

Revocation of Babel Proclamation, 1918

*State of Iowa
Executive Department
A Proclamation*

To the People of Iowa:

Whereas, on the 23d day of May, 1918, the undersigned, by virtue of authority in him vested as Governor of Iowa, issued a proclamation directing attention to the duty of all citizens during the progress of the war to "refrain from acts and conversations which might excite suspicion and strife among the people," and requesting every person to "demean himself that every word and act would manifest his loyalty to his country and his solemn purpose to aid in achieving victory for our Army and Navy and the permanent peace of the world," and declaring "the great aim and object of all should be unity of purpose and solidarity of all the people under the flag for victory;" and

Whereas, to accomplish these purposes, it was proclaimed that certain rules should obtain, which were in substance that the English language should be employed as the medium of instruction in all schools, in conversation in public places and over telephones, and in public address, which, as was said, would "result in peace and tranquility at home and greatly strengthen the country in battle," and suggesting that the blessings of our country were so great "that any inconvenience or sacrifice should willingly be made for their perpetuity;" and

Whereas, the terms of the armistice joined in by all the belligerent powers include the resumption of war, the authority for issuing the rules laid down in the proclamation no longer continues as a war grant power;

Now Therefore, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, notice is hereby given that said rules set out in the proclamation of May 23d, 1918, are no longer in force as an executive order.

The people generally throughout the state are to be commended for patriotically conforming with the spirit and purpose of the Proclamation even though it involves some inconvenience or modification of custom.

The necessity for the solidarity of our people has been demonstrated to every American citizen during the war as never before. National Unity can be best maintained by the employment of a common vehicle of communication, and this vehicle in the United States, by reason of custom and law, is the English language. This does not mean that a citizen should be able to speak no other language. It does mean, however, That though he be conversant with another language or languages he should be able to make efficient use of the official language of the country and should use the same.

Further, the English language should be the only medium of instruction in all schools of state, weather public, private, denominational or otherwise, and no foreign language should be taught in any school

of grade lower than high school, and if taught it should be as a culture and not as a medium of instruction for other subjects.

While we welcome enlightened and thrifty people to our shores and to all the advantages of free institutions under our representative form of government, this is not with the view, and should not be so interpreted, of enabling them to establish themselves in communities by themselves and thereby maintaining the language and customs of their former country. All should understand that they are welcome to come, but for the purpose of becoming a part of our own people, to learn and use our language, adopt our customs, and become citizens of our common country.

In Testimony Whereof, I have here unto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the State of Iowa.

Done at Des Moines, this fourth day of December, 1918.

By the Governor: <signed> W. L. Harding

<signed> W. S. Allen, Secretary of State.