"ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT -- Institutional and Governmental Aspects"

Reaction of Under Secretary of the Interior John A. Carver, Jr., to the remarks of Honorable Edmund S. Muskie, United States Senator of the State of Maine in a lecture on "Environmental Improvement... Air, Water, and Soil", Thomas Jefferson Memorial Auditorium, United States Department of Agriculture Building, Washington, D. C., May 16, 1966, at 2:00 P.M.

Senator Muskie's emphasis on the "context of our total environment", his recognition of the interrelatedness of air, water, and soil pollution, and his attention to water supply as an urgent national race against the clock, all accord with the general thinking of his counterparts in the executive branch.

I am not as sanguine as the Senator, however, that we have "established the basic federal institutions and programs for the control of pollution," at least not in the terms which Senator Muskie states the task.

Not fewer than eight federal agencies carry on research related to water supply or water quality.
Federal programs for assisting States with water development activities have been in the past very fragmented.

We have made improvements, notably and hopefully a major one being the river-basin approach which was recognized by the President in his message of February 23. Such an approach is also implicit in the reorganization which transferred the Water Pollution Control Administration to Interior a week ago, and is evident in the legislation which the Senator has described.

Senator Muskie emphasizes the importance of operations, of active programs, of getting to work on the pollution, rather than on the organizing to get to work on pollution. I agree.

If history is a teacher on how new institutional arrangements start to function, we can expect
a lag in direct proportion to the complexity of the arrangements affected, and in water and air pollution this is complex indeed.

The dollar figures which Senator Muskie uses--figures which a disciplined executive branch must use most carefully--say to me that Senator Muskie would make the quality of our environment a truly national objective, one as direct and positive as, say, the drive a couple of generations ago to see that every American household had electricity. Another more current example is the drive to get to the moon.

Each of these is more than a governmental goal, and certainly more than a private goal--both require a massive mobilization of both public and private resources. To borrow directly from Senator Muskie another analysis of his, our environmental goals involve an enlargement of the responsibilities
of government, a readjustment of the levels of govern-
ment, setting quality goals, more research, and a lot
of money.

Presidential Adviser Walt Rostow has opined
that a mature economy makes choices about what it
wants to do with the wealth it generates after it has
ceased accepting the extension of modern technology
as a primary objective. He says it may choose among
offering, by public measures, increased security,
welfare, and leisure to the working force, enlarging
private consumption, and seeking enlarged power on
the world scene.

The United States opted, says Rostow, for the
second--enlarged private consumption--first in the
1920's and again in the 1950's.

I think the universal concern which Senator
Muskie describes for the quality of our environment
May represent a reaction to that option and a surge toward the first option of public measures for the general good. Or, perhaps, it represents a new fourth option—to renew and repair past damage and to prevent new damage to the quality of our life. Certain it is that the magnitude of the task we now face is a direct resultant of our wholehearted commitment toward more automobiles, more consumer goods of all kinds, new and exotic materials, intensified agricultural practices, and the like.

Traditionally, great wealth of an economy has led to a decreased birth rate. The reversal of this "law" has magnified the problems in a way not dreamed of in the past.

In the level of expenditures Senator Muskie speaks of, we can expect, in the drive to improve our environment, some of the same kinds of results our
phenomenal growth in the "standard of living" gave us: that growth made automobiles and petroleum the sectoral leaders of our economy. Cleaning up pollution is a challenge big enough to give us new sectoral leaders of our economy--whole new industries built around waste treatment technology.

In recent months, in furtherance of the President's program for new excellence in planning, programming, and budgeting, we've been experimenting in Interior with an analysis of our myriad programs which relate to the quality of environment. This experimentation reflects the increased emphasis which we feel these programs must receive in the future.

But that is a whole new subject!