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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

REMARKS OF ALAN S. BOYD, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION,  
PREPARED FOR DELIVERY AT ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE DEPARTMENT  
OF WASHINGTON, THE AMERICAN LEGION, BELLINGHAM HIGH SCHOOL  
AUDITORIUM, BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON, 10:30 A.M., FRIDAY,  
JULY 21, 1967

It is a privilege to participate in this convention, and a pleasure to meet men who are leaders in the American Legion and leaders in the community life of the State of Washington.

I am deeply attached to this part of the country and I think the Pacific Northwest as a whole has a tremendous future, far beyond all present predictions. There will come the day, before the end of this century, when no less than ten million people will be living between Watcom and Wahkiakum counties. And I think that the spirit of enterprise and initiative present in this auditorium will help to bring on the fulfillment of that destiny.

My original schedule called for me to come to Bellingham from a five-day tour of Alaska.

When the new Department of Transportation was organized last April, we found that in addition to managing the highway and aviation programs, and the Coast Guard and St. Lawrence Seaway, and a lot of other activities, we were also given the responsibility for running the Alaska Railroad.

And it is amazing how many reasons my staff found for inspecting the Alaska Railroad when the temperature in Washington, D. C., began to climb toward ninety.

Unfortunately, the call of the wild had to give way to the call of the wildcat over the weekend and by the time the railroad strikes were settled the Alaska trip was just another good idea gone wrong.

But we all seem to be surviving both kinds of heat and I am more than happy to settle for a chance to visit your beautiful state -- the Washington with elected representatives.

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In this connection, I would like to say how greatly we in the other Washington benefit from the effort and talents of your elected representatives.

We in the field of transportation depend heavily on the leadership and foresight of Senator Magnuson and Senator Jackson.

They worked as a team on the Department of Transportation and I think it's fair to say there would be no department if it were not for their efforts.

Senator Jackson handled the bill in committee and was floor manager for the bill during debate. Senator Magnuson was the star witness for the bill.

Our programs would have little meaning or money without their efforts. We honor and respect them not only for representing the state of Washington -- which they do so well -- but for representing even more diligently all those who believe in and hope for a safe, efficient and economical transportation system in this nation.

Effective representation -- not just in a political sense -- is a great issue in this nation today. The great problems we face and the debates emanating from them create a perspective gap and raise the question of whether all viewpoints are being represented accurately and with the weight they deserve.

You, as the veterans of the defense of this nation and its interests, certainly recognize that in this context the greatest problem we face is in Southeast Asia -- in Viet Nam. Here on the home front, our concern does not translate into merely agreement or disagreement with the policy being implemented, but more with the reasoned consideration of the alternatives and possibilities. The most important part of directing the national effort in Viet Nam is to make sure that every citizen understands these. It is absolutely essential to recognize that the right to dissent must include far more than merely debating the extremes -- withdrawing our military forces on the one hand, or dropping a nuclear bomb on Hanoi or Peking on the other.

For us as citizens to engage in only that kind of limited debate is to waste time and energy. I underline that statement not only as a member of the President's Cabinet but as a citizen concerned as you are. It is up to all of us to see that the right to dissent does not just create this kind of centrifugal force which flings the debate to one or both of these two extremes. Complete withdrawal or the ultimate escalation are not real possibilities -- they are absurdities and it is perfectly clear we will never be in that kind of an either/or situation.

I firmly believe that it is both your and my role to see that these points are made and that both the so-called peace-niks and nuke-niks be viewed in proper perspective.

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All this underlines the role of the individual -- and it is a crucial role -- in affecting and implementing sound national policy.

It is of particular importance today, because we as a nation are at that point where the answers to the great problems we face lie not in the increased involvement of the Federal government so much as in the increased involvement of the individual -- whether he is a businessman, governor, mayor or just plain citizen.

The issues of the 1930's over what the Federal government should be involved with are no longer issues -- to continue debate as if they were issues is, quite frankly, a waste of time and energy.

I sense a widespread and growing awareness in this country that we can no longer afford to indulge in arid, ideological arguments about "the evils of big government" or the obsolescence of state and local governments.

We have begun to abandon the always erroneous notion that there is some kind of inherent enmity or incompatibility between the Federal government on the one hand and state and local governments on the other -- that somehow we must choose between one or the other -- that we must swear eternal and undivided allegiance to one and eternal and undivided opposition to the other.

We have begun to understand that an extension of Federal activity does not mean an erosion, in equal amount, of State or local authority -- as if there is some sort of fixed and immutable quantity of total government involvement, so that one level of government can grow only at the expense of the other.

We have come, instead, to appreciate the very simple truth that an effective Federal system requires that every level of government be strong and supple, and that all levels of government share jointly the common task of improving the lot of our citizens.

I am one who believes that there is some truth to past charges that the Federal government has sometimes acted in ways that can only be considered arbitrary by state and local officials. I do not believe that it is possible to sit in Washington, D. C., alone and unaided, hundreds or often thousands of miles away from where problems exist, and come up with adequate solutions. All too often I believe it has been the practice of Federal officials to ask state and local officials to conform to national standards established without regard for the frequently very different needs of very different areas of the country.

And certainly transportation is one such area.

Urban congestion -- which is what we have come to call traffic jams in recent years -- urban congestion is the most serious transportation problem in the United States. There is something very wrong when you can get an astronaut around the world in less time than it takes a man to get to and from work in a big city. But that is too often the case.

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The congestion on our highways -- the fact that you not only have trouble finding room to move but a place to stop -- is a national problem. But it cannot be solved with a national plan. Each city presents a different problem, calling for a different approach, and Seattle is a good example.

The geography of Seattle -- the strait-jacket effect of Puget Sound and Lake Washington -- presents the city with problems unlike those of other cities.

And Seattle has dealt with this problem in a sensible and highly commendable manner. It has come to grips with decisions that many cities have yet to face.

Not the least of these is the proper balance between private and public transportation in the light of existing conditions.

This is a problem we are studying on the national level, but one which can only realistically be decided locally, according to travel patterns and personal desires.

In Seattle, which is geographically ribbon in nature rather than circular, the industrial complex is primarily consolidated in the southern part of the city while the residential districts are in the northern and eastern parts. Thus they have a rush hour convergence on a central area that is horrendous. But they also have the opportunity to build a mass transit corridor to fulfill all of the requirements of a public transportation system -- to carry the greatest number of people in the shortest length of time, and to do so efficiently, economically and safely.

I am pleased to note that those transit plans have been coordinated with highway plans and that Seattle's stated goal is an integrated transportation system. This, we believe, provides the key to transportation efficiency.

This, we also believe, is the way the nation's urban transportation problems will be solved -- on the spot. They will not be solved by sitting at the telephone or the mail box waiting for the answers to arrive from Washington, D. C. They will be solved by hard work and courageous decisions here and in Seattle and in other cities.

This is not to say that the Department of Transportation has drawn a do-it-yourself program for the cities. We plan a great deal of hard work and courageous decisions of our own. But they will be made -- as President Johnson insists that they be made -- as partners of the cities, not as guardians.

We are restructuring our Federal effort to make it far more relevant and responsive to the needs of the states and cities. And we are guided in that effort not by what we think they need but by what they tell us they need.

I can assure you that this is the approach that guides the new Department of Transportation.

It is the approach best suited to the transportation needs of this nation and to the problems of its people.