

From the Farm Foundation Archives

Obituary for Gov. Frank O. Lowden in the *Des Moines Register*, March 22, 1943.

IOWA AND AMERICA LOSE A GREAT MAN

The story of Frank Lowden is a saga of not just one generation but two, of pioneering and of modern social and industrial problems, of the best of conservatism and the best of progressivism. It is a strange story in which a great leader of political forces sometimes declined high office, sometimes was denied it because of his allegiance to high principle, but all the while carried enormous "political weight" because of the respect which his character commanded.

The facets of this man's interests and achievements seem almost to be limitless. We dare say that even few who thought they knew him intimately ever stopped to appraise the multitude of causes to which he devoted time and energy and money.

Of course here in the middle west, Governor Lowden was known as an agricultural leader. Back in the early '20s he was a forceful advocate of the "equalization fee," of the McNary-Haugen bill, of scientific soil and seed grain development, of blooded livestock raising, and so on. He understood the basic *social* implications, as well as the economic, of agricultural stability. This was a vital part of his philosophy about maintaining a strong democracy.

But among public administrators, Governor Lowden was known as a progressive and practical reformer. He made Illinois' antiquated budget and administrative machinery into an efficient, modern system. Subsequent savings brought about the lowest tax rate Illinois had enjoyed for years. He mod-

ernized the state's penal system in many ways. He started the state's hard-surfaced highway network. He started the Great Lakes-Mississippi waterway system. He pressed for reform throughout the old county system of government. And so on.

In the professional world Mr. Lowden was known as a lawyer of great talent. In the business world he was a head of numerous large corporations. Yet as a member of congress he had vigorously supported the income tax principle, labor legislation, and the exposure of corporate practices.

In the field of education, where here in Hardin County, Iowa, he got his professional "start," Mr. Lowden was always a zealous advocate of modernization. He taught law and served as a trustee on several university boards.

In politics, he was never stigmatized with a "small" act done for personal advantage. He declined a whole list of jobs, many of them promising political advancement, because he was afraid his conscience wouldn't "fit." But because he believed that the two-party system made for the success of modern democracy, he was loyal to the Republican party throughout his life, and spent his energy toward bringing it to a constantly higher level of public responsibility.

Few men so "big" intellectually and spiritually come along in an ordinary lifetime. Few men who have achieved or accepted so little in the way of political preferment touch as many common men with their good influence as Frank Lowden has.

We in Iowa may properly be proud that his formative years were spent here among us, and that to this degree he "belonged" to us.