REMARKS OF UNDER SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR JOHN A. CARVER, JR.,
BEFORE THE ALEXANDRIA JUNIOR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, ALEXANDRIA,
VirginIa, Saturday, January 29, 1966, at 6:30 P.M.

Your chairman left me a choice of topics
tonight. I have tried to find one which would be
appropriate to this delightful occasion--your tribute
to one of your number chosen for outstanding service
to his country and community during the year last
past. But I have also hoped to make it current and
relevant to the work of the Department I serve, and to
the national administration of which I am a part.

The quality of the American environment was
the subject of a report of the Environmental Pollution
Panel of President Johnson's Science Advisory Committee
a couple of months ago.

President Johnson, in releasing it for publi-
cation, asked the federal departments and agencies to
consider the recommendations and report to him on
ways to cope with the problems cited in it.

In a scholarly and scientific way, the panel examined environmental pollution. Its examination, in my opinion, was sharpened by, and was the culmination of, a great upsurge of national interest in the quality of environment--natural beauty and related concepts--stemming from a speech by the President in May 1964.
When President Johnson eighteen months ago said that the "challenge of the next half century is whether we have the wisdom to use our wealth to enrich and elevate our national life, and to advance the quality of our American civilization" few people in that audience of Michigan students or in the accompanying press corps were in a position to foretell how widely this thought would spread within such a few months.

Part of the answer is found in the truism that nothing is so powerful as an idea whose time has come. Another part of the answer is found in the same Ann Arbor speech. A model of organization, it not only stated the objective, but also graphically portrayed the conditions which bespoke its urgency and outlined a charter for action.

The conditions of course have been stated many
times in many ways. What the President said was that in fifty years there will be 400,000,000 Americans, four-fifths of them in urban areas, and that by the end of this century urban population would double, city land would double, and we would have to build homes, highways and facilities equal to all those built since this country was first settled. In effect, he said, "in the next 40 years we must rebuild the entire urban United States." In his outline of needs, he spoke of decay of city center, despoilment of suburb, and of housing and transportation and open space. He spoke also of natural beauty and parks and seashores.

And then the President said how we should accomplish these things:

"... we are going to assemble the best thought and the broadest knowledge from all over the world to find those answers for
America. I intend to establish working groups to prepare a series of White House conferences and meetings on the cities, on natural beauty, on the quality of education, and on other emerging challenges."

The President reminded the country that solutions were not to be found in massive programs in Washington nor solely on the strained resource of local authority. He said we ought to create "new concepts of cooperation, a creative federalism."

Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall has administered the country's department of conservation under two Presidents. He has enunciated and elucidated the new conservation in a magnificent book "The Quiet Crisis." He has sounded the call to national action on significant conservation fronts over the whole country for five years, and has become the authentic
spokesman of a new national consciousness about the quality of our environment.

Working with this man has been an exciting experience, one which has been rich in insights into what makes leadership powerful enough to encompass a country, what responsibilities such leadership carries, and what it takes to keep a movement going.

My own role has been more mundane. But because I have found excitement for me in the nuts and bolts and the general anatomy of how government reacts to the challenge of a new idea or new activity, I've thought about the role of "leaders" at other than the summit level of President or cabinet--leadership in neighborhoods and communities; in state, county and local government; in universities, and in foundations; and in the federal bureaucracy.

The first things that comes through to me is
that when the idea of conservation, or of quality environment, or whatever aspect of the subject you may choose takes hold, the leaders have a hard time keeping up with the followers.

As I see the subject, as a fascinating, compelling challenge to Government, may not be the way you see it. But professional men, businessmen, educators and others have jumped into this. Let us see how the Natural Beauty idea got into gear: Consider the crescendo of action in the comparatively brief months since the President named a task force on natural beauty. The report of that task force, or rather some of the ideas in it, were put into specific program recommendations in the unprecedented and significant Message on Natural Beauty which the President sent to Congress in February a year ago.

In that message, he scheduled the White House
Conference for the following May. At that conference were representatives of every segment of our society to talk about action.

Congress responded, with bills like the Water Quality Control Act and the Highway Beautification Act. When he signed the latter, the President said "tonight you serve notice on the spoilers of our landscape that we will battle with all we have to preserve the beauty of our land and the beauty of our countryside."

The Executive Branch picked up the challenge, as excited by it as any private citizen. The message was clear—here was not a visionary idea without practicality, but a solid challenge to our ability to work the new concepts into existing programs, to be a good neighbor in the communities where we do business, to walk the extra mile not to be ourselves polluters or contributors to ugliness.
In the Interior Department, we've been delighted at the results.

We are vitally concerned with minerals and with mining methods. Research on strip mine rehabilitation, on acid mine drainage which contributes to pollution, on metallurgy and on coal--these are our business. We could contribute to the national effort by seeing the relationships which help toward the solution to problems with rather than against the grain of existing economic forces.

Junked automobiles are an eyesore; they are also a valuable source of an important raw material used in the making of steel, and their collection surely is a social function which could not easily be left to individuals. Research toward getting the metal back into the steel-making process, from which they had been displaced by research which had developed taconite
serves a double purpose.

Sulfur is a pollutant in stack gas. Sulfur is a valuable and needed mineral. Query: Can the sulfur be recovered in pure and usable form? Answer: It can. Result: (If it proves technologically and economically sound): A byproduct of pollution suppression which pays part of the cost of the treatment.

Coal as an adsorbent in filtering wastes from sewage-laden water is the subject of another experiment. It is likely that the coal will work, and after being used in this way, can then be a fuel, with the B.t.u. content increased.

I could go on with many other of our Department's programs, but let me mention one particular one to bring home another point. In the Northwest, we are a major supplier of energy and transmission thereof. It is appropriate, and good policy, that in this capacity
we should lead the way in bringing the cost of underground installation of transmission down to acceptable limits.

On a much broader scale, we find the Federal Government imposing higher standards on itself, whether in the equipment on its cars to suppress exhaust pollution or in the quality of the design of its own structures.

The First Lady's magnificent leadership of the beautification effort in our Nation's Capital symbolizes the outpouring of citizen response at the community and state level all across the country.

Community improvement projects have sprung up in cities, large and small, in counties and in regional efforts. A "Keep Omaha Beautiful Association", a "Beautiful Metropolitan Nashville Commission", a "City Beautification by Citizen Participation Committee" in Hartford, and a "Beautification Association" in
Fort Morgan, Colorado, are examples.

State conferences on natural beauty have been called in almost half the States.

Sympathetic reverberations have turned up in corporate board rooms, and in small business enterprises as well. The Wall Street Journal reported last week the surprise of the business community at the favorable reaction from such steps as making a foundry look like a research institution or beautifying a much publicized harbor development in a certain midwestern State.

Broad industry response has been affirmative and constructive. The billboard industry, the auto junk yard business, the mining industry, all of which might have been expected to react pretty negatively, participated usefully in the White House Conference. The industry and trade association leadership in this
area is affirmative and having results.

Action at all these levels, taking different form in different places, with changing emphasis and shifting centers of gravity, has brought us a long way.

The challenge has always been leadership--people who can mobilize all the diverse forces, suppress the divisive jealousies, coordinate the various efforts, justify the needed budgets, attract the needed skills.

Here we come to the theme of your meeting today, for you are honoring leaders and leadership; you honor doers; you honor imagination and foresight. Only one of the 30 nominees could receive the award, but consider the talent and the accomplishment in the aggregate represented by those 30.

I spoke about budgets.

We cannot be oblivious to the fact that our quest for a quality environment may be regarded as a competitor
for needed dollars to meet our international problems, in Viet Nam and elsewhere.

If this were the case, patriotism would demand that we defer; our survival comes first.

But our country is able as no other country is to protect and enhance our environment while meeting these other commitments. We believe with the British statesman that a country worth fighting for is worth building, and worth maintaining as a decent place to live.

We perhaps have not learned as much as we might about how much can be done with cooperating and understanding without costly programs. Mrs. Johnson has shown the way, encouraging the planting of flowers, the gifts of trees, the community pride which outpaces the costliest clean-up equipment in keeping a neighborhood or a street or a city lovely.
Users are cheerfully paying for services once impersonally assigned to general taxpayers, with a better feeling all round.

This is not to say that new programs will not be necessary, some costly. The whole field of water and air pollution will require capital commitments of a major order, governmentally and privately, and for a long time to overcome the accumulated deficit.

The encouraging thing is that as the pressures mount upon a country and its budget, the people rise to the challenge. State-by-state, or community-by-community jealousies give way to regional or basin approaches in water matters, for example.

In the Nation's own city, Washington, on the history-rich Potomac, we have an example of cooperation at work which once would have seemed totally impossible. It was in the President's Natural Beauty Message that
Secretary Udall was directed to work with Federal, State, and local agencies, and citizens to make the Potomac "a model of scenic and recreational values" for the Nation.

All of you know how much it needed attention. You know what a governmental thicket was involved. Representatives of four States and the District, of counties and municipalities, and of regional groups and other Federal agencies miraculously have produced a Potomac Interim Report which is a classic of its kind.

Congress last session created a new Federal department, one of great interest to all urban states. The Department of Housing and Urban Development is going to play a vital role in the subject of natural beauty, particularly in our cities. We look forward to a close working relationship.

What is at stake in all of this is our
environment--air, water, land, structures, natural and artificial features. There is no definable proprietorship for our environment--we're all in it together.

Having a decent environment calls for improved planning, but the task is subject to no great master plan. It is subject to a great national attitude.

That attitude is positive, and seems destined to remain so. The people have joined up for the duration.

We in government--at whatever level--should recall the story of the French Revolutionary mob, storming through the streets, and the man who said "I must go join them; I am their leader."

The greatest of natural resources is the will and willingness of the people to achieve a goal. All Americans want clean air, clean water, decent surroundings, a quality environment.