Remarks of Assistant Secretary of the Interior John A. Carver, Jr. at 7 p.m. (M.S.T.) Friday, May 1, 1964, at the Conservation Week Banquet ending Conservation Week at Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

CONSERVATION AND POLITICS

A week ago today I spent a day on a university campus in Massachusetts, before a graduate seminar on our territorial programs and policies. I've savored the opportunities I've had over the past three years, at Lansing and Ann Arbor, Milwaukee and Chicago, at Princeton and Riverside and Boston, to discuss government in the university community.

I'm particularly proud to have been asked to be with you tonight. Your Conservation Week has become justly renowned, and the standards set by my predecessors are demanding indeed. I recall that you heard a most significant speech a year ago. Although your scheduled speaker, Chairman Wayne Aspinall, was unable to be here, you were able to hear his talk, and in it the main features of his bill for a Public Land Law Review Commission, and of associated legislative items. In the intervening year, his bills on the subjects discussed here have been introduced, hearings held, and they have passed the House of Representatives.

My subject, Conservation and Politics, can be opened by amplifying the reference to the Public Land Law Review Commission. Here was a measure which at the House hearings received virtually unanimous support from the broadest possible spectrum of the public interested in the public lands, whether commercially, as with the timber, forage, and mining industries, or non-commercially, as with the wildlife organizations and recreationists, and public interest and governmental units, State, county and local.

This measure passed the House 339-29. The bill was sponsored from both sides of the aisle, among others by a member of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission with unimpeachable conservation credentials, John Kyl of Iowa.

The purpose of the Commission bill is clearly stated in it: it is to study the statutes, review the policies and practices of the Federal agencies, compile data on demands for the public lands, present and future, and to recommend legislation to the Congress.
Yet last week a newspaper columnist with a radio program also, referred to this as a bill to turn the public lands over to the cattle and mining interests.

Such a charge is erroneous, irresponsible, and a calumny on the Congress. Yet it is of such stuff that conservation politics is made.

This is the good-guys v. bad-guys method of policy formulation. In the international field we're all aware of the attempt to manipulate public attitudes with reference to some other country's policy--what they want, we oppose, and vice versa. In the resources field, it works the same way. If the lumber or cattle or mining people want a public land law review commission, then to some groups it must be bad; if the Sierra Club or the Wilderness Society or some other public group agrees, however reluctantly, to a modified version of the Wilderness Bill, then those who had demanded the modifications are likely to take a second look.

A related, or refined version of this, is the epithet method of manipulating policy formulation.

Even experienced and sophisticated veterans of public resource management react in a conditioned way to verbal stimuli which are a part of our political tradition. Take the word "exploit" in reference to economic development needs. This is ordinarily a bad word in the conservation lexicon--not for any etymological or philological reason, for words are neutral. But this one exudes the colorful symbolism of our political environment. "Exploit" means "spoil"; "conserve" means "save". In this context, one doesn't even need to write down the moral propositions that create the differences. Generations of holy crusade have produced the glandular reaction--"exploiter," evil; "conservationist," virtuous.

This Pavlovian reference illustrates how deeply conservation issues have cut into national thinking. Some will say: "Isn't this good? Shouldn't people react rightfully without having to ponder? Let's not equivocate with evil!" This begs the question, for it assumes that the labels and catch-phrases, the campaign slogans, have been correctly assigned: that there is some divine guidance, some intuitive gift, that permits ready identification of an infidel or heathen cause. For the purist, there are no gradations of virtue--no compromises between ideal and reality.

A few days ago an experienced and seemingly sophisticated government servant said to me, "Why doesn't the Department create a special board for the sole purpose of identifying the public interest?"

A good question. Yet in the three years and almost a half I've been in the Department, I can't recall any one of the innumerable controversies where each side of the issue wasn't framed plausibly in terms of the public interest. I've known no decision made by Secretary Udall which hasn't been made in the
public interest. Yet the controversies have been deep and vigorous, and many have reverberated in the halls of Congress or the columns of the press long after they were made. In all of them both sides of the controversy are stated in terms of the public interest, and in most of them both sides are in the public interest. But choices have to be made and the job of making choices cannot be delegated by the Secretary to a Board.

Let's look at a couple of specific cases. The development plan for the Potomac presents one controversy now active. The development of the Colorado another. Those who would build dams (in one case the dam builders are in another Department, in the other case in our own), and those who oppose in favor of the existing values, such as parks or private improvements each state a public interest case.

Electric energy for a rapidly growing population and burgeoning economy must be planned for. Both sides agree, but opponents of the dam assert that account has not been taken of alternatives like nuclear power.

Recreation opportunities are laudable side benefits of dams—but does this kind of recreation outweigh the damage to natural features?

Listen to the language of the two sides:

From the dam builders:

"Water-based outdoor recreation is one of the most popular leisure-time activities in the Pacific Southwest region. The capacity of many existing recreation facilities is already strained. Coincident with the anticipated population growth of the region will be an increased demand for water-oriented outdoor recreation uses. Thus, new basic facilities are included in the plan of development wherever appropriate.

"The basic facilities that would be provided at the reservoirs include access roads, parking areas, beaches, boat launching ramps, picnic and campground areas, public utilities, comfort stations, and related items. The new reservoirs would create new large water areas for boating, fishing, swimming, and water skiing and, additionally, would provide new access to some of the most spectacular scenery in the Nation."

From the opponents:

"The construction of a reservoir in this reach of the Canyon (at Bridge) would inevitably result in the loss of park values of national significance .......

"The river, with its ever changing currents, pools and rapids, would be blotted out by the slack water of the reservoir ......

"The existing natural streambank ecology would be drastically changed
throughout the extent of the reservoir. The existing plant and animal habitats would be drowned out, and colonization by exotic species would be expected. In the uppermost regions of the reservoir, silt deposition and debris accumulation would be inevitable.

"The most obvious change in the recreational use would be the limitation of the traditional and exhilarating experience of wild river boating."

Controversies like these are incapable of resolution by the application of rhetoric or slogan—something far more fundamental is expected of government than that.

And something far more fundamental ought to be expected of the public.

Conservation issues are public issues. Success in the task of conservation requires mastery of the workings of politics, both internal and external. Conservation presents elemental conflicts of values.

If the politics of conservation are to be worthy, if it is to be recognized that resource managers must communicate to the public and to the legislatures a sense of ethical urgency rooted in a felt philosophy, then history must be studied, our society comprehended, our governmental system mastered.

Slogans are not substitutes for cerebration; and the field of conservation isn't open to be staked as the exclusive domain of any group, however well-intentioned.

Many in this room will participate in making the social decisions that must be made to meet the demands of 300 million people for living space, food and fiber, and all of the other resource requirements of an almost unimaginable technology. Conservation and resources promise to become the most critical domestic political issue as we approach that social milestone. Any attempt to answer the challenge with cliches must fail—and with it our basic values, quite possibly our whole political system and our existence as a democratic society.

Professional resource managers have their own sophisticated phrases. The appeal of "sustained yield" has been sufficient to turn many a tide. And "multiple use" comes close to being the universal solution to all demands, even though it provides no effective assistance in adjudicating incompatible demands. The mere suggestion of "give away" is enough to stop any resource transaction in its tracks—at least temporarily. Such slogans are high-powered weapons of the political arsenal.

It helps to recognize that these are the current manifestations of a long tradition. Resource issues have been political issues since the earliest days of the republic. Jefferson and Hamilton's ideological struggle had as one of its ingredients the policies which should govern in settling western lands.
The "Mississippi Bubble" was the major political issue of its decade. John Wesley Powell made the settlement of arid lands a bloody battleground long before those lands had any real value. In the last decade, Al Sarena held center stage while the pressures for more open space, better recreation facilities, more and purer water piled up. This accumulation is our political inheritance, the unfinished agenda of our generation.

The techniques of achieving political goals for conservation were never more effectively exhibited than they were at the hands of the first Roosevelt and his chief lieutenant, Gifford Pinchot. Roosevelt made his name synonymous with conservation, as he met both the "interests" and their legislative spokesmen head-on.

By a pen's stroke, he set aside public lands for forest purposes while enrolled enactments of Congress prohibiting such executive action sat out the constitutional waiting period on his desk. Forestry, reclamation and wildlife protection became main functions of the Federal Government under his tutelage.

Teddy Roosevelt took the conservation movement out of the polite conversation of drawing rooms and off the platforms of the lecture circuit. An ideal, clothed with Victorian respectability, became an objective of public policy—of government activity. Conservation was made an object of political contest—where it has been ever since, not only at the Federal level but in the States as well.

Pinchot presents an even more interesting case study in the development of political conservation and conservation politics, which is equally significant. Pinchot is something of a rarity among all public figures: a pioneer in an emerging profession and respected for that in itself; masterful politician, good enough to quarterback many of Roosevelt's most daring forays, and to be elected Governor of Pennsylvania twice; but above all, superlative bureaucrat. With a singleness of purpose that would have been disastrous in one of lesser ideals, Pinchot used a small and ineffectual office in the Department of Agriculture as the nucleus for concentrating most of the Federal forestry activities into one of the largest and most powerful of all Federal bureaus—one that could dominate Cabinet officers and challenge a President of the United States.

Pinchot's zeal to become the dictator of conservation values and morals led, of course, to his split with Taft and his accusations against Secretary of the Interior Richard K. Ballinger, whom Taft appointed to replace Pinchot's friend and collaborator, James Garfield. The congressional hearings on these accusations marked one of the bitterest episodes in the history of conservation politics. The stakes were high—the office of the President becoming eventually involved. Ballinger was eventually exonerated of any intentional wrong-doing, but it was found that certain of the evidence submitted in his behalf had been misrepresented as to time of preparation. Press and public alike remembered only this tarnishing fact—Ballinger was publicly guilty, though innocent.
This incident in one man's bureaucratic war on those who opposed him did lasting harm to a major conservation department of the Government. Pinchot—although out of office—never lost an opportunity to remind the country of Interior's faults, as if Ballinger had been found guilty. Not until Harold Ickes took over a quarter century later did the Department retrieve the public respect so necessary to discharge its conservation mission.

The politics of the conservation movement itself, including both the internal manipulation of organizations and the interplay of powerful forces among those who have a rightful claim to be called conservationists, took shape in Roosevelt's time, too.

Theodore Roosevelt's task in establishing the conservation ideal ran across the grain of traditional thinking. He had to first establish waste as something close to immoral—and then work on the public conscience to see that it reacted accordingly. The substantive issues of his day were, however, relatively uncomplicated. Techniques of forest protection were direct, elementary and easily comprehended; power generation and transmission had potential for the future, but comparatively little current relevance; demands upon land and water resources were confined to single uses, uncomplicated by competing needs incompatible with each other.

Now our population has almost doubled and its mobility multiplied five—or tenfold. A disturbing percentage of our land area must be devoted to concrete ribbons strung with the beads of metropolis, suburb and town. Technology has made possible and created forms of land use which were impossible a half century or even a decade ago. The protective barriers to the wilderness have been breached.

Retch Hetchy was the early warning of what is today a truism—that one conservationist's ideal could be another's desecration, that the recriminations among friends under stress match those that draw blood from sworn enemies.

The cities of central California and the Bay Area were outstripping readily available supplies of water; a similar situation in power could be foreseen due to their great distance from conventional energy sources. To those who were thoroughly steeped in Theodore Roosevelt's premise that "conservation is the great fundamental basis for national efficiency," it was elemental that the rivers of the Sierras should be harnessed to provide the water and power requirements for a growing prosperity. From almost every standpoint of economy, efficiency and engineering convenience, the ideal site for dam construction was in the Retch Hetchy Valley of the Tuolumne River. Heated opposition immediately developed from two quarters; from private utility interests, because the project was to be constructed and operated by the City of San Francisco, and from an important segment of the conservation movement itself, because the site was deep in the Yosemite National Park, consecrated in the eyes of parks purists.
Hetch Hetchy became a national issue primarily because of its public power aspects, but the contention between conservation values was also very much in the public eye. Labels became mixed and the identity of friend and foe became complicated. If you can conceive of it, John Muir was actually cast in the role of advocate for Pacific Gas and Electric Company, was called a mouthpiece of "the interests." To those who recount this story from the public power viewpoint, the term "conservationist" is reserved for Hetch Hetchy's proponents—all others fall in the category of "nature lovers" or "power interests." In this, the first clear instance of conflict among national conservation objectives, the charge was also made by one element of the conservation front that their erstwhile friends were being exploited by those having diametrically opposite social values. "Save Yosemite from Destruction" was a rallying cry among dedicated conservationists; it was equally available to those who would use every possible device to defeat the reservation of any further lands for park purposes.

Any number of parallel situations may be cited to demonstrate the increasing conflict between and among interests within the conservation family in its broad expanse. The Steamboat Springs project, dear to the hearts of the reclamation branch of the family, founded upon the unavoidable consequence of flooding a part of Dinosaur National Monument. The Glen Canyon reservoir is already beginning to fill, but the bitterness over failure to protect Rainbow Bridge against water intrusion is readily evident in our daily mail. Issues such as these find their outlet in the exercise of highly developed techniques of political pressure.

The issues upon which the conservation community finds itself divided will increase as demands for scarce land increase. The political dimension of conservation has expanded in ever-widening circles as our society and our technology have become increasingly complex. The simple "for" or "against" issue of 1900 now has overtones of the bureaucratic contest for policy supremacy. "Multiple use" becomes a slogan to block the preservation of critically needed recreation values; freedom to locate mineral claims argues against inclusion of a public domain tract in either a forest or a park. Parks supporters are accused of "locking up" resources because they regard public hunting incompatible with park objectives. The pluralism of modern life makes extremely complicated the simple faith which motivated Thoreau, Muir, Powell and the other prophets of the good life.

Let us now look to the future prospects for conservation as a political issue. Will it drop out of the field because other problems of modern life demand all of our attention? I am convinced that the exact opposite will be the case. Science and technology can change and multiply and stretch the limits of such resources as food and fiber and energy sources. But eventually we get back to the fundamental elements of land and water. Living space for twice our present population will demonstrate the inelasticity of the land surface. Water problems, both qualitative and quantitative, must be attacked promptly and with every scrap of our imagination—for wars have been fought and
civilizations have died for its lack. We face a century of intense competition for these elemental resources. Government must inevitably enter as the arbiter. Conservation issues may therefore become the dominant ones in public affairs, therefore in politics, in our own generation.

The stewardship of Stewart Udall as Secretary of the Interior has seen a truly remarkable elevation of the level of conservation politics.

First and foremost, he has penetrated the American consciousness of the land and water, and has made conservation a felt philosophy, in and out of government. President Kennedy's White House Conference on Conservation in 1962 was the first since Teddy Roosevelt, and it caught the public's attention and interest. So did that memorable conservation tour, in the beautiful autumn of 1963. Mr. Udall's book *The Quiet Crisis* is thoughtful and deep, and its influence widens month by month.

It takes a great Secretary to be able to manage both the programs for water development and the programs for park and natural value protection, and the public does not even begin to understand how well he has mastered the fundamentals of each, thus freeing himself from the shackles of slogans and rhetoric.

The Secretary sees the relationship of conservation to other social objectives and other government programs, as witness the conservationist cast of the Job Corps segment of President Johnson's war on poverty.

And he sees beyond the horizon. The Land and Water Conservation Fund Bill, landmark conservation legislation which must be enacted, will rationalize the hit-or-miss, stop-and-start progress in meeting the national demand for parks and recreation opportunities.

The Pacific Southwest Water Plan, too, represents statesmanship of a most demanding order.

I commend to you the field of conservation, and the field of politics—separately and together. I love them both.

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