

The Energy Crisis and the American Landscape¹

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I might well have been in the audience as a participant had I not gone back into the law because a few years ago, for about five years after I left the President's Cabinet, I called myself an Environmental Planner, whatever that was. I had no credentials except experience and I can say to you it was one of the most satisfying things that I have ever done. I was thinking too, I believe it was Oscar Chapman who was President Truman's Secretary of the Interior who told me not long after President Kennedy had nominated me to be Secretary of Interior, he said, "Stuart there's one thing about that job. If you do your job right, when you finish, there are visible things that you can point to all your life." I think that's true of your profession. That is true of work that many of you are engaged in. Your work is left as a visible mark on the land and, if it's done right, it may be there a hundred, or who knows, a thousand years from now. I was asking myself as I came in yesterday and looked at the literature concerning this conference, how it happened. I want to commend the leaders. I asked myself, would it, five years ago, have been possible for a conference of this kind to be held on the national landscape with a primary focus on the visual resource? Ten years ago it would have been unthinkable and twenty years ago incredible. So I come to you today as an Environmental Planner of your type who took early retirement. I went back to law.

I did not come directly from Washington. I have been spending the last week in Utah

and Nevada. I have been taking a crash course in low level ionizing radiation and have spent almost all of my time representing the people down wind from the Nevada bomb test in the 50's who got clobbered. That's a very tragic, demanding assignment and very interesting in fact. A great thing about my life is that I have, as the old saying goes, "lived more lives than one" and at 59, I don't know what's ahead of me, but I'm having a good time. I want you to know that.

I also have a need of a landscape architect if there are any of you in Washington who have some free time. I want you to know what I'm doing with my own life, because I'd like to focus this morning on the big picture and big decisions but we're also talking about small decisions aren't we? About redoing peoples' homes as one way to cope with the energy crisis. On the East Coast we are the people that get all of this oil from Middle East. We're dependent on that life line so I wondered, could one be decoupled from it? I live along and look down into the Potomac in McLean, Virginia where there are marvelous big trees. We converted back to wood stoves which was an interesting experience, but I have a problem right now. A big red Oak fell and I had it cut up, and I'm in the process of splitting it and stacking it for about two years wood for our house. I am left with the stump and the roots and I have a neighbor who is an architect and he's very fussy and I keep telling him, "well I'm going to landscape it and when you look out of your house it will look like a Henry Moore piece of sculpture." I haven't accomplished that yet and I may need some help, but I'm telling you that to let you know that I'm still part of the brigade trying to do my own little thing in my own back yard.

I thought it would interest you today to do a little quick tour of the horizon, to look at where we come from and then where we

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are headed from one man's view. Very opinionated of course--take it or leave it.

One of the most interesting things to me about this crowd is how many young people there are, how many of you who in the last ten years have graduated from the universities and gone out and found places in this new and growing profession. The growth has been incredible, hasn't it? And isn't it a delicious irony, I just chuckle inside every time I think of it, that if the Strip Mine Act, stays on the books, that five or ten years from now the largest employer of landscape architects in the United States will be the coal industry. Isn't that something when you look at our past history. I remember Lawrence Halprin telling me that, when he began his career thirty years ago as a Landscape Architect, what Landscape Architects did was do gardens in people's yards. You know where his own career has lead and where some of your careers have lead or are leading. This is part of the change that has occurred.

It's interesting that one of the things that we have done, is that there has been a very strong process of maturing. I think the values of this country are different in part because of this. Because of the evolution of thought. I remember that when a President decides to leave office he concentrates on his own contribution to history and President Johnson had very strong feelings like that anyway. He knew he had his library and in the last weeks of his presidency he had all of us in and he taped interviews with us about what we thought we had done. I remember telling him then, eleven years ago and I feel the same way today, that although we had done significant things with regard to new national policies and land and resources, (Bill Duddleson mentioned some of them, the Wilderness Bill, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Bill, the Historic Preservation Legislation, the Land Conservation Water Fund, things of that kind) where we were really making new policy was with regard to the environment. But I thought the most important thing we had was not these laws. It was a change in awareness, the beginning of the evolution of what we later called ecological thing, the environmental ethic and so on.

Now a lot of you younger people think that the environmental movement began on earth day in 1970. There are even a lot of reporters who think that and maybe they are right. I don't know. I don't read history that way. It's usually more complicated when people are actually included. My own

thinking began to change with Rachael Carson's book Silent Spring And I know as time moved on there was a reassessing of values. I thought it was a wonderful moment for the country when Lady Bird Johnson, First Lady of this country and a very wonderful woman in a very sort of straight forward, simple, down to earth way, talked about natural beauty and the values associated with it. That became a theme that was propelled for awhile. In any event, as we moved on into the decade of the 1960s our thinking evolved. I remember a slogan I used to use in my speeches. I had borrowed it from the Sierra club in 1961 and the slogan was "What We Save Now Will Be All That Is Saved"--the idea was that we had a few precious years in which to grab off the finest of our remaining national seashores which is another thing we did in the 1960s. We had a few years for states to make decisions about the best remaining state park options, wild river, scenic rivers, and all the rest. As far as big decisions concerning the land, we felt that we were going to make most of them in the 1960s and I think that was a good judgment. I think it holds up.

But, as our thinking became more sophisticated, as we absorbed the message from Silent Spring, as we realized the number of pollutants that our industries were producing which were permeating out into the system, we began to realize that nothing was saved. Nothing was really saved and the wilderness itself was threatened everyday by these new kinds of pollution that were so subtle. They could be carried from place to place in a most subtle way.

One of the things I am proudest of today was that of the fight against SST. I'm going to make a boast here. The fight against SST really began right under President Johnson's nose in 1966 within the administration. I was allowed, or I got away with it somehow, to challenge whether the SST could ever fly overland in the United States. I appointed the Scientific Advisory Committee, which included people like Barry Commoner, and they came in with the arguments in 1966 or 1967 which killed the SST Program in 1972. I began to ask myself the question in talks with people in my department. Well, if the SST flies overland over the United States with a sixty mile sonic boom carpet, as they called it, where would they fly? Well, they would avoid big cities, middle size cities and small cities. They would head for the places where the fewest people were, and where were the places where the fewest people were? National Forests and National Parks, Wilderness and Wildlife

Refuges would be the sonic boom carpet.

These were the kinds of problems we were dealing with then and I review all this only to make the point that our thinking, our policies, changed gradually. I think that is still what is happening. We often times like to oversimplify things. Certainly out of this came very basic changes in thinking and much of that was embodied in what was probably the most important law of all. It was passed in 1969. That was when some of the work was done. Actually the idea for it was started in 1968 while I was there and it was the National Environmental Policy Act. This was certainly a new beginning. It mandated, Congress didn't understand what it was doing, an incredible thing. I don't think the authors of it really knew its implications and the guy who really deserves the most credit, I think, was Senator Jackson. I'm not sure he fully understood what the impact would be. What that Act said is that from now on the old kind of single-minded planning is out and we are going to plan in a more realistic and balanced way. Just think about what that one principle, as a matter of public policy, said. It also said that some of the values that have been left out of other considerations, some of the human values, some of the agricultural values, and all of the values of natural systems, will be taken into account in this planning process. That was an enormous step forward, although it was done by accident. I think it was a great day and a lot of you wouldn't be here probably today if that act hadn't been passed. Of course what has happened since then is that these new values and planning procedures have become institutionalized. To me, one of the key questions the last few years before the Congress and the country is, are we going to whittle away and repeal the National Environmental Policy Act. At the time of the oil embargo and when OPEC bared its teeth in 1973, a lot of the industry people in the United States thought, "Boy we got them now. We can't afford all this crap about environment and ecology and planning." They thought they had the arguments to say that we have to discard this kind of thinking and these kinds of values. But congress hasn't done that and the more it becomes institutionalized, the more it's built into our law, into our way of thinking, into our way of handling matters in government, the more it becomes something that is a permanent part of American life.

So out of this has come the moment of which you are a part, with your new techniques and your new skills representing

these new values. That's what I want to say. We have come a long way to be sure, but what about the next twenty years, where are we going? Where is it leading us? I believe that is the reason I choose the topic that I did, "The Energy Crisis or Energy Crunch in the American Landscape." I feel that we are facing profound changes. I believe your profession is going to be much more upfront even than it has been in the past. I feel this is the time for great opportunity because we are going to have to make some very big and very basic and very structural changes in American life. I thought there was a lovely little metaphor of the present predicament of the American people in the New Yorker Magazine a month or so ago. It showed a couple in what looked like a Japanese import car with ski racks and skis on the top. The woman is saying to the man, "I have a bad conscious. Everything I really like to do involves burning hydrocarbons." Well, that's where we are. We're addicted, and not only to hydrocarbons. Our economic system is built around the extravagant consumption of hydrocarbons. I'm not going to give you my energy speech. I decided not to speak, or speak very little, on energy until the nation is ready to listen. We are not ready to listen. I think most of you probably are, but there will be a time when people in general are ready to listen. Nevertheless, shortage is looming and already nibbling at the edges. But we in this country are unconvinced somehow. I'm amazed every time I come to California, particularly Southern California, and see the great freeways and the cars moving and this is supposed to be beginning, this is suppose to grow? I know in my bones it's a climax stage and it is going slowly to die and change. The automobile has been such an incredible part of our lives, and our freedom in a way, and has provided a wide range of choice. This is going to change because we are running out of oil and have been for many years now. The world oil shortage, which some of these so called experts where telling us was off in the late 1980s, suddenly popped up when the Shah had his trouble a few months ago and the situation, the crunch, is closer then anyone thought. It is going to mean some very big and basic changes. And most of these changes, I believe, are changes which will involve redesigning America, redesigning our cities, redesigning our landscape, reconsidering much of what we are going to have to do. It certainly will mean an end of the freewheeling, incredibly mobile society that we have. How, when we are rushing pell-mell to be the first major oil-have-not nation in the world, can we in the

united States assume that we can continue having over half the automobiles, traveling well over half the miles that are traveled, using over half the gasoline in the whole world? How much longer can we do it? How much longer can we continue talking about becoming more independent? We are becoming more dependent by having our oil bill go up and so on. That's the big question? The end, or rather the climax, the crunch, is not all that far away. These changes that I mentioned a moment ago will be prolific.

We saw in this wonderful presentation earlier this morning how some areas of our country are already having to reconsider what a good house is or what housing is all about and how it fits into the landscape. The only thought that I had as I watched related to my favorite city, Santa Fe, New Mexico. I thought that the old timers didn't have a bad idea with adobe you know. Maybe we'll get down the road and even concrete won't be as cheap as it is. We may have to use even more earthy materials which they used to use down in Santa Barbara. But what does our future hold?

Are we really going to have all those new highways that we're talking about? Or do we have more now than we'll ever need if we are running out of oil? If we don't need the highways, are we close to the day? What a glorious day that will be and how busy all of you will be. I talked about it for years. In fact, I haven't mentioned this one for awhile. They are going to wake up in Washington and discover that we need to fill in the gaps and make our cities more compact. With gasoline rationing the best way to save energy and to improve the lives and help the people, is to take the highway money, or a big chunk of it, for two or three years and build within each of our cities greenways, places for people to jog, to walk, to bicycle, to use our own energy to go to work. And what does our jogging revolution say? What does this worry about health say? It says that at least 20% of us out there would use our own energy and unhook from the automobile to get to and from work if we were given the opportunity. That is, I believe, just around the corner and what a challenge that will be to landscape architects--to build these new facilities.

But we are still operating on the assumption that we will have fuel. What we are saying to everybody now is to fly. Everybody fly. I read an article in Las Vegas yesterday where they say "Well the gasoline thing is going to disturb the tourism that is so important to "Reno and Las

Vegas and maybe the California people are getting nervous they won't come the way they used to. But now we are deregulating airlines so there is going to be a lot of new flights and everybody will fly." Well, the jet fuel comes out of the same barrel of oil gasoline does and if we are going to have a shortage of gasoline then we are going to have a shortage of jet fuel. The United States can't expect that we are going to dominate or consume all the jet fuel in the world. They seem to be saying that we don't need railroads, and let them go on down the tube and that's another problem.

There's a redesigning going on of everything including the houses. The way they fit into the landscape is being reconsidered. Cities are being redesigned to find out what a livable city is and what can be done to make it more livable. We're redesigning our transportation system, reconsidering even our energy systems and wondering if we are going to need all these power lines? Are we going to keep our commitment to the big mega-systems? I wonder some days whether we are really going down the wrong path. I read in the Wall Street Journal the other day what's happening. New York, in some ways, is a preview of the future. Some of the industries are decoupling themselves from the electric power system and building their own electric power systems which is completely counter to the whole trend. We very well may find many of the new houses of the future, in certain parts of the country, using wind energy solar energy, and other things. They may become largely self-sufficient and hooked up to their electric power company as a back-up rather than as a primary system. The electric power companies of the past, as we have know them, may primarily be providing commercial power rather than the power for homes at least in some communities and some parts of the country. I don't know where we're headed. I'm not sketching in any road map, blue print or scenario but I see enormous changes-structural changes, changes in design, changes in the landscape. I worry. The only thing worrying me about the present, the very fine presentation here this morning, is that I wonder if we were going to have to look at all of our land to grow biomass for energy. You know what kind of environmental problems that presents us with. How are we going to harvest it? How were going to deal with it? We face big, big problems as we leave the period of cheap energy and enter into a period when energy will be very precious and when energy efficiency and conservation become the dominant and paramount ideas and concepts that our society must function

under. Then certainly you can see why I believe we are on the edge of a time which is much more challenging. There is more of need for your talents or skills than we even thought a few years ago. So what I'm suggesting also is that with this value revolution that has been implicit in much that we have been involved in, that we may even begin to ask some simple and sensible questions. Wouldn't we be better off and happier as individuals, and as a country, if we were less mobile? Would we care more about our own backyard and our own community instead of wheeling around the way so many Americans like to do these days? One of the great things that happened to me in the Kennedy years was to form a friendship with Robert Frost, the old poet in his last years. I was reading his biography again and the most creative period of his life was in his thirties. He was living in a little house out at the edge of a little town called Durham, New Hampshire. He walked to

school with his children, to the little school where he taught Little Academy, two miles in and two miles out everyday and by today's standards he was deprived. You know we would say poor man, there he is walking. But I wonder. I always wonder of the poems were created during his most productive period as a poet, how many of the poems did he write on those walks? I haven't read many poems lately of people who wrote them as they were driving in traffic jams or rushing across the country. You know, there is real human satisfaction. Maybe if we slow down and care more about our environment and what we see, and spend more time puttering in our gardens or pruning our trees or getting our firewood or whatever, that we would be a better country and a happier country. At least that is my thought. So I suggest, dream your dreams and plan your sensitive plans. Who knows, they may be needed tomorrow.

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These 104 papers were presented at "Our National Landscape: A Conference on Applied Techniques for Analysis and Management of the Visual Resource," Incline Village, Nevada, April 23-25, 1979. Included in this proceedings are state-of-the-art papers on landscape planning. Emphasis is upon planning the visual aspects of the large and wildland areas of the United States. Methodologies presented are useful in many areas of the world. The major thrusts of these papers are to a) describe the current and future challenges to the visual resource; b) describe available technology for solving landscape planning problems; and c) illustrate appropriate combinations of technology and problems. Specifically, papers address these themes: landscape challenges (presented as a series of "simulated visual field trips"); descriptive, quantitative, and psychometric methodologies available to solve landscape problems; available legal and policy tools; combinations of technology for solving problems; landscape management systems; new dimensions of landscape planning; and priorities for research.

Retrieval Terms: landscape management, outdoor recreation, visual resources, research planning, simulation, conferences.

