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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON CONSERVATION
WEST AUDITORIUM OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT

Secretary Udall, Members of the Senate and the House -- and
Governors -- Secretary Stahr -- Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am too late to welcome you to this Conference which has
been going on now for two days, and I know that I am in no position
to congratulate you upon completing the work because I think that
this Conference is only a step forward in a long journey which began,
fortunately, many years ago and which will continue throughout our
lives.

It is a matter which involves not only all the people of this
nation but in a very real sense all the people of the world. And it
is a source of interest to me that the three Americans in this
century who have been most clearly identified with the maintenance
and development of our natural resources and the conservation of
those resources, particularly in the West, have been three Easterners
-- Gifford Pinchot and the two Roosevelts, both from New York State.

I think that this indicates as well as anything that this is a
national problem, that this is a national challenge and a national
opportunity, and therefore coming as I do from an older part of the
country which has not been overly concerned within its own borders
with resource and management -- Massachusetts -- I think it is most
appropriate to look all the way across the country and indeed around
the world to see how we can improve and develop the resources which
have been given to us through nature.

These tie in, of course, to the questions of our policies
abroad and our aid programs, and I think we are placing, quite
properly, emphasis in our aid more and more
programs upon the development of resources abroad. Whether it may
be how we can teach better water irrigation in Bolivia or build a dam
in Pakistan, more and more we are emphasizing to the people of the
world the great gain that can come to them by the wise use of their
own resources which may be inadequate in many cases but which in
nearly every case are under-developed.

During the conversations which we have had in the last two
days with the President of the Ivory Coast, one of the matters which
he talked about the most was the necessity for a survey to take
place in the southeastern part of his country to find out what
resources are available and how they can be better managed. And
nearly every head of state from what we might call the third world,
Latin America, Africa and Asia, emphasized their desire to associate
with us in a great exploration of their natural resources so that
their people can have a better life.

Our great contribution, it seems to me, that we can make in
our time, as distinct from the contribution of the Roosevelts and
Pinchot which was in a sense the management of resources, their
preservation against their unreasonable exploitation by private
interests, our great contribution in the Fifties and the Sixties, it
seems to me, is applying the great discoveries of science to this
question of conservation, how to get fresh water from salt water at
competitive terms, which has been a matter of particular interest to
Senator Anderson and Congressman Wayne Aspinall, and which can mean
such an extraordinary amount to the people of the West, the Southwest,
and really in a sense to people all around the globe. I have felt
that whichever country can do this in a competitive way will get a
good deal more lasting benefit than those countries that may be even
first in Space.

When we think of such a large percentage of the world's land which supports so few people, how extraordinary an accomplishment it will be when we can bring water to bear on the deserts surrounding the Mediterranean and the Indian Sea and all the rest. And I think that is within our grasp and within our lifetime, perhaps even within our decade, and I think it will be the prime accomplishment of science in improving the life of people in the long history of the world. And that is within, as I have said, our reach, and that deserves the greatest effort by us all.

In addition, we can make the most extraordinary gains in getting food from the ocean depths in the next ten or twenty years. This question of oceanography has also occupied the attention of the Congress and this Administration, how we can double the amount of protein which is available to people around the world. This is a whole new area of conservation, unknown to those who preceded us but which is now coming into public understanding, as a result of your efforts and the efforts of others, and which can make the most profound difference to the lives of people who live rather listlessly because of inadequate proteins.

So harnessing science to conservation is going to be the great contribution of our day, how we can find new uses for minerals, how we can make their use more effective from shale, which we know about in the State of Governor McNichols, how we can make that a competitive fuel and use it, how we can get oil from it. All these are things which science can bring in these days.

So I want to welcome you here and tell you that your visit to Washington stimulates us, stimulates again our interest in this subject, and also we hope that your coming here and talking with responsible governmental officials will stimulate them. I am hopeful that we can move far faster in the more traditional kinds of conservation -- the Wilderness bill, the fund we have set up for the maintenance of the conservation resources. We are going to have 300 million people by the end of this century, that's only about forty years, and we have to begin to make provisions for them. We do not want, for example, this eastern coast to be one gigantic metropolitan area stretching from north of Boston to Jacksonville, Florida, without adequate resources for our people to participate and see some green around them. And I was glad that last year we were able to make progress on the Cape Cod Park. I hope in other States in other key regions that we will do the same. I think that the Governors and Senators from the West and the Southwest recognize that we do not want all of our great parks, all of our great wide-open spaces to be concentrated in those areas of the country where there are the fewest people, even though they represent a great tourist attraction, we want them to be part of their every-day life where they can be reached here from Chicago east where so many people live, where they can be reached within an easy day's driving for a family.

So that I think it is important that we secure this conservation fund, that we can build up the resources of that fund over a period of years, but if we spend that money now and spend it wisely it will be a great economy for us and it will also be a great benefit to those who come after us.

What, in short, I want to emphasize is our debt to you, who have carried this fight for conservation for many years. I don't think there is anything that could occupy our attention with more distinction than trying to preserve for those who come after us this beautiful country which we have inherited. And this is particularly challenging now when so many changes are taking place, in the method of living, of transportation, in the lives of all of us, so that we have the same opportunity, the same challenge, the same necessities as faced Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin Roosevelt way back when they turned their attention to it.

We want this Administration, this government, to be identified with this cause. I can think of no more suitable effort for an

administration which is concerned with progress than to be identified in a sense with past efforts and future efforts to preserve this land and maintain its beauty.

And I hope that what we are able to do here can be exported abroad, not our failures in conservation but our emphasis on it, the wise management of its uses and the inspiration which it can give to our people.

Back many years ago a distinguished French marshal, Marshal Lyautey, asked his gardener to plant a tree, and the gardener said, "Well, this won't flower for a hundred years." And he said, "In that case, plant it this afternoon."

That's the way we all feel about conservation -- it won't come this afternoon, but we ought to get started this afternoon, if it's ever going to come.

Thank you.

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