PIONEERS IN PARTNERSHIP

The preparation of speeches presents a valued opportunity to sharpen and focus my own thoughts on the substance and direction of programs in the Department of the Interior.

At the outset of reflecting on these remarks, I became sidetracked on whether I should ignore the fact I am speaking on April Fool's Day.

About the time I was trying to think of how I could pay homage to this day, my reflections turned to the title assigned for these remarks and I immediately saw in it a piece of foolishness out of the past that warranted comment.

A few years ago a major political party attempted to persuade the American people that a new era of governmental "partnership" was in the making. There were a great many speeches about partnership of one kind or another.

Before long, many of the individuals and organizations associated with the conservation movement added the term "partnership" to their lexicon of naughty words—along with "exploit", "pollute", and other such terms. The word became identified with evil. As is typical of the Pavlovian method by which many people react to conservation issues, partnership became a word of which a number of politicians wished they had never heard.

It was not until President Johnson began to practice a new kind of partnership in Government affairs that the idea and the word came back into proper focus.

Visceral reactions to such words show how deeply conservation is rooted in the American conscience. They also suggest that we who labor in the vineyards of conservation have to recognize the emotionalism and political overtones inherent in words and terms.
Of course, the issue over this word was a foolish one, because no one could seriously contend that partnership in government is either nonexistent or undesirable. The fundamental structure of our Federal society requires cooperative enterprises at all levels of government and private activity.

Nevertheless, the new thrust of President Johnson's emphasis on creative federalism does offer new opportunities to pioneer new roads in partnership. The President's deep interest in unifying the directions in which Federal, state, and local governments are working—from the poverty program to public land management—offers great opportunity.

In this whole field there are myths and misconceptions that need exposure.

At the local level there is weeping and wailing about Federal land management programs being run without local involvement. One of the little understood and often unappreciated facts about many Federal land management programs is the degree to which these programs are conducted in a framework substantially oriented to local concerns and interests. Indeed, local involvement is much institutionalized.

Every National Forest has an advisory board of local citizens. The membership of Soil and Water Conservation Districts is entirely local. Some National Parks have local advisory boards that meet regularly and are consulted often. Reclamation districts and water users' organizations have a substantial role in the management of Federal reclamation and water programs. The Federal grazing districts have statutory local advisory boards.

It is a vexing paradox of public land management that the consistent criticism from many quarters is that these programs are too locally oriented, too concerned with local interests.

As you know, the National Advisory Board Council of the Department of the Interior was expanded four years ago by Secretary Udall to include a broader base of membership. Your Association is represented on the Board and in the work of the State Advisory Boards in the Western States.

We have been very much impressed by the work of your Association on these Boards and by the sophistication of county representatives on a broad range of resources problems and issues. The growing significance of the work you are doing contradicts the gloomy prophets who are predicting the decline of counties as a major force in American government.
The existence of even a variety of mechanisms for consulting local interests and people, however, does not assure that Government administrators have always made the best use of local advice or that local citizens, including county governments, have been as well informed or as deeply involved as they should be. I am convinced we have a long way to go in adequately informing people about what their Government is doing and why.

I should observe, though, that almost every time a Federal agency attempts a broader information and education effort, a loud protest can be expected from some operators, on the grounds that anytime the Government dispenses information it is trying to propagandize.

On the whole, I am impressed by the rather fine job I think most Federal land managing agencies have done in consulting with local bodies and in bringing local and regional opinion into the decision-making and policy-formulating process.

The Federal Government, on balance, does a substantially better job of this than the average State highway department, if I read local newspapers correctly.

In the structure of our governmental system, and particularly in the relationships between the Executive and the Congress in the field of public land management, there is sound basis for local consultation. The Congress has in many ways evidenced the intention that the public's resources should sustain the private sector of the economy, and some of the acts are explicit, such as the O&C Act.

National Parks, since they are distinctly creations of the Congress, can not become a reality without very broad Congressional support. A broad base of Congressional support is generally quite unlikely without substantial local consensus--though I think it is essential that people in local governments and communities recognize that areas having national significance do not belong exclusively to the immediate locality.

There are several recent examples of the degree to which the framers of national conservation and land management policy have deeply involved local interests and opinion. Let me cite only one or two. During the years that the Wilderness Bill was being considered by Congress hearings were held by both Congressional Interior and Insular Affairs Committees in nearly a dozen locations on 18 occasions. Under the procedures called for in the Wilderness Act, local hearings are required in the process of considering additions to the Wilderness System.
Similar hearings were held around the country during consideration of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Bill a year ago. This pattern is not unusual at all on major pieces of policy legislation.

Within the Executive Departments a similar pattern exists. Just a few days ago a hearing was held in Washington, D. C. at which Judge Rea and George Ricca testified on behalf of your Association relating to regulations governing two very important pieces of public land legislation on multiple use management and classification of public domain lands and public sales.

More than 60 preliminary discussions with people in western communities had been held before the text of the proposed rules was formally announced.

During the Washington hearing, testimony endorsing the regulations as proposed was received from more than a dozen citizen groups, while another dozen groups suggested rather extensive revisions. Several witnesses observed that interest in county land use planning and rural zoning had been heightened in their home states as a result of the Public Sale Act, which made zoning a condition precedent to land sales. Probably few activities of this Association will prove more important and of more significance than the effort you are making this year to broaden the adoption of zoning codes to include those counties not now having them. In this effort you will occupy a key position in guiding the future of our cities, towns and countryside.

The Washington, D. C. hearing on the new land use regulations will be followed by four days of hearings in the West so that local views and opinions may be taken into account. These will be at Twin Falls, Idaho, April 9, here in Reno April 12, Albuquerque April 14, and Grand Junction April 16.

Similar examples of soliciting public views and opinions can be taken from virtually every field of public land management, and it is certain that there will be even more of it in the future. I was recently asked to predict whether I thought major land use actions would be preceded by public hearings. My prediction, and I stand by it, was that I was certain that public hearings will precede every major land use decision and that I could think of no better assurance that local opinions would receive full consideration in the decision-making process.
It is perhaps inevitable that relations between the Federal Government and local governments have an inherent instability and exist in a constant state of at least potential conflict. It is certainly also probably inevitable that some of those conflicts can be resolved only in a way that local interests regard as detrimental to them.

For example, it is not often enough recognized that county governments depend almost exclusively on the ad valorem real property tax as a source of revenue. Localities which also derive a part of their revenue from taxes on personal property are in the minority.

When land formerly in private ownership is taken for a Federal program, such as a National Park, there is no question but what reduction of the tax base can work hardship on a county's financial structure. The probable long-term benefits which can accrue to a community from development of a major recreational asset—and there are ample statistics to prove that in the long run the benefits can be very impressive—are understandably regarded as irrelevant by county officials faced with next year's budget within last year's law.

Statistical hocus-pocus by Federal bureaucrats does not solve the immediate problems faced by people and communities where a major land use change has been made. This problem is real, and it is immediate. It should not be ignored or brushed aside in economic predictions of better times coming at some unspecified future date.

Recognition was given to this kind of problem by the Congress with passage of the Revenue Sharing Act, under which counties can benefit annually from the various forms of income derived from the National Wildlife Refuges under a formula tied to land values. Your Association assisted enormously in the passage of this legislation which had the effect of taking the waterfowl refuge program out of a period of stagnation.

The O&C Counties in western Oregon are perhaps the best possible example of the benefits to be derived from a generous revenue sharing formula. This arrangement has permitted development of a management system for which, given the complex pattern of forest land ownership it is difficult to conceive of a workable substitute. Here the degree of cooperation between the Federal government and the county goes far beyond simple financial arrangements.
Even in cases where counties do receive distributed payments as result of Federal resource programs—such as shared timber sale revenues—the strings that have been attached to the funds often hinder a county's ability to make effective use of the money. Where funds are distributed solely for schools and highways, for example, the county may end up with a bulging treasury of school funds and not have enough in its coffers to pay for law enforcement or for a needed sewage treatment facility.

Though I am aware there is considerable reluctance to tamper with existing formulas and reopen some of these questions, both the Federal Government (including the Congress) and the States and counties are going to have to re-examine some of these long-standing policies and formulas if they are adequately to meet future needs.

If in the past the Federal Government has been guilty of failing to take adequate account of local interests and needs, local interests have also too often ignored a national interest and need which may admittedly infringe on their own real estate.

If the Federal Government has attempted to dismiss local concerns with a check covering the fair market value of the land it acquires—with inadequate attention to the concurrent financial problems of the communities—local interests too have often stubbornly ignored the long term economic benefits of which they will be a prime recipient.

The answers to these problems and dilemmas rest largely in the kind of reasoned approach which the President has called for in the whole field of intergovernmental relations. Federal and local officials must get together more often and reason together on issues of mutual concern. It is a great satisfaction to me for this reason to have opportunity to meet here with you at your meeting whose theme and emphasis would not have been possible only half a decade ago.

The Federal system of government is one of the great products of the American political genius. This system contemplates and expects that each of the several levels of government will play its proper role in meeting the demands of a complex social and technological environment. The obligation of staying close to the people falls alike on each level of the system. Centralized government need not be cold or remote or authoritarian. As demonstrated by several Federal natural resource programs, it is neither remote nor divorced from local preferences and participation.