Remarks by Assistant Secretary of the Interior John A. Carver, Jr., before the winter meeting of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, January 21, 1963, Alexandria, Virginia.

An invitation to speak tickles the vanity, and because this is so, acceptances sometimes precede rather than follow a realistic analysis of whether the speaker has something to say. A friend who works with my wife in the vineyard of community projects wrote her a note when my name appeared in the public announcement of this banquet session: "What," she asked, "does your husband know about water?"

It is true that I am the Assistant Secretary for Public Land Management; and we have an Assistant Secretary for Water and Power.

It is true that I am a native of the arid West, and that I am particularly concerned with the stewardship of a hundred million or so acres of public domain land where the rainfall is less than 20 inches annually.

Managing that land for its potential for forage and other values has taught me that water is the life-giving ingredient; that an accurate term for our activities in the parched West is "arid land hydrology."

But I shan't try to palm myself as an expert, by the legerdemain of semantics. Rather I would like to explore the Potomac with you as a river of peculiar and particular concern to the federal government, and
tell you a little of how the activities of one Department -- Interior --
touch upon it.

Every schoolboy accords the Potomac a special dignity as a national
river. John Smith's delightfully incompetent forays upon it; George
Washington's home and his tomb on its banks; the national capital city
astride it at least originally -- it is simply accepted that the
federal government has a special role.

The federal government is not just a fabric of duties and responsi-
bilities detailed in endless and intricate organization charts. Life and
color and action come to our town with the people whose names fill the top
boxes on these charts -- or their wives. Thus a Secretary of Labor and an
Attorney General turn their attentions to sprucing up Pennsylvania Avenue;
even in politics, culture displaces the "dinner" in the $100 dinner; a
Congressman's near accident remolds the traffic pattern at a busy
Washington intersection; William Jennings Bryan -- his statue, that is --
gets spirited out of town.

So it is with our river. Cabinet members, Supreme Court Justices,
Senators, and plain bureaucrats, have strong feelings about our river. Happily these feelings are generally protective, for there is little doubt that their collective influence is a major and unique force in Potomac planning. The location of our bridges and highways is less likely to be left to the engineering experts alone here than in Cincinnati, I'll wager.

The Potomac has never lacked for "planning", nor for intensive analysis. A reexamination of the monumental report of Morris Cooke, Lee Olds, Gil White, et al, "Ten Rivers in America's Future," now twelve years and more old, prompts a bleak thought or two about the gap between problem-analysis and problem-solution. Therein was a discussion of conflict between plans for storage reservoirs and interest of local groups in preventing land inundation; between water development and highways; and between water developments and park, parkway and recreational uses.

These were optimistically called "Apparent Conflicts". They are still apparent, and I doubt that the next dozen years will achieve much more resolution than the last -- unless, of course, maintenance of the status quo is resolution.
Before the automobile had achieved much acceptance, the Senate's McMillan Report of 1902 on the Improvement of the Park System of the District of Columbia attempted a few choices. Development of a stream-level parkway through Rock Creek gorge, then a dumping ground for trash and refuse, was held to be superior to filling in the valley over a masonry culvert and the construction of a boulevard and city lots on the new level, not on aesthetic but on economic grounds. "If the Government is not to go heavily into real-estate speculation in competition with the landowners of the District, the cost of the culvert project becomes so enormous as to be utterly out of the question," the report pointed out.

In this context, what of the Interior Department's connection with the Potomac?

As the manager for the people of the United States of a lot of land within the basin, the Department has what might be called a proprietary interest. The National Capital Region of the Park Service administers 41,000 acres in Virginia, Maryland, and the District, to which must be added 75,000 acres of Shenandoah National Park within the Potomac drainage,
and five or six thousand acres total in historical parks like Gettysburg, Bull Run, Antietam, Harpers Ferry, and the like. This is watershed land, much of it a part of the river environment, such as the C & O Canal. As a land manager for the land owners, the people, we react like any other land owner. A pure river is a part of the value of the land.

Akin to our proprietary attitude based upon direct land stewardship is our near-proprietary attitude about the historical and scenic values of the area, whether ours or someone else's to manage. We are custodians of the values, in a sense, whether there is a land ownership interest in the United States or not. We feel as strongly about state and regional parks, and about national forest land and open space land, as we do about the areas committed to our own management. Mt. Vernon is not federally-maintained, but our concern for its values is real. And we can be as ambivalent as the next, in this proprietary role. While we favor sewage treatment plants, we can be pretty cross about one in a given location.

More about Mockley Point, later.

We have several bureaus whose scientific or program interest in the basin is active. Most notable is the Geological Survey, that venerable
citadel of erudition on the subject of water. Working with appropriated funds, and with contributions from state and other local government bodies, Survey is a major contributor to the basic hydrologic knowledge necessary for planning. A 1907 Survey publication, *The Potomac River Basin*, starts out with the comment that "hardly a river basin in the country is of more importance", a bureaucratic incantation still much in vogue. But even a half century ago, most of the considerations currently before you were of concern. They made a complete reconnaissance with respect to sources of pollution, a study of the prevalence of typhoid in Washington and other places, and investigated quality of surface water.

*Both* our Bureau of Sport Fisheries, and *our* Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, have both independent and cooperative activities on the Potomac. Shellfish studies by Commercial Fisheries have a bearing on that valuable resource of our river. Cooperative studies of striped bass in the lower Potomac are carried on with Virginia and Maryland. Sport Fisheries works actively with the Corps of Engineers and with state fish and game departments on the basin-wide studies with respect to fish and wildlife resources, to help to minimize detrimental effects of development activities, to enhance the recreational values, and to try to measure the benefits
On a broader governmental scale we deal with the Corps of Engineers, the Commerce Department's Bureau of Public Roads, the Metropolitan Council of Governments, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and the telephone, gas and electrical utilities.

In Maryland, the Park Service National Capital Region is a pen pal of the State Roads Commission, the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, the Montgomery County Council, the Prince Georges County Commissioners, the City of Rockville and the Rockville Planning Commission.

Over on this side of the river, our associations are with the Northern Virginia Regional Planning and Economic Development Commission, the State Department of Highways, the Alexandria and Falls Church City Councils and Planning Commissions, the Arlington County Board and Planning Commission, the Boards of Supervisors and Planning Commissions of Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William Counties, and the Fairfax County Park Authority.

This is only a sampling. The entire list would challenge the vocal powers of Danny Kaye.

Those general classifications -- park and historic value interest, proprietary interest, scientific interest and recreational staff responsi-
bilities -- cover most of the Department's involvements in the management of the National Capital and environs.

I started by talking of our membership in the community. You and I, institutionally, are members of the They Club, the ones meant when the complaint is that 'They are doing this to me' or 'They can't do that to me.'

I suppose I have been guilty of committing the same sweeping generality when they, identities not specified further, have done something that offends my own sense of fair play. A fair-minded man is one who shares my bias, of course, and it hurts me when they can't recognize the justice of my case.

It is helpful to the soul and the ulcer to recall occasionally that the faceless Theys might by some chance also be good citizens and even members of our church and PTA. All too often the distinction between a dimbulb-bureaucrat and a valuable public servant is whether we stand together on an issue or on different sides of the fence. Try Three Sisters Bridge as a starter.

Mockley Point was mentioned earlier and it serves as a specimen of the controversies we are engaged in hereabouts. For the benefit of you who live a distance from here and haven't heard of it, I should explain that Mockley
Point is a stretch of land on the Maryland riverfront across the Potomac from Mount Vernon. And for those who may not be aware of Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall's ardor for conservation in general, and park scenery in particular, I should explain that he was horrified to learn that a water and sewer agency proposed to build a sewage treatment plant on Mockley Point, clearly visible from Mount Vernon, as our park technicians pointed out with quivering fingers, and a shattering intrusion of smokestacks and other physical works upon the vista of greenery enjoyed by millions of Mount Vernon visitors on the Virginia side. As a result of the outcry led by Secretary Udall, with powerful aid from conservationists across the nation, a sympathetic Congress appropriated funds for Departmental acquisition of the property. The treatment plant will be constructed at another location. Two non-profit organizations have agreed to donate other waterfront land to the Department and individual property owners in the neighborhood are signing scenic easements, but the Department must still buy other land to insure that the historic view is protected. Our budget requests just submitted to Congress include $724,600 to complete the job of acquiring the necessary land.
On this side of the river, about two miles south of this hotel on the waterfront side of the Mount Vernon Memorial Parkway, lies Dyke Marsh, a long ribbon of marshland valuable for waterfowl purposes. In 1959 the Congress authorized the Department to acquire certain lands from the owner, a sand and gravel company, in exchange for dredging rights. The transaction is currently back in the news because vigilant wildlife advocates are unhappy with the amount of restoration work being done on the wetlands as compared to the rapidity of the dredging. Under Public Law 86-41, we gave dredging rights to the company for 85 acres, and in return we received a 110-acre tract judged to be comparable in value for wildlife. We also obtained another 150 acres but the company has dredging rights on it for 30 years. There has to be coordination between the public and private parties to insure the best protection possible for waterfowl values. The alertness of citizen groups is a strong stimulus to public employees to remember that what one man calls "something for the birds" another man calls something for the people.

The Capper-Cramton Act of 1930 has been the keystone of efforts to preserve the river's natural scenery in this area. It laid the legislative
foundations for construction of the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

The Act recognized that the parkway route through Alexandria was already
lost for scenic purposes and is just another city street, but the Act has
been a marvelous tool for preserving the Potomac's scenery for 28 miles.

The language of the Act stresses the need for "protection and preservation
of the natural scenery of the gorge and the Great Falls of the Potomac, the
preservation of historic Potomac Canal and the acquisition of that portion
of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal below Point of Rocks."

Since we cannot bring ourselves to regard a high-rise apartment as a
contribution to the natural scenery of the gorge, we are dead set against
current proposals to erect these latter day cliff dwellings. We think we are
keeping faith with the 1902 report of the McMillan Commission, already
mentioned, which described the river side scenery as so rare and "of so
great value not only to all Washington but to all visitors, American and
foreign, that it should be safeguarded in every way."

It is too much to hope that our views will be accepted placidly as
sweet reason by the promoters whose blueprints we are frustrating, and this
failure to reach an understanding is anything but recent. George Washington experienced it in 1786, when he advised a friend, with some asperity, that:

"Nothing in my opinion would contribute more to the welfare of these States than the proper management of our lands, and nothing in this State of Virginia seems to be less understood."

A generation has passed since passage of the Capper-Cramton Act, but in our opinion the canal preservation it urged has not yet been fully accomplished. We hope the new Congress will see fit to enact President Kennedy's program to authorize establishment of the canal as a national historical park, with funds to acquire adjoining lands which are required for the recreational opportunities of the visitors.

The McMillan Commission recommended that "no change should come to pass in the character of the canal that will tend to transform its primitive character and quaint beauty." It is an expression of a lofty ideal, and while the final decision rests with Congress regarding the construction of dams which would inundate a significant stretch of the canal route, we hope for the sake of future generations that whatever damage may be caused will be held to the minimum.
Last November, President Kennedy issued an Executive Memorandum on planning for this region. He ordered that "it shall be the policy of the executive branch to seek to reserve for the benefit of the National Capital Region strategic open spaces, including existing park, woodland and scenic resources." One of the main purposes of the regional sewer system projects here is to provide a river for recreational usage. The President's call for the preservation of open space is vital to whatever public use can be made of the river once it is finally cleaned up. The cleanest stream on the planet wouldn't be much good for recreation if recreation seekers didn't have open spaces along it to let them reach it.

The Commission's committee on recreation and wildlife has the duty, and I quote from the Commission, "of planning for the development and conservation of the recreational assets of the Basin and for the management of wildlife."

It would have been difficult to phrase it so as to make it any more appealing to Secretary Udall, who has been stumping the Nation preaching the gospel of recreational conservation. His scripture is that we are blindly engaged in a great giveaway of the few remaining outdoor places
available to the mass of our people for recreation and inspiration. "A quiet crisis," he terms it, because we are apathetic and one of these first future years we are going to discover that we have wasted one of the most precious natural resources. By the end of this century, pressures on the land for outdoor recreation will have tripled, and even today they are more than we can bear in many park areas. The Secretary hopes the quiet crisis can become a noisy one, and all recruits are welcomed gladly. The Commission has done a grand job to stop the Potomac's degeneration into an open sewer. We will lend every possible assistance to you in the work still remaining to save the priceless valley for public use.

Let no one be misled into thinking the major job is behind us. It would be pleasant to contemplate past achievements and feel comfortable in a future full of assurance, but the problems are going to increase rather than go away.

I am beginning to dislike that pet phrase, "population explosion", but one thing is certain; absent some unspeakable devastation, the Eastern Seaboard will be teeming with more people in 20 years than we imagine even when we are caught on Memorial Bridge with the span open at rush hour.