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CONSERVATION ADDRESS TO FARM AND HOME WEEK, UNIVERSITY
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The conservation crisis, described so dramatically by Secretary of the Interior Udall in his recent book, is not becoming any less critical. In fact, the mounting pressures of population, industrialization, pollution and blight are so great that every day wasted in meeting this crisis makes it more doubtful that we will win the fight.

But we do have a unique opportunity presented to us now, and instead of dwelling on the crisis in conservation, I would like today to point out the dimensions of this new opportunity.

The opportunity comes to us in President Johnson's "war on poverty," and the direct way in which that war is tied to the conservation of natural resources.

The nation is responding very favorably to the President's declaration of war on poverty, which I suppose should have been expected by anyone who knew much about the character of the American people.

What was not anticipated, in my opinion, was the extent to which this war on poverty coincides with the fight to preserve natural resources.

I think the parallel between these two great national efforts is best illustrated in the Youth Conservation Corps, originally proposed by President Kennedy and now supported by President Johnson, in modified form, as a vital part of the war on poverty.

The Youth Conservation Corps uniquely meets the needs of both a poverty and a natural resources program for this simple reason: We have a lot of idle men in this country, and, at the same time, we have a tremendous backlog of work to be done in the field of conservation.

The logical thing to do is to put these men to work on vital conservation work -- which would never be done in any other way.

I made a speech in the Senate outlining a national program against poverty on January 27th. At the time I emphasized that we must not try to fight poverty by a massive handout program. Instead, we have to propose long range, carefully coordinated programs that will put people to work in a creative, constructive manner and try to strike at the basic causes of poverty, not just the symptoms.

So when we talk about any program to put men to work, we must be especially careful to avoid "busy work" projects that involve pointless activity and offer little to the country except the false illusion that we have done something about idleness.

The special value of work in the field of conservation lies in the fact that the work itself is of great value, and the fact that it would not be done otherwise.

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Here we do not have to rely on any mere theories. We have the hard, practical experience of several years of a very successful Youth Conservation Camp program in our own state.

Our state welfare director, Wilbur Schmidt, has kept me posted on the results of this program because it was one of my principal interests when I was governor of Wisconsin.

I have been continually amazed at the quantity, the quality and

the variety of work done by the boys who have served in our Youth Conservation camp program for the past two summers .

First of all, the boys moved into rundown camps. They made them liveable. They cleaned up the campgrounds, painted and repaired their buildings, built boat docks and provided their own recreational facilities .

Then, under competent supervision, they moved out to do vital conservation work.

They restored a stretch of the Manitowish river in Vilas county, to make it better for fish habitat. They built retaining walls along a stretch of river bank, placing some 90,000 stones by hand. They built rock dams in the river to channel the flow of water, and dug boulders out of the center of the stream. They inventoried fish in several lakes .

Our State Conservation Department wanted to plant a large tract with buckwheat, to provide feed for wild geese, but it was rough land, studded with scrub timber. The boys cut down, piled and burned the trees to prepare the land for final working by power equipment.

They built fire lanes in state forests. They opened up roads to lakeshores. They set up toilets and bath houses and built boat launching ramps. They thinned out state pine plantations, to give the trees a chance to spread out. They developed campsites and picnic spots for tourists, clearing land and building outdoor fireplaces. They manned fire towers during periods of greatest fire risk. They improved roadsides. They cleared and planted areas to make better habitat for grouse and other wildlife.

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In our Wisconsin program we realized that work alone was not the answer. The Youth Conservation Camp program offered not only a chance to complete some priceless work, which could be done in no other way, but it also offered an opportunity to reach a group of young men with a message of priceless public importance. These boys had to understand the importance and the philosophy and the long-range significance of the work they were doing. So half a day of each week was set aside for instruction. University of Wisconsin professors met with the boys and spoke on wildlife management, the science of the soil, and the philosophy of conservation. Conservation department experts spoke on fire fighting, fire prevention, forest management, boat and gun safety and fish hatchery operations.

Training demonstrations were held out in the field -- in fire fighting, boat and gun safety, wildlife habitat, fish propagation, control of the sea lamprey, and the management of our deer herds.

As the Milwaukee Journal quoted a camp director, commenting on the boys who served under him, "They came in boys, and they went home men." The Sheboygan Press commented, "The success of the Wisconsin program has surpassed all expectations and should go far toward convincing Members of Congress that a National Youth Conservation Corps would work well and deserves a try."

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I cite these detailed facts on Wisconsin's experience for this reason: Whenever we talk about anything like a National Youth Conservation Corps, we do provoke some criticism from people who have trouble visualizing just how the program will work and who are afraid it will become a vast boondoggle.

Some people simply do not appreciate the amount of conservation work that must be done if we are to meet the crisis in conservation. Others do not have any idea of the variety and the significance of this type of work.

A common criticism runs like this: "What good does it do to teach thousands of young men to chop wood? We don't heat our homes with wood any more."

Others assume that if there is work to be done, it should be handled by private contractors.

I think the Wisconsin program answered all these criticisms.

First, we are not talking about chopping wood. We are talking about giving these young men broad, valuable experience in preserving their natural environment. This work will make them better husbands and fathers and better citizens -- and the work they accomplish will make our land a better one in which to live.

Secondly, the very nature of conservation work is such that large numbers of idle men could easily be put to work on it. It is largely unsuited to conventional contracting methods.

Much of the work is in fairly remote rural areas, where it is difficult to recruit a labor force and where contractors are scarce. It is primarily work which must be done by hand -- working in stream beds, chopping through tangled brush, creating campsites, stabilizing stream banks, manning fire towers, etc.

And most importantly, it is work which the state or the community would not be able to afford in any other way. It would be expensive to do through private contractors. The "cost-benefit ratio" might not be favorable. The states and the local communities which would be interested in having this work done are already severely strained by budget problems. They simply do not have the resources to undertake any such program.

So you can see that a national youth conservation corps and a war on poverty go hand in hand.

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Now I want to give you just a brief review of the conservation crisis we face -- and also the problem of poverty -- so you can see how urgent it is that we take advantage of this unique opportunity.

This Nation has got to begin at once to make a massive investment of time, money and effort at the local, state and national level if we are going to save our natural resources from destruction. Much of our priceless heritage has already been lost. The great stand of timber which could have made northern Wisconsin rich forevermore has been gone for half a century. The rivers of the east are already tragically polluted and pollution is spreading relentlessly over the rest of the nation -- even our own Great Lakes.

Our ocean coastlines have been largely ruined by the most vulgar form of commercial exploitation. Much of the wilderness -- our last link with the world which God created -- has been destroyed and our efforts to preserve what is left are stalled because of private greed and public apathy. Many of our most beautiful scenic routes have become ugly slums of garish signs and shoddy development.

And the future promises only that all these trends will become much worse.

Our population is expected to double by the year 2000 -- which is only 36 years away.

We are presently using water at the rate of 355 billion gallons a day, and running short. By 1980, we are told, we will need 600 billion gallons a day -- almost twice our present supply in a scant 17 years. By the year 2000, we will need almost 900 billion gallons. Thus the threat of spreading water pollution is not merely a threat of future inconvenience to a few outdoorsmen. It is a question of the water supply needed to sustain a nation of some 200 million people.

Air pollution is also increasing at an alarming rate. Experts tell us it does \$11 billion a year in damage. Our cities have waged a good fight against smoke, only to be confronted with new and much more complex problems in the gases discharged from chemical plants and automobiles. Polluted air is damaging trees, vegetables, flowers, farm crops, homes and cars, and coating human lungs with deposits that can cause serious illness.

Most of the open space left in America is under relentless pressure. Automobiles are creating a nation-wide traffic jam and chewing up much of the land with highways, parking lots and junkyards. Experts tell us that between 1950 and the year 2000, the demand for outdoor recreation facilities will increase 10 times over. Yet we are making no significant effort today to meet that demand. The parks and open spaces we do have today face the danger of destruction in a few years simply from overuse.

Conservation is not a single issue all by itself -- something of concern to hunters and fishermen and those who like to go for an occasional boat ride. The conservation crisis of which we talk today involves almost every form of human activity. It involves the air, the soil, the water, the forests, wildlife, minerals and people. It includes agriculture, transportation, industry, commerce, sports, education, and almost all of government.

We have a wonderful "conservation movement" in this country, but it is seriously fragmented. It is made up of hundreds of little garden clubs, rod and gun clubs, boating organizations, and all their various publications and interested supporters. Their interest in this national crisis is laudable but is too fragmented to sustain any true nation-wide campaign to meet the problem as it must be met.

That is why we are fortunate that our needs in conservation are now seen to run parallel to our needs to do something about the problem of poverty in a nation of general prosperity. Let me tell you of a few facts about that problem.

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By standards widely accepted in the government and in economic circles, about one-fifth of American families live in poverty. They are poor in income, poor in education and skills, poor in housing, poor most of all in opportunity for the future.

Poverty is a cycle. Children born into it are often doomed to remain there, denied the chance to move upward because they had to quit school to earn money to feed their hungry brothers and sisters, or denied the chance for a job because they live in one of those areas where jobs have almost ceased to exist, or denied a chance to compete in an increasingly technical society because family incentive and capital are sorely lacking.

It is true that some of our worst poverty is in the cities of America, but about one-sixth of our poor people live on farms and almost one-third more live in rural areas.

As I am sure you have already read, waging a national war on poverty is extremely complex. To cure poverty, we must have full employment; we must have a sustained high rate of economic growth; we must end racial discrimination; we must avoid regional recessions; we must improve youth opportunities; we must raise the standards of education and end school dropouts; we must fight disease and mental illness.

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Obviously, a youth conservation corps, or a job corps, is not a complete answer to either the conservation crisis or the problem of poverty. But it is one valuable weapon to use in both campaigns.

No matter how elaborate and sophisticated and enlightened a poverty program we devise, everyone agrees that it must contain one very basic element. We have got to have some kind of an immediate program to put considerable numbers of men -- especially unskilled men -- to work.

This is a great opportunity that a youth conservation corps or a job corps offers us. The work is there, waiting to be done. And it will be of incalculable benefit to America for years to come.

Last October, there were 730,000 young men and women between the ages of 16 and 21 who were out of school and out of work. This was a 22% increase over the previous year. Many of them live in impoverished rural areas, isolated mountain communities or city slums. Many of them lack motivation, and life in America offers them little but a continuation of their life in grinding poverty.

President Johnson has proposed a job corps with 30,000 to 40,000 young men, half of them in conservation camps of 100 to 200 men each. In addition to their conservation work and their outdoors training, they would be taught basic skills as well as reading, writing and arithmetic if they needed it. Enrollment in these camps would be voluntary, of course. They will work under adult supervisors and study under experienced forest and park rangers, representatives of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, etc. They will work in carpentry and masonry, with bulldozers, axes and shovels and in the kitchens and offices and maintenance jobs. The President proposes that they be paid a living allowance of \$30 to \$50 a month and extra pay when they assume leadership duties. Upon leaving the program, each man would get \$50 for each month of satisfactory service.

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We can spend substantial amounts of money on such a program knowing that we are doing valuable work -- work which would not be done otherwise -- and knowing that we are giving thousands of men not only an immediate alternative to idleness but a creative education in their own priceless environment.

And I like to think that if we can do this, if we can put these idle men to work on these vital projects, we can not only accomplish these obvious goals but also make a major contribution to the really great need in the field of conservation -- the need to educate our nation in the urgency of preserving our natural resources.

Consider our wide ranging conservation crisis, and then consider the value in meeting that crisis of thousands of young men, in their most formative years, working on conservation projects and learning first hand of the heritage which they have in their forests and their lakes and their soil, and what must be done to preserve these priceless resources for their future and the future of their children.

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