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PARTIAL TEXT OF AN ADDRESS
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PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
TO THE BETA SIGMA PHI
CONVENTION AT THUNDER BAY,
SATURDAY, JUNE 3, 1972

"NATIONAL ISSUES AND
INTERNATIONAL POLLUTION"

AMONG POINTS MADE IN THE PARTIAL TEXT OF THIS SPEECH:

Canada can expect a levelling off of pollution during the 1970's and a decline in the 1980's, as present laws and programs take full effect.

Pollution control on a global scale poses major problems. There is fear that some countries may permit pollution in order to attract industry at the expense of their pollution free neighbours.

Some developing nations suspect that they will be victims of international regulations devised by and for the benefit of the developed states. They also fear that states may use environmental laws as pretexts for excluding competitive imports.

Some ancient civilizations achieved zero population growth, but none of the nations today, despite our superior technology. The main reason for explosive population growths are social, not technical.

Canadians have begun to ask for goods that last, rather than for a continuous increase in goods with built-in obsolescence.

During the past few years "environment" and "pollution" have become common concerns. People have become aware of the loss of such traditional amenities as pure water and fresh air. People have discovered that, instead of being overwhelmed by his natural environment, man threatens to destroy the biosphere in which he lives. People have begun to demand that their governments face up to the problems of a civilization in which man has both the power to create and the power to destroy. And some say we have only until the year 2,000 to avert a global disaster.

This month's United Nations Conference on the Human Environment marks one high point of public concern with environmental issues. Since the General Assembly convened the Conference in 1968, over one hundred governments have been involved in its preparation. More than seventy governments have presented reports on the state of their national environment. Many governments have established governmental machinery and passed legislation to deal with problems.

Here in Canada the Federal Government has been actively involved in every aspect of the Stockholm Conference preparations.

It has created a Department of the Environment to coordinate its activities in the fields of water management, fisheries, forestry, wildlife, land use and environmental protection. It has established the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs to provide a focus for the identification and control of Canada's urban problems. And it has passed legislation such as the Canada Water Act and the Clean Air Act. (It has signed an agreement with the United States to clean up the Great Lakes. And it has worked on the preparation of an international agreement to deal with the dumping of toxic wastes into the oceans.)

These are worthy accomplishments. But they are not enough in themselves. Environmental problems are international problems and as such they require international solutions.

The problems and proposals which have been placed on the agenda of the Conference which is scheduled to open in two days time in Stockholm are enormous in scope and I would like to discuss a few of them with you today.

Pollution is probably the most obvious of our environmental problems. We discharge vast tonnage of wood fibre, rock and a multitude of chemicals into our rivers and streams. Our factories and cars fill the air with noxious gases. We litter our countryside with garbage. One hundred years ago, the biosphere could absorb these materials and neutralize their effect. Now, however, large-scale modifications of the biosphere are occurring and ecological systems that support life are being overworked.

We in Canada are dealing with this problem. Pollution has already hit its peak. With the installation of efficient treatment facilities and the screening of new industrial products, we will see a levelling off of pollution in the 1970s and a decline in the 1980s. The cost of this massive programme is large in dollar terms. But in new mills and factories it rarely represents more than two per cent of the overall selling price of the product.

This is not to say that pollution control does not present its difficulties at home. Some of these difficulties are technological.

We have not, for example, developed a practicable pollution free car to date.

Other difficulties involve political decisions. Everyone agrees that pollution control is a "good thing". But what priority should it be given in relation to other government services such as education and health care?

Many say the polluter must pay. But who is the polluter - the manufacturer or the consumer?

But today I will deal more specifically with difficulties which are international.

The atmosphere is an international resource beyond the control of national legislation. How is it to be protected?

Who will bring sovereign states to task?

Pollution controls have an important effect on international trade. And countries today are afraid. They are afraid that others will allow pollution havens in order to gain a price advantage in world markets.

How can any nation afford to clean industries unless its economic rivals establish similar controls?

Developing countries have their particular fears. On the one hand, they suspect that developed countries will use their position as development assistance donors to force them to adapt stricter environmental standards than their local priorities or their local environments would otherwise require. Such a policy would divert money from development and increase the price of their products on the international market. Developing countries also fear that pollution control measures such as the banning of products sprayed with DDT will bar their products from developed markets.

You will appreciate that there are no easy answers to these problems. The United Nations Conference Secretariat is,

however, proposing action:

- (1) to monitor, evaluate and forecast international pollution problems;
- (2) to develop international agreements on pollution control standards and the way in which they should be allowed to affect international trade; and
- (3) to promote education, training and research into the problems of pollution identification and control.

Canada supports these proposals and has either provided or intends to provide funds for their implementation. More specifically, we have undertaken to build three of the ten base-line stations for determining the quality of the world's atmosphere and seven of the one hundred monitoring stations which the Secretariat has recommended. We have indicated willingness to assist developing countries to meet the environmental standards which developed countries have imposed on their imports.

Another environmental problem which I wish to draw to your attention this afternoon is the twin problems of population and resource use. World resources are limited. There is only so much air, so much water, so much land. Man can manipulate his resources to increase their capacity to support life, but hardly anyone believes that this can be done forever.

In fact, one of our most successful attempts to increase the world's capacity to support life - the intensive use of chemical fertilizers - has been shown to be only temporarily effective. World population increases exponentially. In 1850 there were one billion people; in 1925, two billion; and in 1963, three billion. Our current population of three and one-half billion is expected to reach four billion by 1977, five billion by 1987; and seven billion by the year 2000. They consider, not unreasonably, that they have the right to live, and that means that they have a right to at least some minimal share of the world's resources.

Over the past decade many countries have faced the problem of population growth and have adopted national population programmes. Unfortunately none of these programmes has been successful in achieving zero population growth.

There are two obstacles which stand in the way of complete success. The first is technical. The second is social. And given the fact that effective population control has existed in societies which did not have access to modern contraception techniques, the second is probably the more important.

People in poor countries have more children than people in rich countries. This is partly because people in rich countries have access to better contraceptive techniques, but it is also

a result of the fact that children are less economically useful in modern urban industrialized societies. In primitive rural societies large families still serve as a kind of substitute for social welfare. People in developed countries can see positive economic benefits in limiting the size of their families. People in poor countries, who have nothing to gain, cannot make the same calculation. Only when standards of living begin to rise do people decide to control population growth.

Let me turn to another aspect of life on this crowded planet of ours - the magic letters GNP, Gross National Product. For as long as any of us here can remember, I'm sure, what we call our standard of living has been measured by the GNP, that is, measured in large degree by the amount by which we increase our use of natural resources each year. Legitimately, quite properly it seemed, all nations have sought to improve the conditions under which their people live and they have done this generally by more mining, more construction, more manufacture, more services, more consumption of fuels.

We must recognize the justice of the desire of underdeveloped nations to grow and prosper. Canada, as you probably know, declared her intention to move toward the United Nations target of 1 per cent of GNP for development assistance.

But at the same time we must recognize that the world's resources are limited and that waste, and fad production, and production with what we call built in obsolescence are now very dubious goals for any society to pursue.

Rather we must turn our attention to matters which were until recently, of little consequence in our lives. Recycling, to name but one. And I suspect that Canadians have now begun to reject the idea that each year we must always have new and different products pouring out of the cornucopia of our immense industrial system. Canadians, I think, are not so anxious for the magic word new in the products they buy. Increasingly they are asking for products which last.

In short, we may have begun to change our idea of what the good life really is.

But if Canada has, as I suspect, begun to rate quality over quantity in our society, let us not automatically adopt the view that the nations of this world who are now hungry and poor will necessarily share our view.

To its very great credit the Stockholm Conference has begun to face the multiple challenges of rising population, limited resources, and legitimate ambitions of the underdeveloped to develop and increase their resource use.

The Conference Secretariat has prepared proposals for action to establish national population policies, to promote international cooperation in the management of shared resources such as the fisheries, and to encourage developing countries to integrate a concern for the environment into their plans for development.

Canada supports these proposals and accepts its responsibility not only to manage its resources for the maximum of benefit to mankind but also to assist others to do likewise. More specifically, it will continue its preparations to participate in a Conference on World Population Problems in 1974. We will indicate its willingness to make a substantial contribution to an international voluntary fund for the environment. And we will increase development assistance to help developing countries control their population growth and develop their renewable and nonrenewable resources according to sound ecological principles.

Throughout my remarks I have been stressing the fact that man, if he is to survive, must put greater stress on the biological side of things. I have talked about the need for nations to take responsibility for the effect of their activities on the environment of other nations and on the common environment of oceans and atmosphere. Like it or not, we are our brother's keeper. We are travelling together on a common planet with no rational alternative but to work together to make the world an environment in which we and our neighbours and our children can live full and peaceful lives.

It will not be simply done. It will not be accomplished by expressions of high hope or of good intent. In the international arena, much hard and painstaking work and many difficult decisions lie ahead for us.

But it is a job which must be done.