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Office of the Vice President
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REMARKS OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
MAYFLOWER HOTEL
WASHINGTON, D. C.

(AT 2:15 P.M. EST)

Thanks very much, Russ. You are a very good friend and generous in your comments, and I am deeply grateful.

I am also delighted to be here with a former colleague and Governor, Russ Peterson. When Russ Peterson and Ray Shafer, who is another former Governor, and I came in the room, you should have introduced, instead of the Vice President, three former Governors are coming in the room, which is what I felt. That is sort of my security blanket.

(Laughter.)

But I would like to also say that there is no finer leader, no more dedicated public citizen, no more wonderful friend than Senator Jennings Randolph. I just am delighted to be on the platform with him and be on the Water Quality Commission with him and be able to say he is a friend and that I love and admire him. I am delighted.

Now I have to think that only in America could this meeting take place, that this is typical to me of our country. Fifteen years ago this group never would have happened. It wasn't existent, to begin with. But the meeting wouldn't have taken place.

Only because of the extraordinary quality of a free society could our country awaken, and largely and importantly due to the young people, awaken to the realization that we were despoiling our environment in the process of achieving a higher standard of living through industrialization, and then to change psychologically and conceptually our whole approach to our life as a Nation.

Many of us in the sixties made important statements on Earth Day, and that was a very big occasion. We used to have it in the chambers of the Legislature in the assembly, and all the young people were there.

I know that the biggest and most exciting day that our young son spent -- he is 11 now; he was about 7 at the time -- was going out to Central Park with his class with a burlap bag over his shoulder and participating in the cleanup of leftovers from some previous celebration in the park and feeling that he was contributing to cleaning up the earth. This has been imbued in the young people.

Perhaps I should interrupt myself and say I have a very excellent speech here which I filed with the press. I stand on every word that is in it.

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(Laughter.)

If you forgive me, I would rather just talk a little bit about these questions because we are all familiar with them. But I would like to just sort of think out loud for a few moments.

I am not like the Senator who said he was going to make brief remarks. He is a Senator. I just am President of the Senate. I can't speak without unanimous consent.

(Laughter.)

They have given me that twice since I have been here. So you will forgive me if I seem to abuse this captive audience. If I abuse your patience, you will understand why -- because of the frustration on the Hill.

(Laughter and Applause.)

But it is awfully hard for a man who has been Governor for 15 years to sit and listen to these exciting and very important and very distinguished discussions on key issues affecting the future of our country and only being able to rule on parliamentary questions, when you really don't know the parliamentary procedures.

(Laughter.)

And I have to get it from the Parliamentarian. So that I am very happy to be with you on this important subject.

We finished yesterday in Los Angeles with the Domestic Council at the request of the President our sixth hearing on domestic policies and programs in which we went out to the American people.

There is no question that this country is totally dedicated to the preservation and protection and the enhancement of its environment. The polls show and the statistics show that the American people are ready to do what is necessary.

There is some difference between having that very distinct feeling and then translating that into action, and what is necessary is when they say pay for it, which they say they are ready to do, that translated into action is a slightly different question. But the basic intent is there. The basic concern is there.

However, there is also no question but that the American people, as a result of these hearings, want to see the continuation of economic growth. They want to see the production and the development of energy independence in this country.

And they happen to feel, and I happen to agree with them, that these are not incompatible objectives; that we can achieve the quality of life and the preservation of our environment while at the same time achieving energy independence and economic growth. And economic growth is

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essential to jobs.

That is all very well for those who want to say let's have a zero growth. It is a little bit like the fellow who is already on board and says, "Pull up the ladder, mates. We are on board. The hell with the rest of them."

The fact is unless this economy grows, there are not going to be the jobs which are needed right now, 2.8 million additional jobs, and there are not going to be one million five or six hundred or seven hundred thousand additional jobs every year which are going to be required for the young people coming out of school and college.

So that I think with this distinguished gathering here of scientists, industrialists, and leaders in government, we have the ingenuity, we have the technology, we have the scientific imagination to find ways of accomplishing both of these objectives together.

To me this is essential if we are going to preserve the strength and vitality of America, if we are going to meet the needs of the people of this country at home and our responsibilities abroad. So I start from that base.

There are those who differ and have different points of view. But I have to say that if democracy is going to preserve its vitality not only in this country but in other countries of the world, it cannot be separated from growth.

Growth can be achieved with the ecological environmental goals, and this is the challenge and this is the excitement. When we accept it and buckle down to it and get going, I think we are going to find ourselves with a greater sense of purpose and more meaning in our lives as individuals. And I think this is going to give more meaning to the lives of young people. That is what they are looking for. They are not incompatible. And they will give us the basis for going.

Now, the Senator was very generous in making reference to the Water Quality Commission and the review of the 1972 Act. And let's face it, in that we really have all of the problems brought together that this country faces.

Here is an Act that expresses the hopes and the aspirations of the American people, that tries to translate those into meaningful legislation. And our good friend Russ Train here is trying to translate the legislation into action.

He is gone. I don't blame him.

(Laughter.)

He has got a tough job. But he is a tremendous fellow. He is doing the very best he can under the most difficult circumstances.

But this is a period of transition. This is a period of evolution. This is a period of change. There are very few countries in the world that have the capacity to take a totally new orientation and adapt themselves to it. And, of course, there is going to be a period of difficulty and confusion and uncertainty.

But I admire tremendously, as I have already stated, Senator Jennings Randolph because he has the concept of examining for a mid-term correction legislation designed to achieve a national objective and to make it realistic in terms of the difficult problems faced by our society in making these adjustments.

We have been studying this, and the Senate and the House have been very generous in making available funds for these studies. We are getting the statistics and the figures and so forth, and there are some very complex problems.

We will go to hearings on the basis of the staff reports early next year. And then on the basis of those hearings and public reaction around the country we will try and come up with some rather fundamental and simple recommendations for that mid-term correction.

I think that intelligent people, and I happen to be one of those optimists in this country who believe that there are no problems to which there are not answers if people of good will and integrity sit down together honestly and try and find them, and that this society is uniquely capable of that kind of approach because you represent the brains, the intelligence, the creativity, the managerial experience and so forth.

We have here the leadership in terms of labor, in terms of government, and this is a society that does not expect some supreme being to dictate the answers but expects to work them out through this kind of open exchange, based on facts; not saying, my mind is already made up, don't confuse me with the facts, but what are the facts and let's find out how we find the intelligent, sound solutions. This can be done. The public wants it done.

The role of government in relation to private enterprise and to State and local government, in a very interesting way there is now an increasing similarity.

I have to say that as one goes around and listens, there is a disenchantment around this country with bureaucracy and red tape in Washington. In fact, the Governor of the State of Washington summarized a brilliant presentation yesterday in Los Angeles by saying, "Perhaps I can put it very simply," he said. "Just get off our backs."

He said, "We would rather take less money and have more freedom from Washington, because we think we can meet the problems and do the job."

I think this is a very important and fundamental point to keep in mind. I think the very same is true of

private enterprise and individual citizens. These are lessons we have to learn. These are questions which we have to adjust.

This is a period of transition, and it has been exacerbated by the fact that because of the growing interdependence among nations and among levels of government and among government and private enterprise and, at the same time, the accelerating rate of change in the world that is taking place, that people's lives are being discombobulated.

It is more difficult because circumstances are not what they were. Continuities do not continue to exist in the same way. Yet, it is a form of progress.

My very simple reaction is let's shape change so it serves our own end instead of allowing it to overwhelm us. I think we have got that capacity. That is a very simple concept. Let's just understand these forces and let's shape them.

That is what our commission is trying to do. Let's not be afraid of what we are trying to do, but do it intelligently.

So I say this group here in this room has the capacity to make the contributions -- not that there are not difficulties -- to achieve those goals and to do it on a sound basis.

The '77 standards, '83 standards, '85 standards, we have got to study those; what the results are. There are all kinds of complexities.

The government is putting up 75 percent of the money for water. But local governments -- I won't mention any particular cities -- are having a little trouble selling their bonds.

(Laughter.)

Therefore, we see difficulties there. The big corporations can't absorb the costs. Small corporations, individual enterprise, is having a very serious problem.

This is in total conflict with our objective to encourage competition and to encourage the creativity of small enterprise. Half of the factories have gone bankrupt by the stacks of emission standards. They were all small ones.

We had a study made by the commission which has been published so there is no secret about it. There are 70,000 companies. The '77 standards alone about bankruptcy affect 35,000 companies because they can't afford to achieve them.

Okay. Therefore, it is just like some drug that is very helpful in dealing with a problem or illness. But it has side effects. When it has side effects, we ban it and try to find something else.

Maybe we have got to say if this is in the national interest, maybe the Federal Government has a responsibility not

only to municipalities but also, if we want to preserve small enterprise, individual operations maybe, the Federal Government has got some responsibility there.

If they are putting an expense on a small company which it can't afford and yet is in society's interest, I don't know.

These are questions which we have to be open-minded about. But let's face it, this country has been built by creativity and imagination of individuals, free citizens, who then gradually evolve. Maybe they form an association. Maybe they form a corporation.

So that we have a lot of very exciting, very interesting, complex, interrelated factors all coming together around this new and tremendously significant concept.

I just have to say to you this is a tough period. You have moved in to help. You are playing a very major role. But I have total confidence that this country has the capacity, the faith in itself, the confidence and belief in the fundamental principles which gave us the strength to grow to the position of importance that we have enjoyed and the position of opportunity which is increasingly shared by a larger and larger percentage of our citizens; that we have the capacity to meet, absorb, and deal with this problem.

So I welcome this opportunity of being with you. Thank you for the role that each and every one of you is playing. And let's not make it too simple by simply taking one facet of this problem and concentrating on that. Let's have the courage and creativity and imagination to relate the interrelated facets of growth, of jobs, of opportunity, and ecology and do it all, because this is the challenge to America. And I feel America is going to respond positively.

I thank you very much for letting me be with you.

(Applause.)

END (AT 2:30 P.M. EST)