

DO YOUR THING - THEN TELL IT LIKE IT IS!

25th Nov 70

Thank you for asking me to join in your discussions.

And I appreciate the non-stop flight, although I've never seen Havana... Some say it's an interesting experience enroute to Florida. - *Airplane Lights - Red - Green -*

Florida is quite a State:

--A rollicking tourist mecca with 22 million visitors to bump shoulders with its 7 million residents, and more of each every year...

--A state hugging the Eastern Coast, and yet having a cattle industry important enough for full-time range conservationists...

Talk by Norman A. Berg, Associate Administrator, Soil Conservation Service, at the Florida Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors, Jacksonville, Florida, August 27, 1970.

--A state where having enough good-quality water for many uses is a problem, and yet where storms with girls' names can dump more rain in a few days than many states get in a year, and where two-thirds of the soils have a wetness problem...

--And a state where waterways have to be a two-way street, to keep groundwater and stream levels right for crops, fish and wildlife, and city folk.

Conservation districts in Florida have a lot to do, and a lot going for them. A movement that began largely as an erosion-oriented concern has become a drive to work with many kinds of people on many facets of resource conservation and environmental improvement.

At least that's the model. How are you doing in your 60 districts?

When you're back home on district business, whom do you work with, and on what kind of action; and who knows about it? Do you take problems one at a time--fire engine style--as they turn up, or are you looking ahead to keep problems small or even turn them into opportunities?

These are big questions. I'm asking them because the next few years are going to be fast-paced and more than a little different from the previous few. I want to talk with you this morning about those years and about getting ready for them.

As a base for talking about the future, we ought to establish where America is right now. And that isn't easy.

--Rural America is pictured as a loser in population and in job opportunities. And that has been true in many areas. According to an Economic Research Service study, the number of people on farms dropped 64 percent from 1950 to 1968. About half of our Nation's 3,134 counties and county equivalents have fewer residents now than a decade ago. Yet, the study points out, some rural counties--in the southern Piedmont, middle Tennessee Valley, eastern Oklahoma, and northern and western Arkansas in particular--gained population in the 1960's. Between 1962 and 1967, private nonfarm employment in counties outside metropolitan areas rose faster than in metropolitan areas. Five percent as compared with four percent.

--And another population note: A year ago predictions were that America would have to accommodate another 100 million people by the year 2000. The latest projections show the jump may be about 80 million, and that America's population may level off before we number 300 million. Do we have a population crisis? Maybe not. Before you begin to breathe more easily, though, let me point out that most of the growth still expected will occur, the statisticians say, at the edges of our country--and Florida has a corner on the edge market. Your "people pressure" on land, water and air resources will continue to be heavy no matter how the projections turn out.

--The environment is in the news, as it was a year ago. Only more so. Smog warnings and nerve gas and DDT and mercury poisoning. Pollution from industry and agriculture and consumer. Instant experts everywhere you turn on what's wrong with America.

And yet lots of people have been working to set things right.

Two million landowners and operators...organizations like yours...

citizen's groups...and government agencies.

President Nixon established an interdepartmental Council on Environmental Quality, as his first official act of this decade. The Council has just issued its first annual report. It is well worth your reading. And when you finish it, take a fresh look at your district's ~~long~~ range program, even though you all have updated your conservation objectives already.

Some thoughts from President Nixon's address to Congress announcing the Council's report caught my attention:

"In dealing with the environment we must learn not how to master nature but how to master ourselves, our institutions, and our technology. We must achieve a new awareness of our dependence on our surroundings and on the natural systems which support all life, but awareness must be coupled with a full realization of our enormous capability to alter these surroundings. Nowhere is this capability greater than in the United States, and this country must lead the way in showing that our human and technological resources can be devoted to a better life and an improved environment for ourselves and our inheritors on this planet.

"Our environmental problems are very serious, indeed urgent, but they do not justify either panic or hysteria. The problems are highly complex, and their resolution will require rational, systematic approaches, hard work and patience. There must be a national commitment and a rational commitment.

"The accompanying report by the Council describes the principal problems we face now and can expect to face in the future, and it provides us with perceptive guidelines for meeting them. These deserve the most careful consideration. They point the directions in which we must move as rapidly as circumstances permit.

"The newly aroused concern with our natural environment embraces old and young alike, in all walks of life. For the young, it has a special urgency. They know that it involves not only our own lives now but the future of mankind. For their parents, it has a special poignancy--because ours is the first generation to feel the pangs of concern for the environmental legacy we leave to our children.

"At the heart of this concern for the environment lies our concern for the human condition: for the welfare of man himself, now and in the future. As we look ahead to the end of this new decade of heightened environmental awareness, therefore, we should set ourselves a higher goal than merely remedying the damage wrought in decades past. We should strive for an environment that not only sustains life but enriches life, harmonizing the works of man and nature for the greater good of all."

President Nixon had some cogent thoughts on the subject of land use and population that ought to hit at home in Florida:

"The particular impact of any given level of population growth depends in large measure on patterns of land use. Three quarters of our people now live in urban areas, and if present trends continue most of them in the future will live in a few mammoth urban concentrations. These concentrations put enormous pressure on transportation, sanitation and other public services. They sometimes create demands that exceed the resource capacity of the region, as in the case of water supply. They can aggravate pollution, overcrowd recreation facilities, limit open space, and make the restorative world of nature ever more remote from everyday life. Yet we would be blind not to recognize that for the most part the movement of people to the cities has been the result neither of perversity nor of happenstance, but rather of natural human aspirations for the better jobs, schools, medical services, cultural opportunities and excitement that have traditionally been associated with urban life.

"If the aspirations which have drawn Americans to the city in the first instance and subsequently from the city core to the suburbs are often proving illusory, the solution does not lie in seeking escape from urban life. Our challenge is to find ways to promote the amenities of life in the midst of urban development: in short, to make urban life fulfilling rather than frustrating. Along with the essentials of jobs and housing, we must also provide open spaces and outdoor recreation opportunities, maintain acceptable levels of air and water quality, reduce noise and litter, and develop cityscapes that delight the eye and uplift the spirit.

"By the same token, it is essential that we also make rural life itself more attractive, thus encouraging orderly growth in rural areas. The creation of greater economic, social, cultural, and recreational opportunities in rural parts of the country will lead to the strengthening of small cities and towns, contributing to the establishment of new growth centers in the nation's heartland region.

"Throughout the nation there is a critical need for more effective land use planning, and for better controls over use of the land and the living systems that depend on it. Throughout our history, our greatest resource has been our land--forests and plains, mountains and marshlands, rivers and lakes. Our land has sustained us. It has given us a love of freedom, a sense of security, and courage to test the unknown.

"We have treated our land as if it were a limitless resource. Traditionally, Americans have felt that what they do with their own land is their own business. This attitude has been a natural outgrowth of the pioneer spirit. Today, we are coming to realize that our land is finite, while our population is growing. The uses to which our generation puts the land can either expand or severely limit the choices our children will have. The time has come when we must accept the idea that none of us has a right to abuse the land, and that on the contrary society as a whole has a legitimate interest in proper land use. There is a national interest in effective land use planning all across the nation.

"I believe that the problems of urbanization which I have described, of resource management, and of land and water use generally can only be met by comprehensive approaches which take into account the widest range of social, economic, and ecological concerns. I believe we must work toward development of a National Land Use Policy to be carried out by an effective partnership of Federal, State and local governments together, and, where appropriate, with new regional institutional arrangements."

In its chapter on land use, the Council's report says:

"More people mean more congestion, more urban

sprawl, and vast networks of highways to transport them.

"They require more goods and services--more steel, more paper, more cars, and more beer cans. And they put more severe demands on urban land. Moreover, people themselves produce waste that must be handled by treatment plants.

"Mushrooming population growth doesn't necessarily mean more polluted air and water. But it is more difficult to have environmental quality with the press of population. It is more difficult to avoid congestion, preserve green space and keep a pleasant environment. Whatever the environmental problem, rising population requires effort just to stand still and great effort to make progress-requiring - institutions not now available and management tools not yet perfected."

Do you catch the thread here? New programs, new policies, new institutions...Several bills are at the Congress now that would make significant changes in government.

You and the Soil Conservation Service may feel--and rightly so--that we have much to offer in the development of land-use and other environmental policies and programs. We've had long experience. We have technical knowhow. We have a growing body of basic land and water facts...recreation inventories...conservation needs inventories...river basin studies...and soil surveys, an item you have helped speed up in Florida, by getting the State legislature and local governments to chip in.

You and others have already said that there are some important features that national land-use policy should consider:

- . Means for accommodating the influx of new residents to what is now rural America;
- . Means for encouraging the existing local and state planning efforts, since most of the decisions are and should be made at those levels;

. Provision, in some form, for preserving areas for future growth and needs, such as areas best suited for farming; for new cities, parks, airports, reservoirs, waste disposal, recreation, industrial parks, and communications systems; for environmental corridors of green space; for wildlife production; for historic interest; and for mineral resources;

. Provision for protecting floodplains, wetland, watersheds, groundwater recharge areas and the like in order to assure a continuing supply of water of suitable quality and safe movement of storm runoff;

. Improved coordination among Federal land-use and management programs; and

. Means for assuring a two-way flow of ideas, information and assistance between local people and Federal agencies.

You and SCS may feel that a grass-roots system that involves the landowner and local governments and help from state and national agencies in an effective package gets results. We may think we have an institutional framework that is well suited to working on America's resource goals and that therefore we deserve a major voice both in planning strategies and in environmental action.

But we may not necessarily have a very large hunk of the pie. We may be doing great things--but who knows about us? Who understands our role? Somebody recently made a list of Federal programs and came up with well over a thousand in 57 Departments and independent agencies--and SCS work was only one item. In that sort of perspective, do you believe that the great American public is fully aware of, as the publication says, "SCS--What It is and What It Does"? How many people even realize they live in a soil and water conservation district?

At appropriation time we compete with those other thousand programs for the hard-pressed Federal dollar, and no one agency gets what it thinks it needs. At a time when the cost of doing business has continually increased, SCS has had to cut back or relocate some of its staff in Florida and nationwide.

When an average American picks up Life Magazine and notices a story on SCS and conservation districts making "moonscapes" out of streambanks, is he able to sit back and ^{reflect} muse, "Well, that's not quite accurate. Restoring the capacity of stream channels sometimes is needed in watershed projects to get enough flood protection. And project sponsors work closely with agencies like the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission to make sure these improvements can be made with the most favorable total impact on the environment. And in a ^{W.S.} project like the Sarasota West Coast project, improved channels are providing excellent fishing..." Too many people do not have that kind of understanding.

Headlines indicate that too many writers and luncheon speakers think there has been nothing done to improve the environment--despite more than 3 decades of significant soil and water conservation work.

Many individual rural landowners have a ready knowledge and appreciation for the work of SCS and conservation districts. But they are not the only ones involved today in bringing about decisions in the use of land and water. They are not the only ones involved in determining which agencies and which organizations are in a position to help in environmental improvement.

Every citizen is or wants to be involved today. And you in conservation districts must work increasingly to create an image of providing useful--vital--assistance to the community, if you expect the whole community to support your efforts.

You need a little public relations, if you will. And the classic PR textbooks say there are two parts to good public relations:

- 1--Doing good things; and *Do your thing*
- 2--Telling people about them. *(Tell it like it is!)*

The first item is not automatic. It doesn't just happen.

Are we doing good things?

. Are we working as hard as we can? If so, are we welcoming other people to help with the workload? The day of doing it all with five supervisors and one district conservationist ended some time back.

. If the workload is too large, do you take a continuing look at priorities so that the most meaningful or pressing work gets done first?

. If an environmental or community problem arises, is your thinking broad enough to look closely as how you could help, or do you prefer to stick with the tried-and-true activities?

. Are you working to get more basic information to be helpful with, and to interpret it for your community needs?

. Are you making sure that every conservation practice is planned and installed and maintained in a way that makes the practice's impact on the environment the most favorable possible?

. Are you looking at your long-range program, your state enabling act, your working arrangements with other institutions to see that they are up to date? Districts have been doing this all over the country, and their "District Outlook" activities have been both timely and encouraging.

And if you are doing good things in Florida's conservation districts, then you'd better tell people about them. Assuming that everybody knows you're wonderful or relying on the good old farm audience is like turning on the stereo in an empty room. Is there music if no one hears it? Are you publicizing your work in empty rooms, or already friendly audiences, or out where all the people are?

. Does your district have a newsletter? If so, how much time do you spend on it? Where do you send it? Who reads it?

. Do you seek out editors and reporters who always print your stuff, or do you work actively to reach the people who need to know about the information and assistance you can provide?

. Do you know the school administrators in your district, and have you worked with them to put the out-of-doors in every classroom and to put every student in the outdoors so that tomorrow's decision-makers have an environmental understanding on which to base their actions?

There are perhaps more questions than answers. I simply want to stimulate your thinking about the shape of things to come and your part in them.

The State of Florida has a most attractive climate and landscape and a strong agriculture and beautiful cities. A growing number of people want to live here.

Between now and the year 2000 several millions of people will move here or be born here. Many of them will have pretty good incomes.

And people and money together with some tricky soil and water conditions can spell danger to the natural resources that attract all these people. But your forward-looking efforts can spell a good future for Florida.

As the Department's Director of Agricultural Economics, Don Paarlberg, said before the American Country Life Association last July, "What the American people really want and will work for, they can have. We are not the helpless objects of blind economic forces; we are capable of helping to shape the institutions which in turn help shape us."

You are capable. I'm confident that you can and will help shape a future that the American people really wants.

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