

Remarks of Assistant Secretary John A. Carver, Jr., at Ceremonies Marking Groundbreaking for Power and Water Plant, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, December 8, 1964

The breaking of ground for this plant marks the opening of a new era of Virgin Islands development. It also exemplifies the highest standards of Federal-local cooperation in devising solutions to our problems.

For years you have, with greater or lesser degrees of patience, borne the inconveniences of power and water shortages. Hard as it has tried, the Virgin Islands Corporation has been unable to stay comfortably ahead of skyrocketing demand. By the same token we were long delayed in getting a decision to transfer the system to the Government of the Virgin Islands. In this impasse, your needs might have gone unmet through a kind of governmental paralysis.

But it is a great credit to the vitality of your community and the courage of your governor that this was not allowed to happen. VICORP couldn't finance the project, and the territorial government doesn't yet have title to the rest of the system. But here we are -- participating in a ceremony to start the needed construction. I think we should some day dedicate this plant, not just as a utility installation, but as a monument to what can be accomplished when two men of ability, understanding and dedication to public service combine their talents to meet a challenge. Governor Palewonsky and VICORP President Cramer were not daunted by the unorthodox, but chose to proceed on schedule despite the risks involved. I commend them for their willingness to cut through the jungle and get the job started.

In a few weeks, we hope, the people of this territory will be fully and deeply involved in the critical job of managing their own utility system. This is a major undertaking a most serious responsibility. But it also provides you, at long last, with the tools you need to manage your own destiny. It is clearly a challenge that you are capable of meeting. On this auspicious occasion, when you more than double your capacity in two important resources, we can safely note that the territory has come of age. We wish you well in this important enterprise.