

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 20, 1976

Office of the Vice President
Washington, D.C.

STATEMENT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE CONCLUSION OF
NATIONAL COMMISSION ON WATER QUALITY PUBLIC HEARINGS

RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
Room 2167
WASHINGTON, D. C.

January 20, 1976

I would like to say a few words to all of you here about the steps that will follow these long and most useful hearings.

We have heard from more than 175 witnesses in six days of public hearings this month in five cities across the country. We heard from scores of other interested and concerned citizens in a series of technical meetings we conducted nationwide last year. In addition, literally thousands of organizations and individuals have responded to the Commission's invitation to comment on its work as it has progressed over the last three years. All of these inputs have been very valuable and we are extremely grateful.

It was agreed by the Executive Committee of the Commission at its November meeting -- and later communicated to the members -- that the Commission will issue a final report including recommendations. The Law itself mandates, "A report shall be submitted to the Congress of the results of such investigation and study, together with recommendations." The recommendations will be based on the staff draft report, comments on the draft which we have received from the public, on further analysis of contractor reports, and on input from the 15 Commissioners themselves.

The work of this Commission, which was established by Congress, has been unique. There is not, to my knowledge, any precedent in history for a study of the long-range ramifications of an Act of Congress, such as we have undertaken. It has involved nearly three years of pioneering study by a hard working and talented staff of more than 70, headed by Frederick J. Clarke, the Executive Director, and Joe G. Moore, Jr., the Program Director. It has called on the dedication of 15 Commissioners, ten from the Congress and five appointed by the President. It has called on the best thinking of more than 100 contractors. The importance with which Congress viewed the Commission's work is indicated by the \$17 million it appropriated for the study.

We have come to the point where, after the public record closes February 6, we will be ready to prepare our report embodying conclusions and recommendations to the Congress. I am asking each of the Commissioners to submit his views and suggestions regarding conclusions and recommendations.

I believe what we finally recommend will be very useful to the Congress, and especially to those new members who have come to the Congress since this very important Act was passed into law in 1972.

We have a tremendous opportunity to help shape the "mid-course correction," and to mold an action in an important area of our lives -- the environment.

I commend and thank the countless numbers of devoted and concerned American citizens who, by their verbal and written testimony, have helped us in this important effort.

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