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REMARKS BY VICE PRESIDENT GERALD R. FORD
EXPO '74
SPOKANE, WASHINGTON
AUGUST 15, 1974

FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY

We are gathered here today as participants in what might be called the First Environmental Congress of the United States.

I have noted with interest the United States National Viewpoint Statement on the Environment which Governor Peterson has presented.

I also am glad to have the considered viewpoints of the citizens and business groups that have been presented here. Their counsel and guidance have added both thrust and balance to the Nation's environmental efforts.

There could be no more fitting place to issue these statements than this unique international exposition on the environment. The subject is a global concern, one that knows no political boundaries.

On behalf of all Americans, I want to commend the public-spirited citizens of Spokane and the State of Washington for holding Expo '74. All who helped plan and finance it, all the business firms and others who are participating in it, have performed a service not only for Americans but for people everywhere by directing attention to environmental problems and solutions.

I also want to commend the other nations of the world who have come here to express their commitment to a cleaner environment. Only by concerted international action can we preserve the precious air and water resources that are the heritage of all mankind.

Of all those who will take note of our National Viewpoint Statement today, no one is listening more attentively than future generations. They have been asking some very pointed questions of us:

Will those who are the temporary passengers on Spaceship Earth in the 20th Century so damage the life support system that they endanger the future of all life?

Or will they preserve and protect it and leave it as they found it, able to sustain the miracle of life in all its many and varied forms? And at

the same time can they provide a balanced economic growth which offers hope for a better life for people everywhere?

During the past five years we have responded to these concerns by launching the greatest environmental cleanup in history.

We have made giant strides in creating the institutional framework, setting the policies, and enacting the programs that will give America the cleanest environment of any industrialized country in the world. We have set tough new standards to improve air and water quality; to control pesticides, noise, and ocean dumping; and to prevent oil spills in our ports and waterways. New park and wilderness areas have been established. Our citizens have been given a better opportunity to contribute to environmental decisions.

In the international field, including specifically the U.S.-Soviet environmental agreement, our country has been a leader in developing cooperative efforts to preserve the environment in areas that transcend national boundaries. We have acted to protect endangered species of wildlife, regulate ocean dumping, and extend the national park concept to the world.

In the past five years, we've made good progress -- more in some areas than others, but we've laid the foundation for advances in almost every field.

The fortunate part is that in this year of 1974 we've got this foundation to build on. Last winter we were confronted with the need to factor a critical new element into the environmental equation: the energy shortage.

Almost overnight, our environmental problems became more complex and the answers more difficult.

The oil embargo demonstrated conclusively that we had to launch a major, long-range effort to increase domestic energy supplies in order to become independent of foreign sources. We have to mine and use more coal, step up drilling for oil and gas on the Outer Continental Shelf, develop our shale oil resources, speed the building of nuclear power stations, and take other measures to ensure adequate energy supplies for both consumers and industry.

But how do we carry out this program and improve environmental quality at the same time? And how do we achieve both in an economy that requires increasing

amounts of energy in order to expand and provide the jobs needed for our growing work force?

We know that the production and use of almost all forms of energy available to us at the present time entail environmental costs or risks of one kind or another. So the answers are not easy. Some of them are costly. But we must all be prepared to bear those costs.

We must provide effective regulation of strip mining.

We must take every precaution to prevent oil spills in offshore drilling.

We must improve the technology to desulphur fuels.

We must control auto emissions.

And we must step up our research on the nuclear fusion process, with its prospects for virtually unlimited energy production.

One of the very best answers is energy conservation. The conservation programs which we launched in the dark days of last winter must be made a permanent part of our daily lives. The lifting of the oil embargo is no license to return to our wasteful ways of the past.

Energy conservation is simply another name for environmental preservation. Every time we turn off a light, save a gallon of gasoline, or cut down on the use of hot water, we also help to preserve our precious environmental resources. We have to remember that when we reduce our auto speed from 65 to 55, we're going to breathe purer air. We're also more likely to arrive at our destination safely, too. The lowered speed limits have resulted in a significant reduction in traffic fatalities. About 1,000 lives have been saved each month since October 1973.

Not only does energy conservation make environmental sense, it also makes economic sense. This applies to business as well as the consumer. Businessmen have learned that improved efficiency in the use of energy can effect substantial savings in their operations. And many firms, from the retail shop on the corner to our largest industrial complexes, have energy conservation programs under way that are proving highly successful.

But we know that in some cases where environmental considerations conflict with other needs and values of society, we have no alternative but to arrive at

reasonable compromises. This doesn't mean that we are changing our unalterable course to improve the environment. And it doesn't mean that we are retreating or giving up the fight.

It does mean stretching out the timetable in some cases. It does mean adjusting some of our long-range goals to accommodate the needs of the immediate present. It does mean some trade-offs.

For my part, I believe in reasonable compromise. I agree with Samuel Johnson that "life cannot subsist in society but by reciprocal concessions." I believe in trying to reconcile extremes. I believe that many of the benefits of society are founded on reasonable compromise by reasonable men and women. We cannot always have the best of all worlds simultaneously. We often have to make hard choices.

In the case of the environment, I believe it is unreasonable to think it can be the controlling factor in every decision. It can carry great weight, and it can play a major role in shaping our decisions, just as it did in the case of the Alaska pipeline. But given the complexities of such problems, single-factor reasoning is out of the question.

Still there are some well-meaning people who see the environmental issue as an "either, or" proposition. They would make the environment the overriding consideration in all our activities, regardless of the consequences, regardless of the sound, middle-ground alternatives that might be worked out.

Some of these people advocate what has become known as the "zero growth" policy. They argue that there are finite limits to the earth's resources, that an environmental doomsday looms on the horizon, and that we should halt, or slow down, all growth, progress, expansion.

I respect those views and the people who hold them.

But will they please explain, under a zero growth philosophy, how we can provide the jobs required for our growing work force? We must generate 17 million new jobs in the next decade. How are we going to do it without vigorous economic growth?

How do we rebuild our cities, modernize our transportation system, and provide better health facilities for our people without the funds that growth

Many things have contributed to our progress. None is more important than what Woodrow Wilson called "the spontaneous cooperation of a free people." We have advanced because one of the great satisfactions of being an American is to act in concert with others to achieve a common end.

But today the complexities of modern life have tended to rob us of this unifying experience. As our problems have become more complicated, we have tended to institutionalize society. We look to government, to organizations, to groups of all kinds, to represent us, make decisions for us, regulate us, handle our affairs in a multitude of ways.

We know that much of this is necessary. Increasingly, things have gotten beyond our power, or knowledge, or ability to cope with.

But we must never lose sight of the fact that the centerpiece of American democracy is the individual. The advances we have made through cooperative endeavors were not made because government decreed that the people cooperate. No government has that power. Cooperation is an expression of self-government by each individual.

Our presence here today is evidence that our people have joined together to achieve a clean, healthy environment and the orderly economic expansion that must accompany this effort.

Our presence also helps to rekindle the American spirit of cooperation and the individual responsibility on which it is founded.

That spirit, once mobilized and on the move, is the most powerful force in this country. We have felt its power in war and in peace, in good times and bad. It has never let us down -- and no matter what challenges we may face in the future, let us put our faith in our readiness as a free people to join together in common purpose and understanding, to achieve our goal of a better America, a better life for all our people.

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