

POPULATION vs. RESOURCES--A GLOBAL VIEW

COPY
Speech of Senator Hubert H. Humphrey
Annual Meeting--Soil Conservation Society of America

August 28, 1962

Ladies and gentlemen of the Soil Conservation
Society of America:

I am honored and pleased to join you here at this high point of your meeting. I trust it has been a productive meeting, for your work is indeed of utmost urgency, here in America and around the world.

I am especially happy that you chose to come to Washington for your meeting. It gives men and women here in the various branches of our government an opportunity to learn from you the problems and progress in resource conservation.

It gives our friends from the foreign embassies an opportunity to share experiences. It helps us all to learn more about what is going on in this important field of work--in the United States and in the other countries represented by your Society.

Furthermore, your meeting here continues a series of particularly important conferences in Washington that have marked 1962 as a year of special focus on land and water resources.

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In January, leaders from all parts of the United States gathered here in a "Land and People Conference" to discuss urgent matters of public policy governing the effective use of resources.

On May 15, in this same hotel, the World Food Forum marked the opening of a year-long joint observance of the Centennial of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the Land-Grant Colleges.

On May 20th, we noted the one-hundredth anniversary of the Homestead Act, which opened vast land areas in the United States to agricultural settlement. And on May 24th, Washington was host to a two-day White House Conference on Conservation which directed special attention to public land problems and outdoor recreation in this country.

Now, you have brought to our capitol city this distinguished assembly of leaders and professional workers in soil and water conservation to take a look at resource matters as they affect people around the world.

We welcome this opportunity to obtain your views and opinions. I hope while you are here you will find occasion to visit personally with people in the executive and legislative branches of our government.

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I hope, too, that you have saved some time to enjoy the historic side of this great city.

It has been my good fortune to represent the people of Minnesota in Washington for many years.

As often as I am able, of course, I go back home. I find there, as you each do in your own home areas, special enjoyment and a source of renewed strength.

But each time I return to Washington, I marvel at the sight of the great Capitol dome. It stands for me as a symbol of the great heritage of liberty this Nation enjoys. Neither the passing of time nor continued familiarity with the scene have lessened the thrill I get from walking these streets and these corridors. Echoes of great men and events are all about us here, if we but listen.

I hope your visit to Washington has stirred in you these same emotions. It is good to have such a heritage and to be proud of it.

We here in America do indeed have a rich heritage.

God blessed this land with bountiful resources.

People from all parts of the world came here to blend and enrich the culture of our land.

Our people have been blessed with great inventiveness, with educational opportunities, and with technical and economic progress that enables most of us to live in comfort and security.

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We enjoy the highest standard of living in the world. We buy our food with fewer minutes of labor than any other people on the globe.

We are conquering disease after disease, and our death rate continues to decline.

What better evidence of our well being than to know that two of our big worries today are how to dispose of food surpluses and what to do with leisure time!

But no nation lives alone in this world.

While the United States and a few other countries in the Western industrial group enjoy a steadily improving standard of living, the majority of the world's people still live close to the subsistence level. Well over half of the population of this globe lives in adject poverty, on the verge of starvation.

I have seen as have many of you, the problems of those underdeveloped countries which contain two-thirds of the world's population. And what I have seen has made me very conscious of our tremendous responsibility to these nations. One cannot see people hungry, sick, fighting for mere existence, without being overwhelmed by a humanitarian impulse to help.

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But there is more than humanitarianism involved in our responsibility to less fortunate peoples of the world.

Fine talk about freedom and democracy and self government means little to a man who is hungry and whose children are dying.

That man does indeed need food and clothing. But he needs more than a mere handout, for that can be only temporary relief, at best. He needs most to be helped to help himself.

This is the great challenge to the United States and to the other prospering nations of the world. What we do, and how we go about helping the under-developed countries in the next decade may well determine the destiny of the world.

The facts are harsh and uncompromising. This is a life-or-death race between mounting world populations and sufficient food to maintain those populations in strength and dignity. We cannot close our eyes and expect this problem to fade away like a bad dream.

The facts about population growth are so staggering they are difficult to grasp. Let me try to bring some of their impact home to you.

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If you think of man's existence on earth as representing a day, the last three hundred years would be less than a minute. Yet during that tiny fraction of world history, the human race has made a six-fold increase.

But this is only the beginning: It took all the past centuries of human existence on this globe to reach today's world population of slightly over 3 billion people.

But if the present rate of population growth continues, it will take only 40 years more for our population to double--six billion people to be fed and clothed at the end of just four more decades. This is the estimate of the United Nations Bureau of Social Affairs.

India, with her teeming 403 million people, has the second largest population of any nation today.

Do you realize that during the 1960's alone the estimated increase in world population will be more than India's present numbers? In fact, at present rate of increase, the ten-year world increment is estimated at 570 million, or the equivalent of the combined present populations of India, Pakistan and Japan.

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Are you aware that in 1958 and 1959 about 90 million people were added to the earth's population--and that was the same as adding another Japan, or twice the population of France?

The problem is further compounded because population growth is most rapid in those countries currently least able to support such growth--where per capita food production is the lowest and where increases in production are difficult to achieve.

United Nations figures show that Latin America is today's fastest growing region, with Asia and Africa close behind. At least two thirds of all the babies born each year are in these areas--areas where progress and living standards are handicapped by illiteracy and malnutrition--areas where communism finds its most fertile seed bed.

So the problem is clear. But what will the solution be? What can be done in and for these less fortunate countries, for their good and for the good of world peace and progress in the years ahead?

For the time being, our productive capacity in the United States is such that we can and will provide large amounts of food to other countries. In addition

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to regular trade, U. S. exports of farm products under special government programs amounted to \$1.5 billion in fiscal year 1961. Food aid is being increased this year.

Some of this food is donated, but the largest part is paid for in local currency by the receiving country. Most of these funds are then loaned back to the country to help finance development programs. Thus U.S. food aid is intended primarily to help underdeveloped countries step up their own economic development.

The United States is not alone in this activity, of course. Many nations contribute to economic development in food deficit countries through the World Bank, the United Nations, and other international groups. Some countries operate direct aid programs. Canada is one of the American nations that has provided major assistance to India, Pakistan and Ceylon.

We who can must use our abundance to help friendly countries strengthen their drive toward economic stability and political maturity.

But with all of America's abundance, we cannot feed the world, or any major part of it indefinitely.

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Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman has pointed out that if all our stored-up abundance of food were made available abroad to people with inadequate diets, it would not close the food gap for even a year.

It has been estimated that the world's population growth within this decade will require nearly half a billion acres of new farmland, or the equivalent increased production from already burdened areas. Although Africa, West Asia and Latin America have much unused arable land, the Far East has very little.

But land alone is not enough. Land, credit and tax reforms are needed in much of the underdeveloped world before land resources can be fully used. Unless these advances come about, and unless every bit of technical know-how is put to use, demand could conceivably outstrip and exhaust the world's cropland resource.

Here is where the trained agriculturalist--the expert soil and water conservationist has his great opportunity.

Here is an export more precious than food.

As long as population growth in the underdeveloped region continues to offset increases in food production, little can be expected in the way of economic growth and stability. Until agriculture becomes more efficient, most of any rise in income must still go for food.

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A more efficient agriculture, however, can create purchasing power that will create and support industry. It will release workers to man the machines, and provide them with the food and fiber they formerly had to produce for themselves.

This is a program in which many of you here have already taken part, I know. More than 1,200 American technicians and experts are abroad now, helping with a wide variety of agricultural problems.

I think you will agree with me that this matter of sharing our technology of resource conservation and development is one of our greatest opportunities for service to the rest of the world. We cannot afford to be miserly or short-sighted in this endeavor. We can and must spare our best technicians--not our least effective--to be certain that we do the best possible job of helping other nations to help themselves.

We want our very best and most competent citizens representing us, too, for each one helps to create a picture of America and democracy in the minds of the people with whom he works.

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This responsibility falls heavily upon you and the organizations you represent. As conservationists, you possess much of the knowledge that is so desperately needed throughout the world. It has been my observation that you also possess the dedication and integrity that leads you to share that knowledge unselfishly.

As you share that knowledge, through your personal service or through your professional communications, you can be reassured that it does pay great dividends. The people of these other lands are ready and waiting to develop their own resources and become self-sufficient, often lacking only the minimum skills to get started.

Mexico is an example of what national initiative with some foreign aid can achieve. Our neighbor to the south increased her farm output 90 percent in the past decade. Mexico is now practically self-sufficient in basic foods and has raised the per capita diet from a substandard level of 1,700 calories in the late 1930's to an adequate 2,700 calories in 1958.

India is one of several other nations utilizing technical as well as financial aid from other lands to increase yields and further protect and develop their productive capacity. In addition, India

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is putting up more than \$15 billion from its own resources to finance the third Five Year Plan with about one-third of that amount going into agriculture and related fields.

As conservationists you play a vital role in maintaining the kind of strong agriculture--the kind of resource protection and development--that this and all other nations must have for survival.

As one who has always been highly conscious of the land base upon which our economy rests, I regret it is necessary to remind anyone that a strong agriculture is the foundation of any nation. Fifty years ago no one needed to be told that. It was a self-evident fact.

But today, as fewer and fewer of our people are engaged in agriculture, our situation might be epitomized by the story of the little girl who saw a pile of empty condensed milk cans and shouted: "Look Mommy, a cow's nest!"

We may make jokes about our changing living patterns. But we must never forget our dependence upon the land. The job of conserving and developing land resources grows more urgent throughout the world, year by year.

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Population growth will largely shape political, social and economic developments over the next quarter of a century. We can make no greater contribution to global peace and progress than to help each other produce the food and fiber that will match that growth, and permit all men to live in hope, dignity, and freedom.

In this connection, as many of you know, it has been my great wish to see established in the United States a Youth Conservation Corps. This would provide opportunity to bring significant numbers of our young citizens back to an awareness of our dependence upon the land, and at the same time conserve and build the one resource that surpasses in value even our land resource--our youth.

I challenge you, as I myself am constantly challenged, to dedicate yourselves anew to this great responsibility of stewardship for the human and physical resources with which we are endowed. Let us use our knowledge wisely, widely, and generously to benefit mankind the world over.

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