

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 22, 1970

FOR JOHN D. EHRLICHMAN

On January 9 you reported that "The President thinks it might be worthwhile for him to correspond with leading thinkers in various fields to solicit their comments and ideas on the issues of the day." In the domestic area he is thinking of the field of "environmental reclamation and ecological preservation."

You asked what I thought of the idea, and who might 10 or 15 correspondents be.

I think it is a good idea. I would hold off thinking of publishing anything until we see what comes of it, but almost any contact of this kind is likely to be of use to the President and to the professors. In particular, the subject of the environment is at this point so vague and unformed, we really must move quickly to impose some structure on our efforts. This requires advice.

I have a specific thought concerning the April 22 EARTH DAY. Clearly this is an opportunity to get the President usefully and positively involved with a large student movement. My thought would be to solicit ideas from the experts in the field, cull those responses, and direct specific questions to each of the "Environmental Teach-Ins." The object would be to come up with hard questions centering on valid issues of trade-offs and the like. These questions are not easy to answer. In the process we could engage in some future goal setting as well. (The results of this effort might be publishable.) In any event it would give some structure and recognition to the EARTH DAY effort, and get us some potentially valuable advice as well.

As a start, I propose the President, if he likes the idea, send something like the enclosed letter to something like the attached list. I don't know most of the people on it, but they are well vouched for. As the responses come back, we can frame our strategy for the April 22 Teach-Ins.

Chris DeMuth is in touch with the EARTH DAY group, which is headquartered here in Washington. Relations apparently are fine. We would want to get some agreement from them before following up on the professors' responses. I think it will also be necessary and wise to give Gaylord Nelson and Paul McCloskey their due as sponsors of the occasion. I was lobbying Nelson yesterday on behalf of Rumsfeld (unsuccessfully) and suggested I would be back at him about EARTH DAY sometime in February. He was entirely cordial.



Daniel P. Moynihan

Attachments

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Dear

As you will of course be aware, there is a rising interest in the nation in environmental problems. As I remarked in the State of the Union Message, "The great question of the seventies is, shall we surrender to our surroundings, or shall we make our peace with nature and begin to make reparations for the damage we have done to our air, our land and our water?"

If this is to become, as I hope and trust it will, a common cause of all the people of America it is necessary to establish some order of priorities, and to develop a set of strategies with respect to the problems involved. I am writing to ask if you would be good enough to share with me your thoughts on this matter.

Which do you consider the most pressing issues of governmental reclamation and ecological preservation? Can you distinguish between those more important in the near term, and those that will be critical for the long run? Which problems would you describe as knowledge problems, that is, subjects on which the basic research or technological development has yet to be done? Which problems are basically political, in that we know what to do and how, but have not mustered an effective political majority in favor of change. In all these matters -- and in any others that might occur to you -- what ought to be the role of the Federal government?

I would most appreciate any thoughts you might have to offer in this regard. Don't hesitate to write at whatever length you desire, or to suggest useful documents already prepared. Please be assured that I will be giving your reply the closest attention.

Sincerely,