
Mayor, City and County of
San Francisco
January 8, 1976

Contact: Corey Busch
558-3456

I must tell you that I have spent a considerable amount of time trying to decide whether or not I would actually deliver an inaugural address this afternoon because the times cry out for action rather than words. We've heard a great deal of rhetoric from public officials across this nation over the past several years -- but precious little action on the part of government at any level to improve the quality of life for people who pay the exorbitant cost of government.

But I decided to spend a little time today to take this occasion to share with you my thoughts as I prepare to occupy Room 200 and help to shape the future of our City. I decided to give a brief talk today partly because of tradition -- yes, even we liberals honor some traditions -- and partly because I think it important that I set forth some of my goals and beliefs as I enter office so I may be better judged and held accountable as time passes and the honeymoon ends -- as I know it surely will.

It is in Room 200 -- the Mayor's office -- where the decisions are made which affect the daily lives of each and every one of us. Through the years some of those decisions have come easily, many of them have come after a brutal give and take of ideas and philosophies.

But it is in that office where the quality of life for nearly 700,000 San Franciscans is debated and ultimately determined.

Today, those decisions are made more difficult by what the experts call the crises of the cities. Perhaps now, more than ever before in the history of our nation, American cities, including our own, ladies and gentlemen, face critical issues which must be resolved with the right decisions if we are to continue to have a liveable urban environment. And what we do will

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also have an important effect upon the many people who come to San Francisco from surrounding communities and who visit our City from throughout the world. Ours is a special city -- with a special vibrancy and excitement which exists in no other city in the world. We can preserve our great qualities and at the same time serve as a model for cities throughout our state and throughout our country.

I sought the office of Mayor knowing the awesome responsibility which I would assume. Today, I took an oath of office which to me is more than a mere ceremonial function. I know what is ahead and I accept the challenge and the responsibility with a sense of excitement, with a sense of fear, and with a sense of anticipation.

It is very clear to me that the very first order of business for my administration will be to demonstrate to the people of San Francisco that their government can work -- that their government can and will be responsive to their needs and their demands -- and that their government is not just willing, but is, indeed, anxious to have the direct participation of the people of San Francisco in the important decision-making which will shape our future.

There is no doubt in my mind that the decisions which are born of the widest range of ideas -- decisions which come from people with the widest range of backgrounds and philosophies are the best decisions.

So my administration will be an open administration. My door will be open and I will be inside. No idea -- no point of view -- no individual will be excluded. They will all be welcomed.

And this openness will not be limited to the Mayor's office. If we are to regain the confidence of the people of this City, we must insure that the bureaucracy works -- that it is accountable and that it is responsive. It is my job to see to it that that happens. I intend to do just that. My demands for performance by the more than 20,000 people who work for you, the taxpayer, will be high.

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Let the word go forth from this moment that George Moscone is a tough man to work for. I put in long hours and have rigid standards on my work. I demand nothing less from the people who work for me. And let there be no mistake -- the people who work for the City and County of San Francisco are all accountable to me because it is I who must answer to the people who pay the price and demand the services which we are supposed to supply.

And, while we are on the subject of the people's employees, I believe that there are throughout the City bureaucracy many able men and women who have long since lost the zeal that drove them to learn professional skills and into public service. We will assure every public employee that public service is an opportunity to use one's intellect and skills to solve critical problems and is not "just another job".

We will also begin immediately to attack the growing problem of violent crime in our City. We will shortly have a new police commission and a new chief. Together, the new commission, the new chief, and your new Mayor will begin to utilize our police resources so that those men and women who have been trained to fight crime will in fact be fighting crime and not sitting behind a desk. They will be on the streets of this City, presenting a police presence which is the only real way we know to provide preventive crime control.

We have the police resources in San Francisco. We are among the highest in the nation in per capita police personnel, yet we need to reorder our priorities so these people are on the streets doing what they have been trained to do. That, ladies and gentlemen, will happen and it will happen fast.

But that is just a first step. There are many more which must be taken in our battle against violence in our City, and we will be ever vigilant in our search for those programs that attack the root causes of crime in our society so as to enable us to prevent crime as well as to act promptly and effectively after the commission of a crime.

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The people of our City bear a heavy tax burden. Some of them an unconscionably high one. I am not fool enough to promise that we can significantly reduce the tax load, nor, however, am I fool enough to allow it to increase by profligate spending policies.

Every resident of San Francisco pays property taxes. Whether paid directly by homeowners or indirectly by renters, we all pay, and none of us like it. I can understand that feeling, but I understand also that these tax dollars pay for an array of City services which I believe we must provide. The real questions are how well we are organized to provide them, whether we are providing the right services to the right people in the most efficient way. It is my belief we are not. Whether that dollar pays for police protection or a bed at Laguna Honda, whether for park maintenance or a local mental health program, the people demand a quality of service which matches the sacrifices of earnings they are asked to make. I intend to see that this demand is met.

I will soon be dealing with the City's budget. I can tell you now that I have advised every Department that I will approve no new position and no new programs unless I can be convinced it is cost-effective. I have further advised the managers of our Departments that I will take nothing for granted, that every proposed expenditure, no matter how sacrosanct it has been in past years will have to be justified in terms of services delivered. No expenditure will be approved unless it is proven to be necessary and, if necessary, that it is efficiently performed. I have asked many Departments to go back to the people in public hearings to establish program priorities so that when cuts are made they will be made based on the performance rating given these services by the constituencies they serve.

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Even with all of that, we are going to need new sources of revenue. I can guarantee that our revenue policies will be directed toward making those who now benefit from city services and amenities pay their share of the costs. Those least able to shoulder the present load will be protected. We are establishing an inter-agency revenue task force. Their exclusive duty will be to make sure that those who are not paying a fair share will no longer escape and that every penny of state or federal revenue to which we are entitled will be captured for the City.

This administration will have a lean and hungry look, not because it happens to be politically stylish at the moment, but because it is necessary. I refuse to believe that we cannot improve the way in which we serve the people of San Francisco. Those who look upon these words as so much familiar rhetoric to disguise a continuation of the same old ways are doomed to a fearful disappointment.

There are big problems and there are small problems. I intend to ask your help. I intend to work closely with the Board of Supervisors and to seek their counsel and their guidance along the way. There is going to be real two-way communication between the Board and the Mayor. I've been in their shoes, and I know the importance of a chief executive willing to work hand in glove with the legislative representatives of the people.

I have a great respect for this Board of Supervisors. We haven't always agreed, but I think there is a real mutual respect which will transcend any honeymoon period. President Kopp will be an outstanding leader of that body, and I know we will work well together. When we disagree, I expect we will both go to the mat for our positions, but after the battle I know we will not lose our ability to continue a good working relationship which we have had over the years. And the same is true for the other ten members of the Board.

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Four years from now I hope this day will be remembered as a time when the windows of City Hall were opened to admit a fresh new air of commitment — and the doors opened to admit a vigorous new spirit of change.

For we will need a new devotion and a new spirit to preserve and enhance this very special City in the years ahead.

Change will not be easy.

"There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things."

A bureaucrat named Nicolo Machiavelli wrote that more than four centuries ago.

It remains true today.

But change we will. I want to give fair warning to the pessimists who may be among my constituency that we can accomplish what we set out to do. We have the zeal, we have the energy and we have the knowledge to make our City work once again.

We will always take the high road, never ride the back of the oppressed, and turn away from those who tell us what cannot be done. I'll be frank: In the spirit of John Kennedy, I think we can do better.

I believe we can have an improved economy and labor peace and right fiscal accountability in the public sector. I believe we can expand sorely needed job opportunities throughout the City. I believe we can have growth, but thoughtful and well-designed growth, not haphazard and soulless rip-off that we'd be ashamed of twenty years from now. I believe we can protect and revive our neighborhoods -- the "hearts" of San Francisco -- with love and care. I believe we can make vast improvements in our MUNI and have the finest public transportation system in the world. I believe we can have schools which teach our children at the level we have an absolute right to demand.

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And I believe we can give the people who live here a rightful priority over those who make their livings in San Francisco, but spend them in the suburbs where they sleep.

In other words, I believe San Francisco can be made a little more liveable, that special way it used to be, not so long ago.

I ask for your help and I ask for your prayers. After I complete my tenure as Mayor, I want San Francisco to be a City we can be proud to leave to our children -- a City in which they can live, in which they can prosper, and in which they can raise our grandchildren. They are the future and they are counting on us.

Thank you.

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