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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

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Memorandum

To: John D. Ehrlichman, Esquire
Counsel to the President

From: Russell E. Train
Under Secretary of the Interior

Subject: Environmental Message -- A Political Strategy

Political Implications of Environmental Quality

Environmental quality is rapidly emerging as a major political issue, which I believe the President should and can make his own.

The environmental crisis will be one of the four or five major political issues facing the Nation in 1972. It could develop as the single most important issue in the years ahead. Current public concern on the issue is evidenced by:

- overwhelming bipartisan support in Congress for legislation establishing a Council/Office of Environmental Quality (Jackson, Muskie, Dingell bills) in the Executive Office of the President
- action by the House (and expected soon in the Senate) to triple 1970 appropriations for waste-treatment facility grants (\$214 million to \$600 million)
- large majorities gained by State and local bond referendums for pollution abatement, open space, etc.
- in a poll reported by Newsweek (October 6, 1969), 56 percent believe the government should be spending more money on air and water pollution -- the highest percentage reported for any new spending category

- growing number of public protests, particularly with youth involvement, on environmental issues
- increasing level of litigation on environmental issues (Mineral King, Storm King, DDT)
- intense national interest in numerous specific environmental issues such as
 - Everglades jetport
 - Alaska pipeline
 - Amchitka test
 - San Francisco Bay
 - Expressway locations (New Orleans; Hudson River; Three Sisters' Bridge)
 - highway location generally
 - airport location generally
 - damsites (Grand Canyon, Snake River, etc.)
 - power plant siting (Storm King)
 - nuclear power
 - thermal pollution
 - pesticides, particularly DDT
 - air and water pollution generally as well as in specifics (Lake Erie)
 - refinery locations (Machiasport, Piney Point)
 - Santa Barbara oil spill

Public concern for environmental quality can be expected to intensify as population growth and the technological expansion continue to impinge on a diminishing land and water base.

The Republican Conservation Record

While the Republican Party has historic associations (Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot) with the conservation movement, these associations have little political significance today. Various New Deal programs (soil conservation, CCC, TVA, etc.) were clearly identified with the Democrats. More recently, the Johnson Administration's emphasis on natural beauty, outdoor recreation, and new national parks strengthened this identification. The anti-pollution leadership in Congress (air, water, and solid waste) has been assumed by the Democrats, mainly Muskie. The more strident environmental voices in the Congress, such as Nelson and Ottinger, are all Democrats.

The Republican environmental image (and prospects) is further complicated by the Party's identification with business interests and by the fact that it has been traditionally opposed to government regulation -- and regulation

is inescapable in pollution abatement and land use controls. The Party has not assumed recent leadership in the establishment of new national parks and similar areas. Few Republicans in Congress have championed these issues. Worse, our Administration's budget position on such programs is almost entirely negative.

In summary, there is widespread uncertainty and doubt among the general public as to the Republican Party's commitment in the field of conservation.

Breadth of Political Appeal

Concern for environmental quality cuts across traditional geographic, ethnic, and economic interest groups and voting patterns. Thus, a strong position on this issue would have a unifying rather than a divisive impact. It would attract new support from youth, the academic world, writers, and independents generally. It should add to our political base with practically no losses.

The issue is emerging as one of great importance in middle-class suburban America. Housewives and mothers particularly are aroused about pollution and they identify the problem with their children's future.

The one group where conservation-environment would seem to have limited appeal is among the poor and the black -- probably because other concerns seem more pressing. Even here, the opportunities are real.

Environmental issues have a tremendous potential appeal to youth. Newsweek (November 3) indicates that a nationwide moratorium day on pollution and the environment is being planned for next spring by Senator Gaylord Nelson, some ex-Kennedy staffers, and participants in the recent Vietnam Moratorium Day. Students are already involved in protests against projects with environmental impact (Three Sisters' Bridge). The appeal for youth may lie in part in the identification with non-materialistic values, in part in "anti-establishment" aspects of the issue. Perhaps the most obvious reason -- and one that helps validate the conclusions set out earlier in this memorandum -- is that "environment" is indeed a major issue of the future and thus one that has natural appeal to the young.

Development of a Strategy

If environmental quality as an issue has the political significance and potential which this memorandum suggests,

the Administration should mount a major, continuing effort designed to

- identify the Republican Party with concern for environmental quality
- take the initiative away from the Democrats and make it our issue.

The second of these objectives involves an uphill struggle, particularly with a Democratic Congress. The Democrats to date have many of the pieces -- but they lack the power of the Presidency to bring all elements together. Success will require a sustained, long-range strategy. Elements of such a strategy should include:

1. A Presidential Message on Environmental Quality
2. Budget priority reordering, particularly for pollution abatement and open space programs
3. Specific legislative recommendations
4. White House Conference in Spring 1970, possibly on Land Use Planning
5. Reorganization proposals directed to more effective environmental management (e.g., consolidation of all anti-pollution activities in one Department)
6. Executive orders designed to elevate environmental quality in agency decision-making
7. Effective and visible use of Environmental Quality Council to implement Presidential policy (crack-down on air and water pollution from Federal installations, etc.)
8. Designation of a focal point in the Executive Office for developing and sustaining environmental strategy

In addition to such key points, we must generate a continuing stream of supporting activity. For example, we need to develop Republican Congressional spokesmen for the environment -- with attention to geographic spread and committee assignments. We need to develop National and State party machinery that focuses on the environment. (The California State Central Republican Committee has recently established a Committee on Environmental Quality.)

Message Strategy

A Special Message should provide Presidential articulation of the reality of the environmental crisis -- in terms both of the quality of life and of ultimate human survival. It should make clear that far more is at stake than aesthetics or amenity. It should summon the nation to face and to meet the environmental challenge.

The President should speak of the need to re-examine and, where necessary, to change our values. He might speak with praise of the economic system and the technology that have produced the highest standard of living -- in quantitative, material terms -- in the world. But he should point out the price we have paid in terms of a degraded environment. He should articulate the increasing uncertainty and frustration of the great suburban middle class -- which has achieved the American Dream and finds it illusory.

He should speak of the need to give far more attention to non-economic, non-material factors in our public and private decision-making.

At the same time, he could well point out that much of the supposed economic basis for decisions in the past has been false economics. The apparent savings when a factory or a municipality dumps untreated industrial waste or sewage into a stream are not really savings at all. The costs are merely passed on to someone else or are hidden or perhaps shifted to another generation. Thus, when a community is unable to fish or swim in a river, it is paying a very real cost in terms of foregone benefits. The President should speak of the need to develop a new economics which provides a truer measurement of benefits and costs. (An input here by the President's new Task Force on Economic Growth would be in order.)

Likewise, the President should speak of the need to change and improve public decision-making as it affects the environment. He should state that he is directing all Federal agencies to weigh carefully environmental impacts in all planning and decision-making. He might direct all agency heads to designate and maintain a focal point for this responsibility. He should speak in terms of basic reform in these matters.

He must call for a reordering of national priorities in Federal expenditures on essential environmental programs -- particularly pollution abatement and open space acquisition. If he doesn't, the Democrats will (and are!) This is not a matter of simply pouring money down the same old rat holes.

Adequate funding is a prerequisite to effectiveness in these areas and to Republican credibility on the environmental issue. Moreover, unlike many Federal expenditure categories, spending on pollution abatement and open space acquisition cannot be safely deferred. Deferral of pollution abatement assures at best far higher future costs and at worse an irreversible situation. An important element in conservation planning is to keep environmental options open for the future. With the escalating cost of land and its rapid loss to industrial and residential development, deferral of open space acquisition is in a real sense an ultimate decision not to save landscape. The options will vanish forever.

There should be a clear, unequivocal espousal of wilderness protection -- both in remote areas of the West and also close to crowded population centers. There is a tendency to equate conservation with "balanced" or "wise" development to the point where dedication to conservation values becomes fuzzy in the public mind. The concept of wilderness has deep emotional ties to many Americans. Consequently, the President's articulation on these values will have significant impact.

Land Use Planning

Neither party, nor any leading politician, has seized upon the whole area of land planning as it pertains to environmental quality. Yet the use of land, together with the choices and decisions involved in that use, is what much of the environmental crisis is all about.

While air and water pollution and open space acquisition constitute established public concerns with recognized political spokesmen and constituencies, they remain specialized concerns. The broader concern for comprehensive land and water planning has not yet been championed at the national level.

Plainly, we have no interest in promoting national planning from Washington. On the contrary, what is needed is more effective land use planning at the State and local level. I have already cited the growing evidence of public concern over such issues as highways, jetports, and power plant siting. We cannot afford to permit the handling of such critical problems to be resolved largely by process of protest and confrontation. Nor can we meet the problem by labeling such public attitudes as "hysteria." They are real. I believe that both private industry and public agencies have a vital stake in better planning and wider public acceptance of that planning.

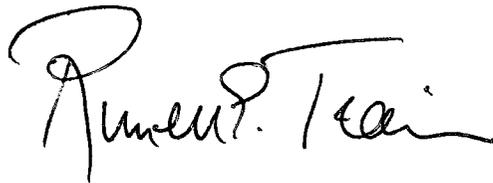
It would probably be premature to undertake any major Federal program initiative in this area. On the other hand, the time is ripe for a Presidential articulation of the problem. A White House Conference could focus public attention on the land use problem, and involve a broad spectrum of national leadership, including governors and industry, and provide a framework for broad citizen involvement in decision-making. (Interior's coastal zone management program now being cleared at the Bureau of the Budget is a modest legislative initiative that could be pursued at such a conference. The Town Conservation Commission concept which has taken hold in New England could provide a model for local, volunteer, community action.)

Conclusion

I have not tried to spell out all of the possible proposals which might be included in a Presidential Message on Environment. What we must look for is basic reform rather than just an itemization of activities.

The President should speak to new ways of making public choices and decisions but, more important, he should speak to new values -- new priorities. He must tell the country that this Administration and this Republican Party stand for something more than just good management. He should redefine the American Dream -- not in terms of GNP but in terms of the quality of human life.

It is an opportunity for the President to excite and challenge the American people, particularly the young.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ronald Reagan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page.