

AN ENVIRONMENTAL AGENDA FOR THE 70's

Speech by Senator Gaylord Nelson on the opening day of the Second Session of the 91st Congress, Washington, D. C., January 19, 1970:

Mr. President, in the nearly forty years since Franklin D. Roosevelt said in his first Innaugural Address that "this great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper," our economy has soared to levels that no one in the 1930's could have imagined. In these past four decades we have become the wealthiest nation on earth by almost any measure of production and consumption.

As the economic boom and the post war population explosion continued to break all records, a national legend developed: With science and technology as its tools, the private enterprise system could accomplish anything.

We assumed that, if private enterprise could turn out more automobiles, airplanes, and TV sets than all the rest of the world combined, somehow it could create a transportation system that would work. If we were the greatest builders in the world, we need not worry about our poor and about the planning and building of our cities.... Private enterprise with enough technology and enough profit would manage that just fine.

In short, we assumed that, if private enterprise could be such a spectacular success in the production of goods and services, it could do our social planning for us, too, set our national priorities, shape our social system, and even establish our individual aspirations.

In fact, I am sure most can recall the famous words of Charles Wilson back in the mid-50's, when he said, "What's good for the country is good for General Motors, and vice versa."

In the 1960's the era of fantastic achievement marched on to levels unprecedented in the history of Man. It was the decade when Man walked on the moon--when medical magic transplanted the human heart--when the computer's mechanical wizardry became a part of daily life--and when, instead of "a chicken in every pot," the national aim seemed to be two cars in every garage, a summer home, a color television set, and a vacation in Europe.

From the small farmers and small merchants of the last century, we had become the "consumer society," with Science and Technology as the "New Testament" and the Gross National Product as the Holy Grail.

One might have thought we would have emerged triumphantly from the 1960's with a shout: "Bring on the next decade."

We have not. For, in addition to the other traumatic national and international events, the 1960's have produced another kind of "top of the decade" list. It has been a decade when the darkening cloud of pollution seriously began degrading the thin envelope of air surrounding the globe; when pesticides and unrestricted waste disposal threatened the productivity of all the oceans of the world; when virtually every lake, river and watershed in America began to show the distressing symptoms of being overloaded with polluting materials.

These pivotal events have begun to warn the Nation of a disturbing new paradox: The mindless pursuit of quantity is destroying--not enhancing--the opportunity to achieve quality in our lives. In the words of the American balladeer, Pete Seeger, we have found ourselves "standing knee deep in garbage, throwing rockets at the moon."

Cumulatively, "Progress--American Style" adds up each year to 172 million tons of smoke and fumes, seven million junked cars, 20 million tons of paper, 48 billion cans, and 28 billion bottles.

It also means bulldozers gnawing away at the landscape to make room for more unplanned expansion, more leisure time but less open space in which to spend it, and so much reckless progress that we face even now a hostile environment.

As one measure of the rate of consumption that demands our resources and creates our vast wastes, it has been estimated that all the American children born in just one year will use up 200 million pounds of steel, 9.1 billion gallons of gasoline, and 25 billion pounds of beef during their lifetimes.

To provide the electricity for our air conditioners, a Kentucky hillside is strip-mined. To provide the gasoline for our automobiles, the ocean floor is drilled for oil. To provide the sites for our second homes, the shore of a pristine lake is subdivided.

The unforeseen--or ignored--consequences of an urbanizing, affluent, mobile, more populous society have poisoned, scarred, and polluted what once was a beautiful land "from sea to shining sea."

It is the laboring man, living in the shadows of the spewing smokestacks of industry, who feels the bite of the "disposable society." Or the commuter inching in spurts along an expressway. Or the housewife paying too much for products that begin to fall apart too soon. Or the student watching the University building program destroy a community. Or the black man living alongside the noisy, polluted truck routes through the central city ghetto.

There is not merely irritation now with the environmental problems of daily life--there is a growing fear that what the scientists have been saying is all too true, that man is on the way to defining the terms of his own extinction.

Today it can be said that there is no clear air left in the United States. The last vestige of pure air was near Flagstaff, Arizona, but it disappeared six years ago.

Today it can also be said that there is no river or lake in the country that has not been affected by the pervasive wastes of our society. On Lake Superior, the last clean Great Lake, a mining company is dumping 60,000 tons of iron ore process wastes a day directly into the lake.

Tomorrow? Responsible scientists have predicted that accelerating rates of air pollution could become so serious by the 1980's that many people may be forced on the worst days to wear breathing helmets to survive outdoors.

It has also been predicted that in 20 years Man will live in domed cities.

Dr. S. Dillon Ripley, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, believes that in 25 years somewhere between 75 and 80 per cent of all the species of living animals will be extinct.

Dr. Paul Ehrlich, eminent California ecologist, and many other scientists predict the end of the oceans as a productive resource within the next 50 years unless pollution is stopped. The United States provides an estimated one-third to one-half of the industrial pollution of the sea. It is especially ironic that, even as we pollute the sea, there is hope that its resources can be used to feed tens of millions of hungry people.

As in the Great Depression, America is again faced with a crisis that has to do with material things--but it is an entirely different sort of dilemma. In effect, America has bought environmental disaster on a national installment plan: Buy affluence now and let future generations pay the price. Trading away the future is a high price to pay for an electric swizzle stick--or a car with greater horsepower. But then, the environmental consequences have never been included on the label.

It is a situation we have gotten into, not by design, but by default. Somehow, the environmental problems have mushroomed upon us from the blind side--although, again, the scientists knew decades ago that they were coming.

What has been missing is the unity of purpose, forged out of a threat to our national health or security or prestige, that we so often seem to have found only during world war.

But there is now, I think, a great awakening underway. We have begun to recognize that our security is again threatened--not from the outside, but from the inside--not by our enemies, but by ourselves. As Pogo quaintly put it, "We have met the enemy and they is us."

A Gallup Poll taken for the National Wildlife Federation last year revealed that fifty-one per cent of all persons interviewed were deeply disturbed about the grim tide of pollution.

Growing student environmental concern is a striking new development. A freshman college student attitude poll, conducted last fall by the American Council on Education, found that 89.9 per cent of all male freshmen believed the federal government should be more involved in the control of pollution. And a Gallup Poll published in late December found that the control of air and water pollution is fast becoming a new student cause, with students placing this issue sixth on a list of areas where they felt changes must be made.

Other national and local polls, the rising citizen attendance at public hearings on polluters, the letters that are pouring into Congressional offices--all indicate a vast new concern.

As a dramatic indication of the degree the new citizen concern has reached Congress, a daily average of 150 constituent requests on environmental

questions is coming into the Legislative Reference Service, the research arm of Congress, from Members of Congress. This is a request rate second only to that for crime.

In the Congressional Record, the amount of environmental material inserted last year by Senators and Congressmen was exceeded only by material on the issue of Vietnam.

Congress last year took the major initiative of appropriating \$800 million in Federal water pollution control funds--nearly four times the request of the present and previous Administrations.

And environmentalists across the country have been heartened by the reports that the President will devote major attention to the environmental crisis in his State of the Union message later this week. All conservationists applaud the President's interest and commitment.

In short, I believe that today we are at a watershed in the history of the struggle in this country to save the quality of our environment.

With the massive new coalition of interests that is now forming, which is including the urbanite and the student, it is possible to wage war on our environmental problems and win. In any such effort the continued commitment of millions of people is the most essential resource of all.

But, lest anyone be misled or caught unaware, this war will be lost before it is begun if we don't bring other massive resources to it as well. A victory will take decades and tens of billions of dollars. Just to control pollution, it will take \$275 billion by the year 2000. Although that sounds like a lot of money, it will be spent over the next 30 years and is equivalent to the Defense expenditure for the next four years.

More than money, restoring our environment and establishing quality on a par with quantity as a goal of American life will require a reshaping of our values, sweeping changes in the performance and goals of our institutions, national standards of quality for the goods we produce, a humanizing and redirection of our technology, and greatly increased attention to the problem of our expanding population.

Perhaps, most of all, it will require on the part of the people a new

assertion of environmental rights and the evolution of an ecological ethic of understanding and respect for the bonds that unite the species Man with the natural systems of the planet.

The ecological ethic must be debated and evolved by individuals and institutions on the terms of Man's interdependence with nature. Institutions such as our churches and universities could be of important assistance in providing increased understanding of these ethical considerations.

Such an ethic, in recognizing the common heritage and concern of men of all nations, is the surest road to removing the mistrust and mutual suspicions that have always seemed to stand in the way of world peace.

American acceptance of the ecological ethic will involve nothing less than achieving a transition from the consumer society to a society of "New Citizenship"--a society that concerns itself as much with the well being of present and future generations as it does with bigness and abundance. It is an ethic whose yardstick for progress should be: Is it good for people?

American college students--thousands of whom are now actively planning a Teach-In on the Crisis of the Environment April 22 on hundreds of campuses--are in the forefront in expressing the terms on which we will need to meet this critical challenge.

Students, scientists, and many others are saying that we must reject any notion that Progress means destroying Everglades National Park with massive airport development--or that it is Progress to use the American public as an experimental laboratory for artificial sweeteners, food additives or other products without understanding the "technological backlash" that may come from their unmeasured dangers--or that it is Progress to fill hundreds of square miles of our bays and coastal wetlands, destroying natural habitat for thousands of species of fish and wildlife, polluting our waters, and in many other ways wreaking havoc with this fragile ecological system in the name of providing new space for industry, commerce and subdivisions.

There is a great need, and growing support, for the introduction of new values in our society--where bigger is not necessarily better--where slower can be faster--and where less can be more.

This attitude must be at the heart of a nationwide effort--an Agenda for the 1970's--whereby this country puts Gross National Quality above Gross National Product.

AN ENVIRONMENTAL AGENDA FOR THE 1970's

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

The first item I suggest for this agenda will be the introduction of an amendment to the U.S. Constitution which will recognize and protect the inalienable right of every person to a decent environment.

In its degradation of the quality of American life--in its danger to the future of Man himself--I believe the environmental crisis is the greatest single threat to our pursuit of those inalienable rights--Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness--which we have recognized as a society.

The amendment will be brief. It will state: "Every person has the inalienable right to a decent environment. The United States and every State shall guarantee this right."

Now, the tragedy is that the citizen has little clear legal or explicit Constitutional avenue to protect the sensitivities and well being of himself, his family or his community from environmental assault.

Far too frequently, the citizen finds himself left with no remedy in the face of the pollution of a lake which belongs to the public or the poisoning of the air which he must breathe, or the shattering din which is imposed upon him with no choice.

This is because in the development of our Anglo-Saxon common law, our protections have traditionally focused on economic or personal injury, with the subordination of other damages that we are finding are just as much a threat to the quality of life.

Although I believe we must explicitly establish environmental right and protection as a fundamental doctrine of our society, it is clear that any such right and the terms of its protection must be enumerated in statutes at the Federal and state level and further defined in the courts.

I will introduce this constitutional amendment within the next few days.

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As the second item for an agenda, I propose immediate action to rid America in the 1970's of the massive pollution from five of the most heavily-used products of our Affluent Age. For each of these products, I am convinced that It Can Be Done--with firm Federal action to assure it.

THE FIVE AREAS ARE:

INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINE

Phase out the internal combustion automobile engine by January 1, 1978, unless it can meet national emission standards by that time.

I have already introduced this legislation--the Low Emission Vehicle Act. It is imperative that a near pollution-free automobile be developed and put into use as quickly as possible.... Its exhausts are causing up to 90 per cent of the air pollution problem in some areas of the nation.

This proposal would also initiate a Federal Research and Subsidy Program to find an alternative to the internal combustion engine or improve the performance of existing alternatives.

ELIMINATE HARD PESTICIDES

Eliminate persistent, toxic pesticides--the "chlorinated hydrocarbons"--by 1972.

Because of the grave, world-wide environmental dangers from these long-lasting, poisonous compounds, this step was proposed as a national goal seven

years ago by the President's Science Advisory Committee. There is growing agreement that the persistent pesticides are expendable, because of less persistent substitutes and the development of other means of pest control.

A recent decision by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to eliminate all non-essential uses of DDT by the end of this year was a step forward. Yet the pesticide industry's continued unwillingness to initiate or accept reform, coupled with the Agriculture Department's historic hesitancy to improve pesticide regulation, makes it mandatory that Congress set a deadline on banning the persistent pesticides.

REDUCE DETERGENT POLLUTION

Set strict anti-pollution standards on detergents, including a ban on their phosphorous "builders" that have contributed so much to the pollution of our lakes all across the Nation.

Detergents are one of the major pollution problems in the country today. Six years ago I sponsored legislation which prompted an industry changeover to a new ingredient which cut the massive mountains of foam detergents were causing on our waters. Now, another important step is needed: elimination of the detergent's polyphosphate "builders" that pass through sewage treatment systems into our lakes and rivers, stimulating the growth of algae.

Most recently at House committee hearings, scientists testified that non-polluting substitutes for these detergents are now within reach. Industry, however, continues to resist such a move. Congress must act to require the substitution and, in addition, to set national standards on the water eutrophication ability, biodegradability, toxicity, and health effects of detergents.

JET AIRCRAFT POLLUTION

To dramatically reduce pollution from jet aircraft, establish a deadline of December, 1972, for the installation of smokeless combustors on their engines.

Industry has produced a combustor that makes jet engines smokeless and significantly cuts their other pollution. At the rate the airlines have agreed to install these devices, it would take until the middle of the decade to make the changeover. It will soon be possible to install the combustors at the rate of 200 a month, which would accomplish the changeover in two years, but the industry is refusing to do so.

With jets in the country pouring 78 million pounds of pollutants into the atmosphere each year, there is every reason for the combustors to be installed as quickly as possible. Congress should act to require this and to provide Federal assistance for research to make the combustors even more effective and easier to install.

Aircraft noise is another area which is in need of urgent action. As just one example, the supersonic transport plane, when flying at a height of 65,000 feet, will lay down a path of sonic booms 40 to 50 miles wide. This is a massive intrusion into human life which we cannot tolerate.

ELIMINATE NON-RETURNABLE CONTAINERS

Eliminate bottles, jars, and cans from the American landscape through a combination of effluent charges, development of reusable or degradable containers, and packaging standards.

In the comprehensive solid waste management legislation that has already been introduced in this Congress, provision should be made for standards which will require reusable or degradable consumer product containers, as soon as it is proven technically feasible. In addition, our solid waste control program

should be financed in part by effluent charges paid by industry on packaging that will not degrade or cannot be reused.

It is my conviction that the long run answer to our solid waste problem must be a massive effort to turn our wastes into valuable new products that can be recycled into the economy.

With these five actions, we would be taking great strides toward establishing the principle that industry's responsibilities for the human and environmental effects of its products do not stop at the end of the production line. The only way to assure this is through national laws that establish performance standards, so that products will be tested and environmental and health protections built in before, not after, they reach the market place.

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FAMILY PLANNING

The third item on an agenda for quality of American life should be establishing and protecting the right of every citizen to plan his family. The funds and coordination must be made available for conducting necessary research into population problems and providing family planning services.

The statistics are deeply disturbing. It took until 1850 for the world population to reach one billion. By 1930, 80 years later, that figure had doubled, and by year 2000, the world population is expected to reach 6 to 8 billion. Some ecologists see that population level as the "crash point," beyond which the natural environment will not be able to cleanse and restore itself from the massive pressure of exploitation and pollution.

At the December meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Boston, there was general agreement that the world's optimum population limit has already been passed. Measured in terms of our past performance in protecting our environment, the United States is already overpopulated. If we cannot manage the wastes produced by 200 million people, it will be a catastrophe when we reach 300 million, as predicted within the next 30 years.

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ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATE AGENCY

The fourth item on an agenda for the 1970's must be involving the citizen in environmental decision-making through new mechanisms, including establishment of new channels and forums for public participation, creation of a citizen environmental advocate agency, and creation of an environmental overview committee in Congress.

As a start, industry must consult with the community on the pollution controls needed to protect and enhance the environment. It must make a full disclosure of facts before, not after, the decisions are made that affect the consumer and his environment.

Although it is ironic that it needs to be said, public participation in environmental decision must also be extended to our government. The sorry history is that, through rhetoric, inaction, and compromise with special interests, our public institutions have been accomplices in frittering away the quality of American life.

The infusion of a spirit of advocacy and environmental ombudsmanship is urgently needed at every level of government, and I will propose a citizen environmental advocate agency at the Federal level. This independent office would represent the public interest in matters before every federal department and in the courts.

With strong support, the National Environmental Policy Act recently signed into law and a complementary proposal now pending in Senate-House conference that would provide staff support should be major steps forward in achieving in the White House an independent overview of Federal activities as they affect the American environment. Hopefully, one of the most frequently-used provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act will be the one which makes available to the public the agency reports required where a Federal program or project would significantly affect the environment.

Finally, Congress itself could profit greatly by the establishment of a non-legislative environmental committee that would provide all committees with a continuing assessment of the state of the environment and of Federal environmental activities.

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MORATORIUM ON UNDERSEA OIL PRODUCTION

A fifth item on an environmental agenda for the 1970's should be the launching of a broad-scale effort to halt the pollution of our sea. Municipalities and industries must be required to halt their wholesale dumping of wastes into the ocean environment. And we should declare a moratorium on new leases or permits for oil production and other activities on the undersea Outer Continental Shelf until criteria are established for its protection.

The oceans, man's greatest asset are being degraded at an alarming rate, hurling us toward world-wide catastrophe. In addition to dramatic oil pollution incidents, there are the less visible forms of pollution--from pesticides that are accumulating in the sea and from raw industrial wastes and sewage. In the United States, some 27 million tons of wastes were dumped at sea from barges and ships in 1968 alone.

These activities have their most immediate effect on our very limited continental shelves, the most productive area of the sea. If this sensitive environment is destroyed, sea life will rapidly diminish and a major source of food protein will be lost in a world that is searching for resources to feed its exploding population.

In a glimpse into the future, the recent report of the President's Panel on Oil Spills predicts we can expect a Santa Barbara-scale pollution incident once a year by 1980, if offshore oil development continues at the present rate.

To meet this problem, Congress should declare a moratorium on further Outer Continental Shelf development until the ground rules are established. Recreation, aesthetics, fishery resources, and natural ecology must not be sacrificed in the interest of mineral and other development.

A high-level commission should be established and given the two-year task of conducting an inventory of our offshore resources and recommending criteria by which we can achieve a harmonious relationship with the ocean environment. Upon the establishment of such criteria, the moratorium would be lifted.

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ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The sixth item on the agenda should be the establishment of an environmental education program which will make the environment and man's relationship to it a major interdisciplinary subject at every level of public education.

No country can maintain its vigilance in protecting its environment without a broad education for understanding of Man's relationship to his land, air, water and to other living creatures.

To help achieve this, I introduced the Environmental Quality Education Act in November. A companion bill was introduced in the House. The legislation would provide support for the development of new environmental education

curricula from pre-school through college, adult education, and community programs.

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TRANSPORTATION FOR PEOPLE

As a seventh item for an environmental agenda, we must utilize the billions of dollars a year that could be made available on completion of the Interstate Highway System to provide new transportation alternatives, including mass transit, in our polluted, congested, highway-choked urban areas.

This year, about \$3.3 billion of the \$4.4 billion administered by the Highway Trust Fund will be spent on the Federal Interstate System, which is scheduled for completion in the mid-70's. Instead of being used to lay new blankets of asphalt and concrete from coast to coast in another round of massive highway building, as has already been suggested, the Interstate Highway portion of the fund that could be made available in 1975 must be put to work alleviating the gargantuan transportation problems of our American cities. A major emphasis of those funds should be the provision of adequate mass transit systems, as well as developing and refining other transportation alternatives.

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NATIONAL LAND USE POLICY

As an eighth item, a national policy on land use must be delineated and implemented that will halt the chaotic, unplanned combination of urban sprawl, industrial expansion, and air, water, land and visual pollution that is seriously threatening the quality of life of major regions of the nation.

The nationwide land use policy must comprise and effectively use all the tools available to Federal, state and local governments to establish rational planning, management and controls.

Such a policy must deal with the massive strip mining operations that are ravaging and polluting vast acreages; the reckless draining and filling of wetlands that are destroying wildlife habitat and polluting vital coastal and inland areas; the helter-skelter development of our coastal and inland lakes shoreline that is eliminating a vital national asset from any future public use; the widespread land erosion in urbanizing areas that is silting and polluting our rivers and lakes; and the disruption of communities and destruction of marshlands and other scenic and naturally valuable areas that are brought about by our gigantic highway program where building in the fastest, cheapest "point to point" fashion has invariable been the rule, despite the consequences.

I should add that an integral part of our land resource and environmental heritage is the national park, lakeshore and seashore system that we have established over the past decades. In this area, we have fallen tragically short of carrying out the Congressional intention of providing \$200 million a year for the Land and Water Conservation Fund through 1973. Land purchase for our national parks and other Federal wildlife and recreation areas is critically dependent on this fund. Yet for last year, only \$124 million was sought and appropriated. Meanwhile, Outer Continental Shelf oil revenues intended to bring the fund to a \$200 million a year level have been accumulating in trust year after underfunded year, unappropriated and unspent.

It is urgent that this year we provide not only the annually authorized \$200 million, but the additional \$164.5 million in Outer Continental Shelf funds now sitting in trust.

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A NATIONAL MINERALS AND RESOURCES POLICY

A ninth item must be the establishment of a national minerals and resources policy.

Vital resources are already being exhausted because of our fantastic rate of consumption and our indiscriminate national waste. In addition, the extraction of our natural resources for our raw material has more often than not been done in such a way as to wreak violent and lasting environmental destruction.

A part of this national policy must be replacing the U.S. Mining Law of 1872 with a modern system of mineral leasing. As it is now, the 1872 law is a major obstacle to wise and effective land management in a world where the best kind of multiple use management is imperative. The present policy, based on that antiquated law, gives blind priority to mineral resources and makes any consideration of wildlife, recreation, esthetic or urban land values impossible. I have introduced legislation to establish a modern mineral leasing system, and a companion bill has been introduced in the House.

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NATIONAL AIR AND WATER QUALITY POLICY

As a tenth and highly important item, America must establish a national air and water quality policy and commitment which will restore and enhance the quality of these critical natural resources. Our dirtied rivers and poisoned air are dramatic evidence of the desperate need to take action on a national, unprecedented scale.

The full funding of present pollution control programs--closing the environmental money gap--is a fundamental and urgent requirement of a national policy. Despite the Congressional initiative last year in Federal water pollution control aid, our national water quality program still faces the danger of total collapse. While the Federal aid has been trickling to the critical municipal sewage treatment program in the millions of dollars, applications for aid from cities and towns across the country are in the billions.

In this perilous situation, it is essential that we appropriate the full authorization of \$1.2 billion in the Federal water pollution control grant program for sewage treatment plants for fiscal 1971. Other means of long range financing are being considered, but we cannot afford a delay in already authorized water quality funding while the alternatives are being debated.

A national air and water quality policy must also dramatically expand our present program of research and development of ways to neutralize, dispose of, and recycle all wastes, and require all governmental units and all industries and municipalities to comply with the highest state of the art in treating their wastes. We must also require that, as new, more effective pollution control equipment is developed, it be installed as a matter of course.

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ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICAL ACTION

The eleventh item on an agenda for the 70's must be the creation of a nonpartisan national environmental political action organization, with state and local organizations providing the foundation.

The organization will give the public the day to day involvement that is essential to achieving environmental solutions.

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CONCLUSION

Our efforts to meet a broad-gauged agenda such as I have outlined above will require a vast increase in spending for environmental programs. At least \$20 to \$25 billion per year over present expenditures is essential. A major portion of this could come from existing sources of revenues by reordering national priorities and diverting funds to environmental programs. New resources must also be tapped.

A radical reduction in the level of our Viet Nam involvement and an elimination of unnecessary defense expenditures will result in substantial savings which could be tapped for environmental programs, among other dramatic needs. Normal economic growth will also produce more revenue which can be earmarked for improving our surroundings.

A casual look at the deterioration that has come about over the past 30 years is a frightening prologue to a disaster of inestimable dimensions if the accelerating rate of the environmental crisis continues.

It is not, however, a trend that cannot be reversed. If we have the will, the environmental challenge can be met. But in doing so, it will take significant modifications in our way of life. It will mark the beginning of a period when all of the institutions of our society--social, political and economic--must readjust their philosophical attitudes towards man's relationship to his environment and all other living creatures.

Our environmental problems are manmade. The solutions must be manmade as well.

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