

## **RG6135.MI: Nebraska for the People [1974]**

### **Part 2: Executive**

Narrated by Floyd Kalber

[An overview of the functions and responsibilities of the Governor of Nebraska.]

The Narrator, standing the steps of the Capitol, asks: “How much do you know about Nebraska State government? Do you know how it works? What do you think of when you think of State government?”

These questions are then presented to a random selection of citizens on the street. The responses suggest that “State government” means, for example, the financing of schools, the legislative body itself, taxes, “not into it at all,” and local issues, issues having more to do with the people.

Standing inside the Capitol, the Narrator introduces the concept of the Executive in State government, noting that the Constitution of Nebraska indicates that “the supreme executive power shall be vested in the Governor, who shall take care that the laws are faithfully executed and the affairs of the state are efficiently and economically administered.”

The Governor, however, in accordance with the Constitution of Nebraska, must share his broad administrative powers with several other Constitutional officers (the Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Auditor of Public Accounts, and State Treasurer), all of whom are elected directly by the people.

The people, in fact, elect 27 executive officers in Nebraska, and this group then elects the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska, the members of the State Board of Education and the Public Service Commission. In short, the Governor’s powers are not unlimited.

Former Governors Robert Crosby and Frank Morrison then comment on the responsibilities and challenges of the governor’s office, the effects on his family, and his broad “ceremonial” role in representing the State.

View of Governor J. James Exon at his desk in the Capitol. As the officer responsible for the day-to-day functions of State government, the Governor supervises the 18 “code departments”: Agriculture, Health, Labor, Banking, Roads, Water Resources, Insurance, Motor Vehicles, Public Welfare, Public Institutions, Administrative Services, Corrections, Personnel, Environmental Control, Aeronautics, Veterans Affairs, Economic Development, and Revenue. An overview of the varied functions of these agencies follows.

The Governor is limited to two four-year terms of office. When this film was made, the Governor's annual salary was \$25,000, and he and his family live, without charge, in the Executive Mansion, directly across the street from the Capitol in Lincoln. A limousine is also provided, along with a security detail.

Taxes are supposed to be "just high enough" to cover appropriations made by the Legislature. Nebraska has a "pay-as-you go" State government, in accordance with the Constitution. There is a State sales tax and a State income tax, but there are no State property taxes; all property taxes are levied and used by local authorities.

View of the processing room where all State tax receipts are tallied and entered into a computer. The centralized procedures for recording tax receipts and State financial transactions have become a model for other states.

The Nebraska Crime File (a comprehensive list of individuals with Nebraska felony records) is also maintained on a computer and is made available to the FBI and to law enforcement officials across the country.

View of a State Patrol car along with a brief overview of the Patrol's functions.

The Department of Roads oversees the construction and maintenance of the State road network, operates stations to monitor the weight of trucks passing through Nebraska, and supervises the many rest areas along the Interstate highways in the State.

Other functions and programs of State government are briefly highlighted: cancer research at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha; the work of the criminal justice system, including rehabilitation initiatives; the Youth Development Centers in Kearney and Geneva; the Game and Parks Commission; the State welfare system; the State Department of Health; and the Bureau of Vital Statistics.

Public education: the Constitution of Nebraska guarantees "free instruction in the common schools" of the State to all persons between the ages of 5 and 21. The Legislature delegates to school districts the management and supervision of local schools, but the Legislature controls the qualifications of teachers, the length of the school year, and even the curriculum.

Broad views of the campus of the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. Except for the Legislature itself, "no other institution of State government has had a more pronounced continuing effect on the history of the State" than the University of Nebraska, which was chartered by the Legislature in 1867.

There is also a parallel State college system, with campuses in Chadron, Peru, Wayne, and Kearney, as well as an extensive community college system with its emphasis on vocational training and skills.

In his closing remarks, the Narrator (Floyd Kalber) notes that this overview of State government and its functions was paid for with tax money, appropriated by the Legislature, in an effort to increase public knowledge and understanding of State government itself. Urging every citizen to take an active role in the processes of democratic government (by voting, for example), he refers to the words above the north entrance of the Capitol: "THE SALVATION OF THE STATE IS WATCHFULNESS IN THE CITIZEN."

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