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Remarks of Assistant Secretary of the Interior John A. Carver, Jr., at the 16th Annual California and Pacific Southwest Recreation and Park Conference, Anaheim, California, February 23, 1964, 4:00 P.M. (PST)

A keynote speech is an exacting assignment. I approach this one timorously, for your theme is broad, your professional awareness is sharp, and the assignment given to me to set a tone, or contribute a new idea, or kick off a program is neither simple nor easy.

Together, we are to talk about "living in the explosive sixties". From me, an Assistant Secretary of the Interior whose responsibilities include two bureaus--the National Park Service and the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation--whose business is recreation, and another, the Bureau of Land Management, which has the raw material, land and water, of recreation, you may expect some relating of the theme to federal programs, federal money, federal thinking. After all, the recreation component of "living in the explosive sixties" is very much the concern of the federal level of government, and my Department, along with many others, has long helped to see that the land and water resources of the United States are managed with an informed eye to their potential for outdoor recreation. Indeed, recreation has come to be a word of art in government.

I must tell you the story related to me by one of the regional directors of our newest bureaus. Opening an office in a Western city, they called the Internal Revenue for a copy of a chart or table of some kind, asking that it be sent to the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. "You mean," said the voice in the tax office, "you mean they have a bureau for that?"

I will take my keynoter responsibility seriously, and in a moment will speak to you of some specific proposals, including the bill to establish a Land and Water Conservation Fund, which will be of interest to you.

But I would like first to talk with you about President Johnson's unconditional war on poverty. It has, I think, relevance for us. Throughout America, people have begun to think about the relevance of many of their activities in the context of an effort to eradicate the shameful pockets of poverty in our land.
I hope it is appropriate to begin our discussion of recreation at this conference in the perspective of the nation's concern for the one-fifth of America which is not included in the glowing statistics which describe the ever-growing demand for outdoor recreation -- I mean statistics like a gross national product of six-tenths of a trillion dollars a year; sixty-seven point two million people employed; median family income of six thousand dollars (less $44) a year, a fifty percent increase since 1947.

These are explosive statistics. They validate your theme's description of the explosive sixties. We have become almost blase in our use of the data: we talk of the determinants of the growth trend of recreation -- more people, higher incomes, more leisure, and greater mobility -- and argue whether these are additive, or multiplicative.

We've promoted recreation to big business, and we can prove it -- with data on growth in number of annual visits, dollars spent, miles traveled, and the like. We count or measure the boats, and the boaters; the camps and the campers; the trails and the trailers; the ducks and the habitat acres -- and the projections of only five years ago always prove to have been conservative.

Here in California, the population grows 1500 per day, and the sixties and seventies together will add as many people as were here at the end of the fifties. Here you deal with annual highway transportation facilities expenditures of a billion dollars with calmness.

There is no question about it -- the decade is explosive. But your theme also uses a calm word, living. What about the living in the sixties -- what are the images of this word?

I've already mentioned one, one which the President has rightly reminded us of -- the poor among us. Yes, they are in California, too. In Fresno as well as Los Angeles, in Eureka as well as San Diego. Does the quality of our living involve legitimately the consideration of recreation for the poor?

I think it does, although we may have to shift some semantic gears. This may have to be recreation divorced from the automobile. Here the question is not whether an outdoor recreation opportunity is the distance of a day's drive or a week-end's. Here we deal with recreation in place, so to speak. Swimming pools, neighborhood parks, supervisors, equipment -- the nuts and bolts of metropolitan recreation are weapons in the war against poverty. Recreation does not feed, it does not clothe, it does not house -- but it contributes to the quality of American life, the aspect of American life whose absence means the end of hope.

Most of you here today are quite aware, I know, that recreation is a vital part of any comprehensive action program to strike at the root causes of poverty. It is one of the weapons which is directly aimed at improving human motivation.
and performance. With education and vocational training, health services, and decent housing, surely the productive environment for a good community life must include the opportunity to play.

As our cities grow and bulge, we must never forget how vitally important parks and recreation areas are to the vigor and health of our people. Every citizen has an interest in whether parks and facilities are adequate to meet the growing needs of his community. The quality of living in the explosive sixties is directly related to mental and physical well being of its people. Parks, playgrounds, and other recreation areas promote these. Recreation facilities are important.

Make no mistake of it, the President is engaged in an historic enterprise, and I'm proud to be on the fringes of the truly exciting leadership the President is giving it.

I predict that you -- all of you here today -- will find yourselves enlisted before too long for your contribution and the commitment of your programs to the war on poverty.

How this will come about is now being worked out. Mr. Sargent Shriver, drawing upon the advice and resources from diverse government departments, the private sector, and from the legislative branch, and state and local governments, has brought the magnificent talent which launched the highly successful Peace Corps to the task. As Assistant to the President, he has authority to bring many programs of the federal government into the fray. Recreation is one program which will contribute.

Most of you know how satisfying it is to deal with real community needs. Areas for neighborhood recreation are vital, and our concern for them must be as great as that for the preservation of sea shores and wilderness areas. Both are vital to America, and for many of the same reasons.

This is fully within the philosophy of the federal government, as expressed by the Congress, and in the programs in being or on the planning boards. Let me translate into specifics:

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Bill, favorably reported by the House Interior Committee, has one title of key importance -- grants to states for planning and for development.

Chairman Wayne Aspinall of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee sent the Committee report on the bill to every Member of the House, with these words:

"In my opinion, this is one of the most important and far-reaching pieces of legislation that the Committee on Interior
and Insular Affairs has presented to the House in a long, long time. In the light of the fact that recreation is demanding more and more recognition at all levels of government, it seems to me that we who have responsibility on the Federal level should see to it that State and local levels assume major responsibility in this particular activity and we should assist them in doing so."

I would like also to re-emphasize the importance of State-County relationships in parks and outdoor recreation. Some 30 States have statutes specifically authorizing county park or recreation departments or commissions. Last year, 13 States expanded the authorities of the counties with respect to recreation. Only a few States, however, have specific provisions for State services to county park or recreation systems.

Some States have programs of financial assistance to counties. New York has allotted about $12 million of State funds under its park and recreation land acquisition program to 15 counties for 50 projects. These State allotments to counties have been programmed under a 75 percent grant-in-aid formula. Although this particular program is only three years old, it is fully programmed. The record in New York, at least, is an indication of counties' intense interest in an acquisition program for recreation.

The Congress last May in the Organic Act for the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, stated the following policy with respect to outdoor recreation:

"That the Congress finds and declares it to be desirable that all American people of present and future generations be assured adequate outdoor recreation resources, and that it is desirable for all levels of government and private interests to take prompt and coordinated action to the extent practicable without diminishing or affecting their respective powers and functions to conserve, develop, and utilize such resources for the benefit and enjoyment of the American people."

The federal government has a genuine commitment to see that "recreation" includes local activities, which are deserving of assistance and encouragement. Recreation is not regarded as a federal prerogative tied to vast land holdings. The legislative acts and programs I've mentioned support this without question.

So that is the message of my keynote -- let us emphasize the living, the quality word of your conference theme.

The Sixties are indeed explosive, frantic, frenetic. The demand for recreation is related to the growth of our income levels, the lengthening of our superhighways, the greater leisure, the heightened sophistication of our recreation tastes. All our energies might well be directed toward meeting the demand for places to pitch two hundred dollar tents, or park two thousand dollar camp trailers -- to fish or to hunt or to hike.
Some of our energies are going to the unsung sector of recreation. More of our energies will go to this sector. For community recreation meets a felt need, and a little land in the city goes a long way. The relatively higher cost of urban land for recreation is offset by the astronomically higher intensity of use.

I've heard city recreationists called whistle-blowers.

It is my fervent hope that this will become a term of approbation -- that these people will be key workers in a truly vital task of these explosive sixties. That is the task of restoring the meaning of living to the youthful poor, and thereby to break the chain of poverty.