REMARKS BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR JOHN A. CARVER, JR., BEFORE THE NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON CONSERVATION, SPONSORED BY THE GENERAL BOARD OF CHRISTIAN SOCIAL CONCERNS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH AT 12:00 NOON, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1962, WASHINGTON, D. C.

THE CONSCIENCE OF A CONSERVATIONIST

The Department of the Interior is a land and water managing agency. To you who live in the District of Columbia area, that means the bits and pieces of Federal land making up the National Capital Parks; perhaps week-end trips to Shenandoah National Park's Skyline Drive to see the Spring flowers or Fall tree foliage; Manassas, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, Antietam, Harpers Ferry may be familiar Interior areas for the history buffs among you; and for more and more Americans our Department participates, so to speak, in the once-in-a-lifetime trip to Yellowstone or Grand Canyon.

In the States west of the 100th meridian, an entirely different image of our Department is evoked in your counterpart groups—the seemingly limitless "public domain" grazing or forest lands of Oregon, Nevada, Idaho; dams and reservoirs to serve lush irrigated crop lands and feed giant power generators on the Columbia and the Colorado and on the torrential streams of the sierras; the Indian reservations that make up so much of New Mexico and Arizona, and are found in much of the rest of the West, too; the vastness of the Brooks Range and the Arctic Coast and the workaday reality of a 470-mile railroad in Alaska.

In Samoa and the Trust Islands of the South and Western Pacific, the Interior Department means government; in lovely and equable Virgin Islands and Guam, our Department is the channel and conduit to full participation in the American system.

Vast commercial interests look to us as a sort of governmental service department—coal research, commercial fisheries, oil import administration, Bureau of Mines, Geological Survey—these are some of the organization titles which hint at the kaleidoscopic variety of functions with which the Department of the Interior is engaged.

My own interests are broadly denominated as public land management—the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Office of Territories, the Alaska Railroad, are my bureaus, as they say in government.

This covers the spectrum—from government itself in the territories, to the specialized proprietary function of running a railroad.

We are a government of laws, not of men. In a broad, and very real sense, all of us in the Department are administering laws. These laws, hammered out on
the anvil of a functioning free government are based upon ethical concepts. The Congress has intended to "do right" by the land and water and by the people--Indians and dependent groups in the territories.

But the administration of responsibilities so vast and so varied must also bear an ethical burden. Congress's intent to "do right" must come out that way. The touchstone of much of resource management legislation is the key phrase "In the discretion of the Secretary..." or "as the public interest shall require."

So whether we are in "land management", in "water and power", in "minerals", or in "fish and wildlife", all of us in the Department of the Interior look upon ourselves as "conservationists". We think of ourselves as a "Department of Conservation."

And because we have a Secretary in Stewart Udall who thinks, and reads, and feels strongly this conservationist concept, many of us are inspired by him to seek out and think out our own articulation of what it means to be a conservationist."

When Mr. Udall and the President brought Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg to Washington, we were refreshed; we were inspired to rummage through our own forgotten books for the eloquence of simplicity, the forcefulness of insight, the wisdom of the poets and philosophers.

Thus it is that I welcome the opportunity to pinch-hit for Secretary Udall before your group today--it gave me an opportunity to think about conservation as an ethical concept, and to talk with you about it.

And, as usual, I found that others have stated it so well that I can do little better than share with you the results of my researches, confessing the while that the research has meant more to me than hearing its results can possibly mean to you.

Listen to Aldo Leopold in his "Sand County Almanac":

"Conservation", he says, "is a state of harmony between men and land."

He develops the "ethical sequence." The first ethics dealt with the relation between individuals--the Ten Commandments. Then, as a developing sequence, philosophically the differentiation of social from anti-social conduct of the individual with a society--the Golden Rule is an expression of the ethical relation of an individual to society; the democratic idea is an expression of the ethical relation of a society to the individual.

The unrealized sequence, in Leopold's view, is an ethical aspect of man's relation to land. Although individual thinkers since the days of Ezekiel and Isaiah have asserted that the despoliation of land is wrong, society, he thinks, has not affirmed the belief. "There is as yet no ethic dealing with man's relation to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it... The land-relation is still strictly economic, entailing privileges but not obligations..."
"The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.

"This sounds simple: do we not already sing our love for and obligation to the land of the free and the home of the brave? Yes, but just what and whom do we love? Certainly not the soil, which we are sending helter-skelter downriver. Certainly not the waters, which we assume have no function except to turn turbines, float barges, and carry off sewage. Certainly not the plants, of which we exterminate whole communities without batting an eye. Certainly not the animals, of which we have already extirpated many of the largest and most beautiful species. A land ethic of course cannot prevent the alteration, management, and use of these 'resources,' but it does affirm their right to continued existence, and, at least in spots, their continued existence in a natural state.

"In short, a land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such."

A distinguished anthropologist, Alexander Spoehr, who has studied intensively the areas of the Pacific which my Department administers, has furnished to me the idea that Charles Darwin is the spiritual progenitor of Aldo Leopold. Darwin dwelt with man's place in nature. Michael Faraday, Darwin's contemporary, introduced us to the inanimate forces and their potential to be harnessed for men's needs--the world felt and is still dominated by the excitement attending the accomplishment and application of the physical sciences. Faraday put man in space, and he has seemed to have won the laurel over Darwin--who thinks of man as a part of a "natural" environment when he is spinning about the earth in a capsule environment of his own creation?

The American conservation movement has been described as a minority reaction to the prevailing urban point of view.

Aldo Leopold had a bleak outlook in 1948:

"It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value. By value, I of course mean something far broader than mere economic value; I mean value in the philosophical sense.

"Perhaps the most serious obstacle impeding the evolution of a land ethic is the fact that our educational and economic system is headed away from, rather than toward, an intense consciousness of land. Your true modern is separated from the land by many middlemen, and by innumerable physical gadgets. He has no vital relation to it; to him it is the space between cities on which crops grow. Turn him loose for a day on the land, and if the spot does not happen to be a golf links or a 'scenic' area, he is bored stiff. If crops could be raised by hydroponics instead of farming, it would suit him very well. Synthetic substitutes for wood, leather, wool, and other natural land products suit him better than the originals. In short, land is something he has 'outgrown.' . . .

"The case for a land ethic would appear hopeless but for the minority which is in obvious revolt against these 'modern' trends."
The evidence of the revolt mounts. Consider the words of the ORRRC report, delivered to the President day before yesterday: "When an American looks for the meaning of his past, he seeks it not in ancient ruins, but more likely in mountains and forests, by a river, or at the edge of the sea. The tale is one of discovery, or encounter, of hard-won settlement."...

"Thoreau reaffirmed its [the outdoors] values in words that still compel: industrialization, he believed, could blight us, and he asked: 'Why should we not ** have our national preserves ** for inspiration and our own true recreation? Or shall we, like villains, grub them all up, poaching on our own national domains?'

"This mainstream of thought has continued to have its champions through the years. John Muir spoke for the mountains and the wilderness in a voice that moved even the least sympathetic. Theodore Roosevelt talked not so softly about the disappearance and abuse of natural resources and left as heirlooms some of the biggest sticks to enforce natural conservation policy. Carl Schurz, the German-American Civil War general and Interior Secretary, tried to halt the uncontrolled exploitation of federally owned forests and paved the way for Gifford Pinchot to carve out the national forest system. Stephen T. Mather gave up a prospering business career to make the national park system a reality. The list is a long one; these are only a few of the men who, with their supporters and disciples, kept alive through the years the warning that the American people cannot wander too far from the great outdoors without losing character and strength and orientation."

In our responsibilities for management of the land, we find satisfaction and are inspired by seeking to harmonize the use of the land by man with a respect and reverence for the land. We have a trust for all the people in the management of the land of the West, whether for recreation, for grazing, for mining, for timber production, Man can be both destructive and constructive, and we want a discipline usually call sustained yield management--consumption each year of less raw material taken from earth, sea and air than nature and man together create.

Samuel Ordway put the happiest light possible on our objectives in land management: "Conservation for prosperity appeals to logic also. It is practical all as creative and constructive. It is cooperative and convivial as well as itsus. It is consonant with the "joining" instinct and the "do-good" act, and it is respectable. It is educational, social, and political, as well scientific. It benefits the poor and debases no one. It links respect for the ve with respect for the sophisticated; love of nature with love of the. It would build, not wreck. It would save, not destroy. It lifts man's beyond himself. What more can man ask of an ethic?"

somehow, I feel that Aldo Leopold would not be satisfied by Sam Ordway.

1 the Marshall Islands, where, as I've said, we have a trust
2ity for people, we introduce a money economy--development of the copra
3marked change in their attitude toward nature and the land. For this
4ion, the limits of this responsibility present a basi.
For our national defense purposes, we take land of these island peoples--maybe a whole island. If we fail to take into account that in their system land is not sold, and that our concepts of ownership of real property are meaningless to them we are not acting to as high an ethical standard as we might.

The answers aren't easy. There are, perhaps, no answers at all--all problems don't have solutions.

But it helps to think hard--to formulate, if you will, each his own "conscience of a conservationist."