

REMARKS BY CONGRESSMAN LES AUCCOIN
TO THE OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
CAPITAL
SALEM, OREGON
APRIL 13, 1977

ENERGY: THE SAMENESS OF OUR TASK

THANK YOU, MR. SPEAKER. TO YOU, TO OLD FRIENDS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE AISLE, AND TO NEW ONES -- I BRING GREETINGS. NOT ONLY FROM ME ... BUT ALSO FROM A FORMER PAGE WHO TAUGHT ME HOW THE LEGISLATURE WORKS: MY WIFE, SUE, WHO IS WITH ME TODAY.

I MUST TELL YOU THAT IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK; AND SEVERAL PEOPLE HAVE ALREADY POINTED OUT HOW MUCH CLASS YOU AND THE CAPITAL HAVE ACQUIRED ... SINCE I LEFT.

ACTUALLY, OF THE TWO OF US, SUE MISSES THIS PLACE THE MOST.

FOR FOUR YEARS, SUE SAT AT MY SIDE IN THIS CHAMBER AS MY FLOOR SECRETARY. AND FOR FOUR YEARS, HER OWN VOTING RECORD WAS DULY RECORDED -- WITH HEEL MARKS ON MY SHINS!

MR. SPEAKER, ON CAPITOL HILL, THEY DON'T HAVE FLOOR SECRETARIES. AND SO NOW, THE REAL REASON I LEFT THE LEGISLATURE CAN BE TOLD -- I HAD TO RUN FOR CONGRESS FOR PHYSICAL RELIEF.

MR. SPEAKER, I DIDN'T COME TODAY TO SIMPLY SAY HELLO. I ALSO CAME TO TALK BUSINESS.

GIVEN THE EVENTS THAT ARE ABOUT TO BREAK IN WASHINGTON, I WANT TO TALK ABOUT ENERGY AND THE OREGON ECONOMY.

IN SEVEN DAYS, THE PRESIDENT WILL PRESENT A COMPREHENSIVE ENERGY PLAN TO THE CONGRESS.

I WANT TO OUTLINE SOME THINGS I THINK YOU CAN EXPECT IN THAT POLICY, OTHER THINGS I HOPE THE ADMINISTRATION WILL PUT INTO THAT POLICY, AND, FINALLY, WHAT STEPS WE IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST OUGHT TO TAKE TO PREPARE ECONOMICALLY FOR A "BRAVE NEW WORLD" OF LIMITS.

THE NATIONAL PROBLEM

I DON'T THINK I HAVE TO DRAW ANY PICTURES TODAY. WE'VE GOT A TOUGH NATIONAL CRISIS ON OUR HANDS.

WE'RE LITERALLY RUNNING OUT OF GAS AND OIL.

TODAY THOSE FUELS ACCOUNT FOR THREE-FOURTHS OF OUR ENERGY CONSUMPTION AND THEY UNDERPIN OUR STANDARD OF LIVING. BUT AT THE RATE WE'RE USING THEM UP, MOST OF OUR KNOWN GAS AND OIL RESERVES WILL BE GONE BY THE YEAR 2000.

AND SO OUR TASK IS THIS: TO RACE THE CLOCK, AND STRETCH OUT EXISTING RESOURCES UNTIL NEW ENERGY SOURCES COME ON LINE -- SOURCES LIKE SOLAR POWER, WIND POWER, AND NUCLEAR FUSION. THIS WILL TAKE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT, AND SOME VERY WISE MANAGEMENT.

IN THE MEANTIME, THERE ARE ONLY THREE SHORT-TERM SOURCES OF ENERGY -- CONSERVATION, COAL, AND NUCLEAR FISSION. OF THE THREE, CONSERVATION IS MY HIGHEST PRIORITY. LET ME TELL YOU WHY.

TODAY WE WASTE ONE-THIRD OF ALL ENERGY WE CONSUME AS A NATION.

WE USE TWICE AS MUCH ENERGY AS THE WEST GERMANS, WHO LIVE AS WELL AS WE DO.

BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ABOUT CONSERVATION IS THIS: SAVING ENERGY COSTS ONLY A TENTH AS MUCH AS PRODUCING IT.

I LOOK FOR THE ADMINISTRATION TO COME DOWN HARD FOR CONSERVATION. I ANTICIPATE MANDATORY INSULATION PROGRAMS FOR HOMES AND INDUSTRY, PHASED-IN DEREGULATION OF GAS AND OIL PRICES, ELECTRICAL APPLICANCE EFFICIENCY STANDARDS, AND TAXES ON GAS-GUZZLING CARS.

I BELIEVE THERE IS NO IMMEDIATE PROSPECT FOR A LARGE GASOLINE TAX INCREASE, AS SOME REPORTS HAVE SUGGESTED. INSTEAD, THERE WILL BE PENALTIES ON CARS THAT DON'T ACHIEVE GOOD MILEAGE RATINGS, AND REWARDS FOR PURCHASERS OF CARS ACHIEVING ACCEPTABLE MILES-PER-GALLON AVERAGES.

BUT LET THERE BE NO SIGH OF RELIEF: THE IDEA OF HIGHER GAS TAXES -- WHETHER 25 CENTS PER GALLON OR 10 CENTS PER GALLON -- WASN'T LEAKED BY ACCIDENT. A GAS TAX INCREASE

WILL REMAIN THE CLUB BEHIND THE DOOR TO BE SUMMONED IF OTHER MEANS DO NOT CURB THE INCREASE IN GASOLINE CONSUMPTION.

I WILL GO ALONG WITH THE PRESIDENT'S PROGRAM AS I EXPECT IT TO BE ANNOUNCED. BUT I WILL NOT GO ALONG WITH ANY SIZABLE INCREASE IN THE GAS TAX UNLESS I AM CONVINCED THAT IT WILL ACHIEVE CONSERVATION, THAT RURAL STATES SUCH AS OREGON WILL BE GIVEN SOME RELIEF, AND THAT THE MONEY WILL BE EFFECTIVELY RECYCLED TO THE PEOPLE HURT THE MOST.

COAL CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE THE SECOND MAJOR PART OF THE WHITE HOUSE PLAN. IT'S MY OWN SECOND PRIORITY CHOICE AFTER CONSERVATION -- AND I'LL WILLINGLY SUPPORT IT OVER THE LAST, MOST ALARMING ALTERNATIVE -- WHICH IS NUCLEAR FISSION.

ESTIMATES OF U.S. COAL RESERVES RANGE FROM A 90-YEAR SUPPLY TO A 400-YEAR SUPPLY. WHATEVER THE CASE, WE HAVE ENOUGH TO LAST UNTIL SAFE, ABUNDANT, ALTERNATIVE SOURCES COME FULLY ON LINE.

I THINK THE PRESIDENT WILL CALL FOR STIFF TAXES ON THE USE OF OIL AND GAS BY BOTH UTILITIES AND LARGE INDUSTRIAL USERS IN AN ATTEMPT TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO SWITCH FROM GAS AND OIL TO COAL.

I WILL SUPPORT THIS EFFORT -- BUT THERE ARE DANGERS HERE, TOO. WE MUST ENSURE THAT THERE WILL BE NO SERIOUS,

LONG-TERM RETREAT FROM AIR QUALITY STANDARDS RESULTING FROM THE USE OF COAL.

AS FOR NUCLEAR ENERGY, THE ADMINISTRATION IS EFFECTIVELY BRINGING TO AN END THE MENACE OF THE BREEDER REACTOR. I DO NOT EXPECT CONGRESS TO SERIOUSLY CHALLENGE THIS DECISION.

BREEDER PLANTS USE PLUTONIUM EXTRACTED FROM THE SPENT FUEL OF NUCLEAR FISSION, AND THEN THEY "BREED" MORE PLUTONIUM. THE PLANTS ARE CONSIDERED DANGEROUS BY THE ADMINISTRATION BECAUSE, IN ADDITION TO POWERING GENERATORS, PLUTONIUM ALSO HAPPENS TO MAKE EXCELLENT, HAND-MADE NUCLEAR BOMBS.

IN THE TIMES WE LIVE IN, I BELIEVE THE DECISION TO MOTHBALL THE BREEDER IS A WISE ONE.

WHAT THIS MEANS, THOUGH, IS THAT ANY MAJOR USE OF NUCLEAR FISSION IS GOING TO CREATE MOUNTING STOCKPILES OF RADIOACTIVE WASTES.

THESE ARE WASTES THAT WILL REMAIN LETHAL FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS.

THESE ARE WASTES THAT WE STILL DON'T KNOW HOW TO STORE SAFELY.

I CANNOT PREDICT THE ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY HERE. BUT WE LIVE WITH THIS IRONIC FACT: IN THE FACE OF ALL THE QUESTIONS ABOUT FISSION PLANTS, OUR SUPPLIES OF URANIUM TO RUN THEM WON'T LAST MUCH BEYOND 25 YEARS.

MY VIEW: THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSERVATION

SPEAKING FOR MYSELF, I CANNOT BELIEVE THAT IT'S RIGHT TO PUSH NUCLEAR WASTES OFF ONTO THE NEXT GENERATIONS TO TEMPORARILY SATISFY OUR OWN APPETITE FOR ENERGY, MUCH OF WHICH WE WASTE.

INEVITABLY, THIS BRINGS US BACK TO CONSERVATION, AND THE CONCLUSION THAT THE BEST WAY TO MAKE ENERGY AVAILABLE TODAY IS TO CONSERVE IT.

ACCORDING TO AN ENERGY SPECIALIST WHO IS PART OF A SPECIAL NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES TEAM, IF WE FULLY USED ALL THE KNOWN METHODS OF UTILIZING ENERGY MORE EFFICIENTLY, OUR CONSUMPTION WOULD GROW BY A MERE 50 PERCENT BY THE YEAR 2000. THE TROUBLE IS, WE DON'T HAVE THE INCENTIVES.

WHY IS IT THAT THE SWEDES, FOR EXAMPLE, USE ONLY TWO-THIRDS AS MUCH ENERGY AS WE DO FOR EVERY DOLLAR OF GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT?

WHY DO SWEDISH CARS AVERAGE 24 MILES A GALLON, WHILE OURS AVERAGE LESS THAN 14?

WHY IS SPACE HEATING IN SWEDEN TWICE AS EFFICIENT AS IN THE UNITED STATES?

IT'S NOT FOR LACK OF TECHNOLOGY; IF SWEDEN CAN DO IT, WE CAN. INSTEAD, I'M CONVINCED IT'S THAT AMERICANS SIMPLY DON'T KNOW THE VALUE OF ENERGY.

WE'VE BEEN LIVING IN A FOOL'S PARADISE. WE'VE ASSUMED THAT CHEAP ENERGY WOULD BE WITH US FOREVER. AND POLITICIANS WHO KNOW BETTER STILL FIND IT CONVENIENT TO PERPETUATE THAT MYTH.

UNLESS THAT MYTH IS BROKEN, AMERICANS WILL KEEP ON BLAMING OIL COMPANIES OR FIND OTHER SCAPEGOATS FOR ALL OUR PROBLEMS, WILL KEEP THEIR HEADS IN THE SAND -- AND THERE WILL BE NO CONSERVATION ETHIC IN THIS COUNTRY.

MY HOPE IS THAT THE SPEECH FROM THE OVAL OFFICE SEVEN DAYS FROM NOW WILL LAY THE REALITIES SQUARELY ON THE LINE.

ENERGY PRICES ARE GOING TO HAVE TO GO UP -- NOT DOWN -- TO REFLECT ENERGY'S REAL VALUE.

POLITICALLY-INDUCED, ARTIFICIALLY LOW RATES FOR OIL AND NATURAL GAS ARE GOING TO BE GRADUALLY LIFTED -- NOT LOWERED -- TO REFLECT THE ACTUAL COSTS OF PRODUCTION.

PEOPLE WHO ARE WEDDED TO GAS-GUZZLING CARS WILL HAVE TO PAY MORE -- NOT LESS -- TO OWN THEM AND DRIVE THEM.

THOSE THINGS, MY FRIENDS, ARE AT THE NUB OF THE ISSUE CONGRESS WILL SOON BE DEBATING.

THE REGIONAL BPA ISSUE

HERE IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, TWO THINGS HAVE THRUST US INTO THIS NATIONAL EQUATION IN A VERY SPECIAL WAY.

FIRST, THERE'S THE DROUGHT. THE HYDROELECTRIC BROWNOUTS IT COULD CAUSE THIS SUMMER, WHILE A MATTER OF GRAVE CONCERN, CAN POSSIBLY CREATE A PUBLIC SENSE OF REALITY THAT'S GENERALLY MISSING ACROSS THE NATION. THIS PRESENTS OPPORTUNITIES FOR DECISIVE POLICY ACTION AND PUBLIC SUPPORT.

SECONDLY, THERE IS THE ISSUE OF THE BPA. MANY PROPOSALS ARE NOW BEING MADE TO RESHAPE THIS AGENCY. BUT I WOULD WARN THAT ANY REFORM PROPOSAL MUST STRESS TWO THINGS -- FIRST, CONSERVATION; AND, SECOND, THE DISPARITY IN RATES PAID BY PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UTILITY CUSTOMERS. I AM ALSO CONVINCED THAT IT WOULD BE UNWISE TO GIVE DISCRIMINATORY, LOW RATES TO CERTAIN CLASSES OF USERS. IT DOESN'T HELP, FOR INSTANCE, TO GIVE PEOPLE CHEAP RESIDENTIAL RATES IF THEIR JOBS HAVE BEEN DRIVEN AWAY BY EXTREME RATES FOR BUSINESS.

FAILURE TO ADDRESS THESE CONCERNS -- FAILURE OF ALL THE AFFECTED PARTIES TO GIVE UP SOME OF THEIR SACRED GROUND -- COULD CREATE ENOUGH CONTROVERSY TO JEOPARDIZE THE FUTURE OF BPA AS A REGIONAL ENTITY AND POSSIBLY LEAD TO ABSORBING OUR LOW HYDROELECTRICAL RATES IN A NATIONAL POWER POOL. IF THAT HAPPENS, EVERY SINGLE ONE OF US WILL LOSE.

GIVEN RESPONSIBLE COMPROMISES BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE POWER INTERESTS, CONSUMER AND ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS, I'M CONVINCED THAT IMAGINATIVE LEADERSHIP AND INCREASED AUTHORITY CAN MAKE THIS UNIQUE REGIONAL AGENCY A NATIONAL MODEL FOR CONSERVATION AND ALTERNATIVE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT.

SEVERAL THINGS MUST HAPPEN TO MAKE THIS POSSIBLE.

FIRST, BPA MUST CEASE BEING SEEN AS A PRIVATE CLUB FOR THE UTILITIES AND BEGIN DOING ITS BUSINESS OPENLY AND PUBLICLY. THERE MAY HAVE BEEN A DAY WHEN IT DIDN'T MATTER BECAUSE ENERGY PLANNING DIDN'T SEEM CRITICAL.

BUT THOSE DAYS ARE GONE.

BPA MUST BE GIVEN A FORMAL POLICY ADVISORY COUNCIL WHICH WOULD INCLUDE NOT JUST THE UTILITIES, BUT ALSO THE STATES, WHICH ARE BEING HELD INCREASINGLY RESPONSIBLE FOR ENERGY PLANNING, AS WELL AS CONSUMER, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND BUSINESS INTERESTS.

SECOND, ANY RESHAPING OF BPA MUST CREATE RATE REFORM AND ADDRESS THE GROWING DISPARITY BETWEEN RATES CHARGED BY PUBLIC UTILITIES AND PRIVATE UTILITIES.

THIRD, BPA SHOULD BE CHANGED BY MANDATING IT TO ENCOURAGE ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES.

ONE OF THE MAJOR IMPEDIMENTS TO WIDESPREAD USE OF SOLAR AND WIND POWER HAS BEEN THE INABILITY TO STORE THE ENERGY THEY GENERATE. HERE'S WHERE BPA'S HYDROELECTRIC SYSTEM OFFERS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY.

WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO REGULATE THE AMOUNT OF WATER GOING THROUGH THE GENERATORS OF THE DAMS.

THUS, IF BPA WERE AUTHORIZED TO GET INTO SOLAR AND WIND POWER GENERATION, FOR EVERY KILOWATT OF POWER GENERATED BY SOLAR COLLECTORS OR WIND TURBINES, AN APPROPRIATE AMOUNT OF WATER COULD BE IMPOUNDED BEHIND A DAM. THAT WATER WOULD REPRESENT POTENTIAL POWER TO BE GENERATED LATER WHEN WINDS AND SOLAR RAYS DIMINISH.

THE BENEFIT OF BEGINNING TO APPLY ALTERNATE POWER SOURCE TECHNOLOGIES IS THAT BPA WOULD IMMEDIATELY DIVERSIFY THE HYDROELECTRIC GRID SYSTEM, AND, IN THE CASE OF SOLAR POWER, ACTUALLY COMPLEMENT THE SYSTEM BY PROVIDING MORE POTENTIAL FOR POWER DURING DROUGHT AND LOW-RIVER CONDITIONS.

LITERALLY, THE BPA COULD BECOME A NATIONAL LABORATORY FOR ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES OF SCALE -- IN THE FINEST TRADITION OF THE LEADERSHIP EXAMPLES THIS REGION HAS SET FOR THE NATION.

FOURTH, I URGE THAT BPA BE GIVEN A CHARTER TO ENCOURAGE THE WISE USE OF ENERGY CONSISTENT WITH SOUND BUSINESS PRINCIPLES, AND TO BECOME A CATALYST FOR CONSERVATION. IT SHOULD PROMOTE PROPER INSULATION AND PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO INEFFICIENT INDUSTRIAL POWER USERS.

A JOINT TEST

WORKING IN CONCERT, THIS LEGISLATURE COULD PLAY A MAJOR PARTNERSHIP ROLE IN THE ESSENTIAL NATIONAL EFFORT.

THE STATE BUILDING CODE COULD BE EXAMINED TO SEE HOW WELL IT FOSTERS ENERGY EFFICIENCY. EXPERIENCE IN OTHER STATES SHOWS THAT ENERGY COSTS IN EXISTING BUILDINGS CAN BE CUT BY 25 PERCENT WITH LITTLE ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT.

NEW BUILDINGS, IF DESIGNED PROPERLY, WOULD REQUIRE ONLY ABOUT HALF THE ENERGY PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT NECESSARY.

ARCHITECT EDWARD DEAN PUT IT WELL IN DESCRIBING THE NEW CALIFORNIA STATE OFFICE BUILDING IN SACRAMENTO WHEN HE SAID, "COMMON SENSE, NEW TECHNOLOGY, AND GOOD DESIGN WILL SUBSTITUTE FOR 80 PERCENT OF THE ENERGY OTHERWISE USED."

MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING ON LAND-USE PLANNING TOOLS TO CHECK URBAN SPRAWL, TO STABILIZE CITIES, TO FOSTER PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION, ALSO WILL HELP.

I DON'T ASSUME THESE TASKS AND OTHERS WILL BE EASY FOR THE LEGISLATURE. THE TASK FACING CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT WON'T BE EASY, EITHER.

BUT IT IS AN EFFORT THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE MUST GET SERIOUS ABOUT. AND THAT STARTS WITH EACH OF US IN PUBLIC OFFICE.

THE DIFFICULT THING ABOUT OUR TASK IS THAT SOLUTIONS CALL FOR SOME RATHER PAINFUL MEDICINE NOW, WHILE THE FULL IMPACT OF OUR FAILURE TO ACT WOULDN'T BE FELT UNTIL AFTER MOST OF US HAVE LONG SINCE LEFT OFFICE.

IT ALL ADDS UP TO A PECULIAR TEST FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY. WHO, AFTER ALL, DO YOU AND I REPRESENT -- THE VOTERS OF TODAY, OR POSTERITY? THE RESULTS OF SUCH A TEST ARE AT BEST UNCERTAIN.

MY OWN FEELING IS THAT IF WE SHOULD ERR, IT SHOULD BE ON THE SIDE OF POSTERITY. THEN IT BECOMES A TASK OF US EXPLAINING TO THE PUBLIC WHY SACRIFICES ARE NEEDED NOW.

BUT IS ENDING WASTE AND OVER-CONSUMPTION REALLY A SACRIFICE?

NOT IF IT ALLOWS US TO SAVE TENS OF BILLIONS OF ENERGY-RELATED DOLLARS WHICH COULD BE SPENT ELSEWHERE IN THE ECONOMY -- RATHER THAN BE LOST THROUGH POORLY-INSULATED AND POORLY-DESIGNED FACTORIES AND HOMES.

NOT IF IT MEANS AVOIDING THE LOSS OF BOTH CONSUMER AND BUSINESS INCOME TO PAY FOR MORE EXPENSIVE ENERGY THAT ALSO WILL BE UNDER-UTILIZED.

NOT IF IT MEANS REDUCED RISK TO NATIONAL SECURITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT.

THAT'S THE MESSAGE. IT IS NOT ONE THAT WILL FIND FAVOR AMONG ALL THE RIVAL INTERESTS. BUT WHEREVER WE ARE IN GOVERNMENT, I THINK WE HAVE TO HAVE THE BACKBONE TO DELIVER THAT MESSAGE.

IN SALEM. OR IN WASHINGTON.

THAT'S THE SAMENESS OF OUR TASK.