

REMARKS OF SENATOR ALAN BIBLE

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More than any single event in mankind's history, the epic voyage of Apollo 8 reaffirmed our awareness of earth's fragile environment. The celestial view of our planet, frozen in the camera lens of a brave space frontiersman, provided awesome evidence of nature's perfect handiwork, but it also created new philosophical questions that go to the heart of man's search for his destiny.

For we are alone -- and the knowledge of our solitude inspires humility. Few, then, would wonder at the reverent impulse that moved our astronauts to turn to the Book of Genesis at the instant their tiny craft approached the apex of its long adventure and turned back from the corridors of infinity.

The rich, vibrant colors of the earth, in dazzling contrast to the dull surface of the moon, testify to the unique perfection of earth in the universal order. It is not simply that the moon, our closest heavenly neighbor at a distance of a quarter of a million miles, probably cannot sustain human life. For it is also quite likely that intelligent life does not exist anywhere else in our solar system.

So whatever else it accomplished, the flight of Apollo 8 surely provided fresh stimulus for man to jealously conserve and protect the treasures of his environment. If he squanders his abundance, or if he destroys it through the ravages of war, he becomes the executioner of all living things. There can be no second chance -- no escape to another world. Here, on this earth, is where man must prosper by his wisdom or perish by his excesses.

And since self-preservation is instinctive to man, it would seem reasonable to assume that long ago he came to grips with the problem and embarked upon a sensible program to protect air and water, wilderness and wildlife, thus conserving the self-renewing systems of nature that sustain the earth.

Unfortunately, such has not been the case. For if man instinctively protects his own skin, he also procrastinates, and it is not until he feels the hot breath of danger that he is motivated to pursue solutions in earnest. Thus it was not until recently -- within the last decade -- that natural resource conservation began to attract heavy public support.

This support came, in large part, as the consequence of subtle but deeply significant changes in public attitudes and habits. Americans in the 1960's are turning in increasing numbers to the outdoor environment as a means of enjoying their leisure hours. There are more people than ever before -- a great many more -- and they are working fewer hours. So it was inevitable that the outposts of nature -- once almost exclusively the dominion of the adventurous -- would become coveted sanctuaries of leisure to millions who work and live in urban areas.

The blessings of this social evolution have been mixed. We can scarcely deny that the gifts of nature have been sorely taxed by the mass weekend and summer migration of the human species. In some instances, these gifts have been thoughtlessly and permanently destroyed. But on balance, the effect is more good than evil, for it has given birth to a whole generation of "instant conservationists." Americans by the millions are suddenly aware the land and water resources they enjoy are not guaranteed in perpetuity, and that conservation really is synonymous with survival.

Collectively, these "instant conservationists" represent one of the most powerful lobbies in America today. No longer are professionals in the conservation field required to wage the battle alone. Today, they are reinforced by the weight of public opinion. And so it is predictable that the years immediately ahead will bring an acceleration in legislative and administrative programs aimed directly at the protection and development of natural resources.

Already, substantial steps have been taken in the proper direction. At the federal level, achievements by Congress and the Administration in the last 10 years included:

- Establishment of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, an agency recommended by a commission Congress named in 1958 to study America's recreation resources.

- Creation and expansion of the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, which Congress set up to help local, state and federal agencies in buying and developing new park lands.

- Enactment of basic legislation for the control of water and air pollution.

-- Establishment of the National Water Commission, the wilderness system, the wild and scenic rivers system and the national system of trails.

-- Greater protection for wildlife with the creation of 39 additional refuges. There are now 321 units in the National Wildlife Refuge System, comprising nearly 29 million acres. All but four states are represented in the system.

-- Expansion of the National Park System by at least 50 units, including the creation of national parks in the redwoods and the North Cascades. As the chairman of the Senate Parks and Recreation Subcommittee since its inception, it has been my privilege to play a role in bringing about the greatest period of recreation development in our nation's history. I take particular pride in this achievement.

I have cited only a few of the major accomplishments of the last decade which have been meaningful in protecting our natural environment. Yet in looking at the situation objectively, we find that we have only just begun. Since we, as a nation, started late, a redoubling of our efforts will be required to implement systematic and effective conservation measures before our environmental gifts are dangerously depleted. The new Administration must begin these efforts immediately in concert with the 91st Congress. Most important, the individual states and local governments must begin to effectively meet their responsibilities in this critical area. If they do not, the federal government will assume increasingly greater autonomy over natural resource protection and development.

To completely grasp the substance of the problem, we must take note of the broad changes -- and tremendous expansion -- in conservation programs in the 1960's. In one of his last public interviews, retiring Interior Secretary Udall delivered this summation:

"We have shifted from the old conservation -- the Audubon Society's interest in birds and the park people's interest in forests -- to realizing that from now on it is one big battle for a livable environment. This means taking conservation out of the countryside and into the city."

In my judgment, this fresh emphasis on conservation as it affects urban areas will command greater attention by the Administration and the Congress in the immediate future. Anti-pollution laws, such as the Water Quality Act of 1965 and the Clean Rivers Act of 1966, must be adequately funded and vigorously enforced. And if they prove insufficient, Congress should consider even tougher measures. The stakes are too high for the nation to procrastinate.

In the area of water pollution, particularly, the essential problem is that there are not yet effective regulations applied throughout the continental United States. Indeed, pollution laws for the most part are locally formed and locally applied. We get an idea of the tangled complexity of the problem when we consider that our continental waterways must flow through some 48 states, 3,000 counties and 117,000 separate governmental units. Thus, it seems to me that this is an area where more affirmative action by the government is desirable.

Let me emphasize, however, that I do not believe the answer to the conservation problem lies in giving the federal government total control over our environment. Quite the opposite is true. This is one reason why I joined with Senator Tom Kuchel in 1967 in introducing a Water Rights Act to halt Federal encroachment on state authority. The language of our measure specified that reservation or withdrawal of public land would not reserve water rights contrary to state laws. The bill also would have required compensation for federal interference with state-recognized water rights.

Though hearings on this proposal were conducted by the Senate Commerce Committee, the press of other legislation prohibited the 90th Congress from giving it full consideration. I plan to re-introduce the bill at an early date in the present Congress.

In some areas, there seems to be an increasing awareness on the part of the federal government to the role that must be played by the states in the promulgation of orderly conservation programs. I would be less than honest if I suggested that federal and state jurisdictions are now working together in total harmony. We all know how much still remains to be accomplished. But we should recognize the encouraging signs.

A recent example was last year's decision by the Department of the Interior to spell out new administrative guidelines to promote closer cooperation between state and federal agencies in regulating hunting and fishing on all public lands.

I was the first to congratulate the Interior Department for recognizing the joint authority and responsibility of the state and federal governments in this area. But I was also among the first to insist that these assurances should be written into law. With Senator Frank Moss of Utah as a co-sponsor, I introduced legislation to accomplish this purpose. A question arose over the authority for regulation on Indian reservations and within the National Park System. Senator Moss and I are presently re-working the bill to clarify this issue, and we plan to submit the proposal again within a week or so.

Turning now to an important regional matter, most of you undoubtedly are aware that representatives of the Nevada and California Congressional delegations earlier this month joined in introducing legislation approving the bi-state compact for water pollution control and land development in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Ratification by Congress represents the final step toward the establishment of an area-wide planning agency empowered to adopt and enforce a regional plan for resource conservation in the basin. It goes without saying that all of us involved have assigned the highest priority to approval of the compact so work can begin as soon as possible.

But the compact, however important, promises to provide only part of the solution to the planning requirements for the Lake Tahoe Basin. No less important is the imperative need to secure sufficient land to guarantee a public park that will comfortably accommodate the hundreds of thousands who are visiting the area in increasing numbers each year.

Permit me to offer a personal and parenthetical thought at this time. As chairman of the Senate Parks and Recreation Subcommittee, I have been responsible for directing legislation to create National Lakeshores and National Seashores across the length and breadth of this great republic. During my stewardship, we have designated spectacular scenic areas such as Point Reyes, Padre Island, Assateague Island and Cape Cod as National Seashores. And we have given National Lakeshore designation to inland water treasures such as Pictured Rocks and Indiana Dunes.

Having visited these and other areas, I can truthfully say that Lake Tahoe has equal or even greater natural splendor. Certainly its appeal to the West and to the entire nation cannot be exaggerated. Among America's many scenic gifts, it is one of the most regal.

I have been concerned for some time now over the slow progress being made in acquiring and developing Lake Tahoe State Park in Nevada. This in no way implies criticism of the state's leadership, past or present. In fact, state government initiative in this area has been outstanding.

But the financial facts of life are becoming painfully clear. Since Nevada's resources are limited, a very real question exists as to how much more the state can do to develop the kind of lakeshore recreation area we would all like to see. As early as 1965, I prevailed upon Interior Secretary Udall to approve a special allocation of \$3 million from his contingency fund to assist the state in the development of Lake Tahoe. But even this supplement was far short of providing anywhere near the amount needed.

I have spent a great deal of time in deliberating all aspects of the problem, and I have decided that a clear-cut need exists for a decisive course of

action. Accordingly, I have chosen tonight's forum to announce that I will very shortly introduce legislation directing the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation to study the feasibility of creating a National Lakeshore Recreation Area on the Nevada side of Lake Tahoe.

Let me immediately emphasize that this will be a feasibility study -- nothing more. My legislation will not exclude the possibility that some type of state program would be preferable to a National Lakeshore, and in fact, I shall ask the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation to explore this possibility.

Should the study clearly indicate that the public interest would be best served by designating desirable portions of the Lake Tahoe area as a National Lakeshore, then I believe we would be obligated to proceed accordingly -- just as we acted to designate Lake Mead in Southern Nevada as a National Recreation Area. However, I have no intention of proceeding unless the Nevada Governor and his Director of Natural Resources concur in my suggestion.

As I indicated earlier, I do not believe that natural resource conservation is properly the dominion of the federal government alone. Whenever possible, the states and local political subdivisions should do the job. But with respect to Lake Tahoe, it is apparent that the state -- for all of its excellent intentions -- may lack the resources required to create a recreation area of adequate dimensions for the enjoyment of the general public. The natural, undeveloped shoreline beauty of this majestic mountain lake grows smaller each day. And since time is a critical factor in the development of Lake Tahoe, I believe the public interest should be the paramount consideration. Whatever the feasibility study suggests, we should be prepared to thrust political considerations aside to insure the proper protection and development of a national heirloom.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude for your generous invitation. You pay me high honor. I am delighted to be among people who have advanced a proven record of accomplishment in the all-important area of conservation.

Please permit me a final personal note:

One of the proudest moments of my life occurred last year when I traveled to Houston to receive the National Distinguished Service in Conservation Award, presented by the National Wildlife Federation. That award occupies a position of honor in my Washington office.

At Houston, I said something that perhaps is suited to this occasion as well. I said, "The day may yet come when man ends all wars for all time,

cures all sickness, eliminates all hunger and conquers the final frontiers of space. Let us hope when that day dawns he does not suddenly find he has no more fresh water to drink, no more clear air to breathe, no more fertile land to till, no more forests and rivers and streams to sustain wildlife. To avoid that final irony, we must work as diligently to preserve the gifts of God as we do to resolve the problems of man."

That, finally, is the task before this Society, before leaders at every level of government and before the nation. We cannot fail, because we shall have no second chance.

Let us resolve to preserve our world at least as it was seen through the eyes of our pioneers in distant space: a magnificent sanctuary for mankind, brilliant blue and brilliant green, majestically revolving for eternity in the limitless corridors of the universe.