



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
JOHN A. VOLPE FOR THE BILLBOARD REMOVAL CEREMONY, TUESDAY, APRIL
27, 1971, FREEPORT, MAINE

Let me say first what a pleasure it is to be back in New England again,
where no one speaks with an accent.

I am pleased to be here today for the real beginning of our Highway
Billboard Removal Program. While the Congress passed the initial legislation
in 1965, it was not until last December that funds were authorized to carry
out this program of Highway Beautification. It's been a long wait, but it
will be worth it.

Since becoming Secretary of Transportation over two years ago, I have
traveled throughout this Nation. This is a country of which we can all be
proud. This is a country whose grandeur, whose natural beauty, and whose open
spaces are as much a part of our heritage as the Declaration of Independence
and the Star Spangled Banner.

We will be celebrating our Bicentennial in 1976. Two hundred years is a
long time in terms of individual men's lifetimes, but not in terms of a nation's.
Two hundred years is just about the time it takes to learn to appreciate what
you have -- and to learn that what you have is due to the foresight of those
who went before you. As the President said in this environmental message to
the Congress in February: "Together we hold this good earth in trust. We must --
and together we can -- prove ourselves worthy of that trust."

It is particularly appropriate that this program begin in April. Spring
is a time not only of celebration, but also of abstinence in many religions.
It seems a curious paradox -- abstinence in the face of plenty. But it is?
Since time immemorial, man has realized that it is only through abstinence --
through the jealous guarding of our resources -- that we are able to preserve
and protect, for ourselves and for future generations, what the good Lord has
given us.

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There are those who say that the Billboard Removal Program is destructive. It isn't. It represents the realization that the majestic vistas along our rural highways belong to the people. And it returns those vistas to the people legally -- through the due process of laws. This is the way to accomplish our goals. This program does not affect informational signs or billboards in already commercial areas; it only affects the billboards in our rural areas which conflict with nature.

This program also represents a triumph for constitutional fair play and our free enterprise system. We realize that while the beauty of our landscape is more important than billboards, the billboard itself is not intrinsically evil. Therefore, this legislation provides just compensation for those whose signs are taken to benefit the commonwealth. And I am delighted with the full co-operation we are receiving from the billboard industry.

Environmental quality may cost more, but it's also worth more.

As I have often said, at the Department of Transportation environmental quality is a goal not a constraint. We are pleased to be able to take part in this constructive program to improve the quality of life in our Nation. But I think this beautification program means more than that. I think it represents a model of what I like to call the President's program of environmental federalism. As I am sure you realize, this administration believes in returning power to the states and to the people. We believe in letting those closest to the problems set the goals and the priorities. We are here today because Maine wanted to move ahead with highway beautification, because Maine wanted to be first. We applaud your foresight, and on behalf of all Americans, thank you. We sincerely hope that "as Maine goes, so goes the Nation."

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