

REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE

NIXON LEGACY OF PARKS DEDICATION CEREMONY  
SEABROOK PARK  
TOPEKA, KANSAS  
MONDAY, JULY 10, 1972

IT IS A PLEASURE TO BE HERE TODAY TO PARTICIPATE IN THESE CEREMONIES MARKING THE TRANSFER OF SOME 26 ACRES OF FEDERAL LAND TO THE CITY OF TOPEKA.

I UNDERSTAND THAT THE LAND WILL BE USED FOR PARK AND RECREATION PURPOSES FOR THE PEOPLE OF TOPEKA. THIS, OF COURSE, IS PRECISELY WHAT THE PRESIDENT HAD IN MIND WHEN HE PROPOSED THAT THE LEGACY OF PARKS PROGRAM BE INSTITUTED.

LAND FOR RECREATION

"AMONG THE MOST IMPORTANT LEGACIES THAT WE CAN PASS ON TO FUTURE GENERATIONS," THE PRESIDENT HAS SAID, "IS AN ENDOWMENT OF PARKLANDS AND RECREATIONAL AREAS THAT WILL ENRICH LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES AND MAKE THE BEAUTIES OF THE EARTH...ACCESSIBLE TO ALL AMERICANS."

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THIS TRANSFER OF LAND IN TOPEKA IS ONLY THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S EFFORTS TO CARRY OUT THAT MANDATE. MANY THOUSANDS OF ACRES OF LAND HAVE NOW BEEN TURNED OVER TO STATES AND TO MUNICIPALITIES BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN THE FIRST FIFTEEN MONTHS OF THIS PROGRAM. AND ALL OF IT WILL BE DEVOTED ESSENTIALLY TO THE SAME PURPOSE FOR WHICH THIS TRANSFER IS BEING MADE -- TO ENHANCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR AMERICANS' ENJOYMENT OF THEIR LEISURE TIME.

IN SOME 38 STATES OF THE UNION, IN PUERTO RICO, AND NOW HERE IN TOPEKA, FEDERAL LANDS ARE BEING MADE AVAILABLE FOR THIS PURPOSE.

AND I WOULD SUGGEST THAT WHEN WE HEAR TALK ABOUT IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN AMERICA -- AND WE WILL HEAR A GREAT DEAL OF SUCH TALK IN THIS PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION YEAR -- THAT SUCH THINGS AS THIS LEGACY OF PARKS PROGRAM OUGHT TO COME TO MIND.

AND, TOO, THERE WILL BE TALK OF DOING SOMETHING TO HELP THE CITIES. AND THERE WILL BE TALK OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND OF LAND USE POLICY. AND THERE WILL BE TALK OF ECOLOGY AND OF MAXIMIZING THE RESOURCES WE ALREADY HAVE IN THIS COUNTRY.

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IN THE CONTEXT OF ALL OF THOSE SUBJECTS, THE LEGACY OF PARKS PROGRAM HAS TO BE CONSIDERED. IT IS MORE THAN JUST TALK. IT IS ACTION. IT IS PRODUCTIVE, PROGRESSIVE ACTION LIKE THAT WE TAKE TODAY IN TOPEKA.

TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE

I THINK IT IS SAFE TO SAY THAT THIS PROGRAM IS ONLY A SMALL PART OF THE OVERALL PROGRAM OF THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION. BUT IT IS, NONETHELESS, A SIGNIFICANT INDICATOR OF THE DIRECTION IN WHICH THE PRESIDENT WANTS TO TAKE THIS COUNTRY.

IT IS A DIRECTION TOWARDS A GOVERNMENT THAT IS RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS AND DESIRES OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS THE LARGEST SINGLE LANDHOLDER IN THE UNITED STATES. IT HOLDS TITLE TO ALMOST A THIRD OF THE LAND IN THIS COUNTRY. MUCH OF THAT LAND IS NO LONGER NEEDED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND IT SERVES NO USEFUL PURPOSE FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO HOLD TITLE TO IT.

AND THAT HAS BEEN THE CASE FOR MANY YEARS WITH MUCH OF THIS LAND. PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATIONS HAD NEVER OVERCOME THE INERTIA OF YEARS AND DECADES OF FEDERAL LAND USE POLICIES. AND WE SAW FEDERAL AGENCIES HOLDING ON TO UNNEEDED PROPERTY LONG AFTER THE REASON FOR WHICH IT MAY FIRST HAVE BEEN OBTAINED WAS ALL BUT FORGOTTEN.

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PRESIDENT NIXON, IN HIS FIRST YEAR OF OFFICE, SAW THAT A CHANGE WAS REQUIRED. RECOGNIZING THAT THE NATION HAD COME TO VIEW ITS RESOURCES DIFFERENTLY -- AND THAT NEW NEEDS AND NEW ATTITUDES TOWARD LAND USE WERE DEVELOPING -- HE BEGAN AN EVALUATION OF FEDERAL REAL PROPERTY MANAGEMENT.

OUT OF THAT EVALUATION CAME HIS PROPOSALS FOR A LEGACY OF PARKS PROGRAM AND OUT OF THAT PROGRAM HAS COME THIS AVAILABILITY OF SOME 26 ACRES OF RECREATIONAL AREA FOR THE PEOPLE OF TOPEKA.

NIXON ADMINISTRATION BRINGS NEEDED CHANGE

PAST ADMINISTRATIONS HAD TAKEN FOR GRANTED THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WOULD, AND PERHAPS SHOULD, CONTINUE TO HOLD PROPERTIES SUCH AS THESE.

THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION DID NOT.

PAST ADMINISTRATIONS HAD BEEN CONTENT TO LEAVE ACCOUNTING METHODS AND FEDERAL PROPERTY VALUATION PROCEDURES UNCHANGED AND UNTOUCHED BY MODERN TECHNIQUE OR UPDATED INFORMATION.

THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION DID NOT.

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WHAT IT FOUND, HOWEVER, WAS THAT IT HAD TO TAKE ON A JOB OF TREMENDOUS PROPORTIONS AND OF UNEXPECTED DIMENSIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, I AM TOLD THAT ONE PRIME PIECE OF REAL ESTATE IN WASHINGTON, D. C., AN 18 ACRE PARCEL IN THE SIXTEEN-HUNDRED BLOCK OF PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, WAS PURCHASED IN 1791 BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FOR A PRICE OF ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS. THE FEDERAL BOOKS STILL LIST THE PROPERTY AS WORTH THAT SAME PRICE -- ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS -- IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW IMPROVEMENTS MADE TO IT SINCE 1791.

NOW, BECAUSE THIS PROGRAM HAS BEEN UNDERTAKEN, THE VALUE OF THIS PROPERTY IS GOING TO APPRECIATE, TOO. AS OF TODAY, THIS PROPERTY MAY BE CONSIDERED, IN EVERY BEST SENSE OF THE WORD, TO BE AN IMPROVED PROPERTY. IT IS BEING PUT TO USE FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE NEAR IT AND THERE CAN BE NO MORE PROPER USE TO WHICH IT CAN BE PUT.