



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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EXCERPTS OF REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
JOHN A. VOLPE BEFORE THE CONFERENCE ON THE IMPACT
OF URBANIZATION ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT, ONAWAY,
MICHIGAN, JUNE 15, 1970

There is something unique about this Conference. Assembled here today is a group of international experts concerned with environmental problems arising from our increasing urbanization. This is a subject of urgent interest to peoples of all major industrialized nations. Yet this symposium is being co-sponsored by a single trade union. And everybody accepts this without surprise! This speaks well for the U.A.W. We accept the idea that the U.A.W. has long been concerned with social problems that go far beyond the interests of trade unionism. And this social conscience of the U.A.W. is the legacy of -- and tribute to -- the late, great Walter Reuther.

I was privileged to know Walter Reuther and I knew him as a man of great courage, and conscience -- a man with a great heart. I am deeply sorry he is not with us here today.

I am keenly interested in the proceedings of this Conference. Urbanization and its impact on the environment is the common complicating factor in most transportation decisions. This was early apparent, and one of my first actions after taking office was to place on my own staff an Assistant Secretary for Environment and Urban Systems -- former Seattle Mayor, Dorm Braman. Under his leadership, we have been able to establish -- in all of our operating administrations -- a solid commitment to environmental considerations. This awareness has brought results. We put an end to construction of the jet airport that threatened the Everglades. We stopped a freeway that would have destroyed the old French Quarter of New Orleans. We have stopped or re-routed

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other highways that threatened historic or scenic sites. We issued new regulations designed to reduce the harmful emissions of jet aircraft engines. Other regulations will reduce aircraft noise. We are partners in the effort to reduce pollution from the internal combustion engine. And our Coast Guard is in the forefront of the effort to prevent and control oil spillage on our lakes and oceans.

Those are the physical aspects of environmentalism -- on the "human" side. I think it is meaningful to this Conference to point to our recent mandate that no highways, freeways, or any federally assisted transportation facilities shall be built unless and until adequate housing has been provided for those who may be displaced. Period. We are moving ahead.

I would also mention the difficulty of these environmental problems and I suggest the best approach to resolving these challenges is the one Walter Reuther demonstrated so many times. He was never awed by difficulties. He assumed the job could be done and he was confident that it could best be done by long, hard, persistent and patient bargaining and negotiation -- negotiation with neither recrimination nor hate. This was Walter Reuther and this was statesmanship at its best. We have need of such statesmanship today.

Again, I want to thank you for your invitation to be here. And let me express the wish your Conference will be fruitful and successful.

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