Washington Environmental Council  
Seattle, Washington  
September 15, 1969  

Address by  
Governor Daniel J. Evans  

Nothing could be more suitable this morning than to have had an introduction by Jack Robertson!

I can remember back to the early days in the legislature, talking with Jack Robertson and agreeing to sponsor, with others, a bill. Only, Jack, little did I know how long and how deep a struggle we would have and really how notorious that bill could make all of us. Of course that was the Washington Roadside Advertising Act of 1961. Here it is 1969 and we still have not been able to fully implement it but we are getting closer with each passing month.

And that represented not the first, perhaps, but certainly one of the first real indications of interest of a small band of citizens willing to spend their time and their efforts on a volunteer basis in order to help preserve some of the uniqueness of our own State of Washington.

In looking around this audience—and I have seen so many of you before, I echo Tom Wimmer's comments. It's worth every minute of getting up early in the morning and traveling from Olympia to see such a large group of people devoted to changing things here in the State of Washington, perhaps more accurately—preserving things here in the State of Washington.

I sometimes have the feeling that the Environmental Council is a combination of the voice of the wilderness and a voice in the wilderness—a group of dedicated and foresighted individuals whose message may hold the key to our survival, but always seemed to be several degrees less important than any other crisis of the moment.

The problem, of course, with a deteriorating environment is that we never see it as a day to day priority. It never comes before us with the demand for solution that some other crises do. One more minor increment of pollution in our air or one more lake lost among hundreds, one more acre of scenic view property removed from public access—these are small losses in a time marked by some pretty major problems.

And yet they do add up—they add up—like the toll of a crippling disease—until one day the enormity of neglect becomes all too visible, and the resources of government all too inadequate.

I don't believe we have reached the point in Washington where the quality of our environment is beyond repair. But I do think that unless we begin to make major programs out of minor problems, we will live to see the day in most of our lifetimes when uninhibited progress has succeeded in making a living junkyard out of our superb and unequalled physical resources.
And of course this is why all of us have gathered today: to call attention to the dangers of unplanned growth; to point out the gross impact of a waste-producing population, increasing in numbers every day and every month; to alert every citizen that the quality of his life is being reduced by negligence, by ignorance and not infrequently by greed; to remind every citizen that the Seattle of today in the Los Angeles of twenty years ago, or perhaps even fewer years, that smog and grime respect no geographic boundaries and that a lake lost to the ravages of raw sewage, is a lake lost forever.

And you know not in recent years has a message been so clearly delivered as the one delivered a few weeks ago by James Jackson, the chief of the Quinault Nation. By closing the beaches of his reservation, he has done more than deny their momentary use--he has pointed dramatically to the ruin which civilization can bring to our swiftly declining wild lands and open beaches. With dignity he has said: this far, and no further. And by his gesture he has accomplished, perhaps, what all of our good intentions have yet failed to do.

I don't believe that he acted in defiance, but rather in recognition of the fact if proper safeguards were not enacted, then his people, and indeed all people of this state -- would be denied those rare privileges endowed by nature, not just for one generation, or for those of us living now, but for all generations to come.

We haven't done enough. We have stood too long. We have been ensnared by the bureaucracy of our own creation, a mute witness to the disintegration of our own atmosphere, to the degradation of our open spaces, to the suffocation of people and the physical congestion of their environment.

We have watched while junkyards multiply, while our rivers and streams are filled with refuse, while our suburbs sprawl without any plan and the ghettos of our cities decay without any hope.

We have erected new buildings to house the great machines of commerce, but we have failed to erect those barriers of law and of reason which would guarantee a minimum of quality to our life. And for this negligence, we have already paid a heavy price.

Now this isn't a price of dollars, at least not yet. But it is surely the price of beaches unwalked, of beauty unseen, of unuseable waters and impassable freeways, of disappearing land and swiftly encroaching ugliness.

It is all too apparent, of course, that we now must take action; that we must do more than ask; more than plead, and more than urge. We must begin to construct the organization and the legislation which will assure that the fate of our environment is not left to chance -- that it is once and for all secured by the laws of government and the reason of our citizens.

Let me say at this time, I think there is no greater priority in state government than environmental quality, for environmental quality deals not with just our physical environment but with our human environment as well. And it does little good to provide the great expansion of our economy--to build huge new cities, unless we can retain an increasing quality of life and the physical surroundings about us. No need ranks so high because no need so broadly affects so many citizens -- majority and minority, rich and poor, city and rural dwelling.

I pledge to this Council and to those gathered here today, that beginning with the 1970 session of this legislature, our administration will make progress in
the environmental area, that I personally will place the full weight and the full prestige of the Governor's Office behind such an effort. We will seek more than just accommodation; we will seek laws which are right, laws which are strenuous, laws which are demanding. We will get tougher on business, tougher on government and even tougher on people themselves. For there is no such thing as a little quality or a little pollution. We can undertake nothing less than a maximum effort and accept nothing less than maximum results.

With this charge and pledge, however, I would like to bring everyone here a warning or at least point out, something from the other side.

An interesting article, which some of you may have seen, appeared in the Wall Street Journal a short time ago, under Allen Otten's byline of "Politics and People". And it spoke to the popularities of political causes in the rise and fall of the passing years and it is worthwhile listening to and heeding as you begin your efforts today.

He said "like headlines and hairstyles, the fashion in political issues keeps constantly changing".

"A while back, everyone was talking about housing and urban renewal. Then the spotlight shifted to human resources--job training, health and welfare. Consumer protection had its run: Auto safety, food inspection, the truth-in-bills. Now our environment is the hot topic.

"Probably it's highly beneficial to focus the attention of the nation intently on a special subject. There is, though, a major danger: Immersion in a particular issue or group of issues can create a superficial familiarity that breeds oversimplified answers. An attitude develops that if only a few bad men or greedy corporations were brought into line, all would be well. And there is even the more treacherous corollary that the price of setting the situation straight is quite minor and manageable--a tricky tendency to obscure the real costs and just who, ultimately, would probably pay them."

He goes on to say that "technologically, most of these solutions are attainable with relative ease. Industry has the know-how to produce more efficient devices to control air and water pollution, to bury utility lines, to make the best of less-favorable plant sites. It may take a little time but it can be done. The problem that tends to be obscured or oversimplified in the environmental debates is the matter of cost--whether the public, the minority actively fighting for a better environment and the majority who don't care much one way or the other, is willing to foot the bill."

"For it does cost to carry on ambitious research into major pollution problems. It does cost to use cleaner coal, or to add better exhaust systems to cars, to trucks, or to install waste treatment or noise abatement devices or to put utility lines underground. Land may be cheaper for a jetport farther from the city, but the traveler will pay in time and in money going between the airport and town. A power plant in a less efficient location may save a scenic spot elsewhere, but it will also produce more expensive electricity. "The prospect of having to absorb some of this extra cost is one reason so many companies fight so hard against anti-pollution and similar legislation and are often slow to take advantage of technological breakthroughs. But most of the cost is going to be borne by the public--either in higher taxes to sustain expensive governmental programs, or in high prices as industry passes along most of its extra outlays."
"And really there's the rub. Is the nation really willing to pay what's needed to get cleaner air and water? Are they really willing to pay what's needed to obtain less noise, more beautiful landscapes, more parks and open space? Both the Johnson and Nixon Administrations, for instance, actually budgeted less than one quarter of the billion dollars already authorized for Federal grants to build local waste treatment plants last year and this year; state and city officials are predictably perturbed, but there has been no real outcry from the citizenry at large.

"Almost surely, a good part of the public, if it knew all the facts, would settle for dirtier air or less beautiful scenery or whatever, than pay higher taxes or higher prices. Even the knights who lead the environmental crusade rarely volunteer their readiness to pay higher electric or gas bills, steeper air fares, or higher auto prices, or higher taxes.

"Maybe even when the full costs were known, environmental issues might become just a shade less fashionable. One has to hope not, but they just barely might."

Well, that's a pretty article and a pretty good warning, I think to everyone here--that it isn't quite as simple as it may sometimes seem to convince a legislature or even to convince a citizenry at large. And, I suspect, those of us who consider ourselves knights in the environmental crusade better line up first at the pay window when we assume the cost of environmental quality. I don't think for one minute, that the situation is as difficult in this state as it might be in some other states. I do believe that the citizenry at large in this state, is more concerned about its surroundings and more willing to enlist in such a crusade and even to pay a little more if it is necessary to attain higher quality.

Let me turn, then, to some specifics and just deal with them very briefly as a prelude to the committee activity of today and the recommendations I do hope you will bring to us in the months between now and the January opening of our legislative session. Some of you will participate tomorrow morning and all through Sunday at a retreat we are conducting for some selected state officials and department heads, legislators and citizen leaders in the field of environmental issues, attempting to sort out the priorities of legislation for this upcoming session and to lay the groundwork for a massive onslaught on our deteriorating quality.

First, among these issues as far as the state is concerned, I think, has to be the ultimate management of environmental quality. During the last session of the legislature, and the session before, we have submitted bills to create a new department of environmental quality. The initial suggestions for this department were really to bring together the existing air quality and water quality programs so that we could speak with one voice and offer one organization to industries and municipalities having those pollution problems.

During this last session of the legislature, we added through a successful piece of legislation, solid waste management to a department of environmental quality but then had a small problem during the course of the legislature--we forgot to enact a department of environmental quality. So we had the issue and we had the function but no department in which to place it. We have since attempted to carry out as well as we can, those new functions with no money and no department but through the Health Department but at least we are starting this effort.
We are now beginning to structure a new program for this upcoming session of the legislature and in this field hope that you will give some consideration and perhaps offer some advice. We are now talking about the possibility of a department of environmental quality encompassing not only just air quality and water quality and solid waste management but the possibility of shifting pesticide control from the Department of Agriculture to a department of environmental quality. It is quite clear that the problems of pesticides and particularly persistent pesticides are far more than an agricultural problem but an environmental problem. We tried last session and we will try again, to have a comprehensive strip mining act passed and believe very strongly that rather than placing the management of that with a department of natural resources whose section on mining is devoted to expansion of the opportunities for mining, we should place the management in a department of environmental quality.

We have done little in this state and there has been little done across the nation in the growing problems and the growing field of noise-pollution. If we can effectively put together a legislative proposal, this too, should fall within the purview of environmental quality.

The thermal waste problems or as some would like to call them, the thermal enrichment problems of nuclear plants, again, represent an environmental problem and perhaps ought to be added to the responsibilities of a new department of environmental quality.

I guess what I am really trying to point out is the proposal for this next session, could be and I think should be, a much more comprehensive approach to the management of environmental quality than any we have presented in previous sessions of the legislature. It will probably make a better bill and a better department. It will also add to the difficulty of its passage.

Let's turn to some of the other specifics that are the subject of a pretty fine position paper, that incidentally was put together by our new Department of Program Planning and Fiscal Management. This I hope will be the first of many new things we are able to do at the state level because we have put together the planning and the budget agency and now have created some teams in these various functional fields in natural resources, in human problems and four or five other fields, we have teams working in both planning and budgeting. They have established for us a comprehensive paper on environmental issues listing where we are today, the related state legislation that is in existence, a brief of the current responses to the issue and legislative or administrative recommendations. They talk to the issue I have spoken of environmental quality.

We go to pollution control and waste disposal issues. The pollution control of gases, the pollution control and disposal of liquid waste, the pollution control and disposal of solid waste, pollution control and disposal of thermal heat, the control of noise pollution and the control of pesticide. I mention each of these; I hope you will deal with each of these problems in your activities today, in much more detail. They all relate to the department of environmental quality but each of them has some very important specifics—some specifics that ought to be related to legislation in setting standards, in setting quality for the entire state.
Beyond pollution control, however, we have a much, much broader role in the utilization of our resources and the conservation of those same resources. One of the most dramatic in the most recent years, has been our effort along the ocean beaches, the response I have spoken of, the Quinault Indians relating to the ocean beaches and the continuing need for a strengthened conservation area along our ocean beaches and perhaps for that matter, along the protected salt waters of Puget Sound. I don't yet know how far we can or will go but I hope again that you will deal with this problem and present your proposals to us. We are seriously considering such things as Oregon's successful passage of an act requiring counties to go ahead and produce a comprehensive zoning ordinance or have the state do it for them within a limited period of time.

This, I think, is certainly not beyond the realm of possibility in our own state as we deal with this most important resource for all of our citizens--the ocean beaches and the tidelands of our protected Puget Sound area.

The protection, the conservation, and the use of our estuarine areas, is another associated area. Scenic and recreation islands. This has been subject of a comprehensive study by the Department of the Interior. We have talked on the Federal level. Certainly we have some rather unique problems and unique opportunities as we deal with scenic and recreation islands here in our State of Washington, scenic and wild river systems. This raises more hackles in the legislature, I suppose, than almost any other single issue. And yet what really could be much more important than insuring in a state as devoted to water as we are that we do preserve and hold some of the scenic and wild rivers we now have.

Associated with all of these waterfront and river issues, are the problems of waterfront land bills, waterfront obstructions and construction along the shoreline.

We hope that you will deal with these problems and present recommendations that can be seriously considered during this next session of our legislature. Turn now to the problems of our land. The questions of urban design and how we can insure on a broader basis, a more comprehensive basis throughout this state, the quality of urban design. How can we provide much better land development standards than we have been willing to insist upon on a statewide level up to now. We are a state whose people are devoted to recreation and the result of that has been the development of massive recreation areas by land developers, some of those good and some of them atrocious. We need, it seems to me, on a statewide basis, some guidance and some direction, to insure that in using the great recreational areas of this state, we don't in the process of development, destroy them. So land development standards that are strict and yet reasonable seem to be an important and priority requirement.

I spoke early in my remarks about the Roadside Advertising Act of 1961. That, of course, has been broadened over the years to a real concern over scenic and recreational highways. And we have begun the job of expanding our scenic highway system. We have initiated the effort to develop a recreational and scenic highway system and now through the cooperative efforts of the State Parks and Recreation Commission and our State Highway Commission, our State Game Commission, and others, are beginning to put together packages relating to entire stretches of scenic highway and how they can be preserved on the one hand and utilized for recreational opportunities on the other. The Yakima Canyon is one of our first places to concentrate for in a relatively few years that will be an interstate route connecting Ellensburg and Yakima that will relieve the pressures on that scenic Yakima Canyon and hopefully allow us at that time to embark on a massive recreational opportunity for that scenic highway.
The same thing is certainly true on the north cross-state highway route North Cascades area and here in conjunction with the Federal government and its several departments, we hope to do a similar thing.

But these are by no means the only two areas of this state where we need more attention to scenic and in some cases, scenic and recreational highway systems. We urge your support and suggestions on the expansion of that system.

Urban open space preservation is another high priority need of this state. The citizens, two years ago, indicated by a very substantial majority, their desire through the passage of HJR 1 - of current use taxation legislation that could help in preserving some of our urban open spaces. The last session of the legislature, failed to enact such enabling legislation. The Senate, after passing by the House I think at least a reasonable bill, failed to take action. Maybe some changes are needed to insure that the goal we all seek is not subverted by leaving loopholes in enabling legislation. Here again, your efforts and your help will make sure that we close loopholes, provide adequate legislation and then pass it to carry out the clear wishes of the people of this state.

Mineral resource removal which was subject of a comprehensive strip mining act during the last session, must be before us again and I think we cannot afford to take out from any such legislation, some of these specific areas of endeavor that were tempted to be removed during the last session. If we really are talking about the management and control of mining, especially open-pit or strip mining, then I think we are quite clearly talking about the problems, not just of coal and other similar kinds of minerals, but we are talking about gravel and sand as well. And the gravel pits of this state are just as important adequately to control as the strip coal mines. There are a whole host of other unmentioned problems that can be considered. I suspect our job especially during the 1970 session of the legislature will be to try to compile all of these ideas, to create some sense of priority, to insure that those having the greatest impact on the State of Washington, and its citizens have the greatest interest and the greatest concern of this body of citizen leaders as well as the legislature itself.

I suppose I could not end without dealing with one somewhat disassociated part of environmental quality but I feel it so strongly that I will throw it in anyhow.

Perhaps no single element of construction, physical construction plays a greater role than the development of our urban communities than a system of transportation. We spend no more money on any other governmental structures than on our highways or whatever other systems of transportation we build. These systems determine pretty well on where people live - and where they work and where the open spaces remain and what kind of quality we have in our urban communities. And I hope you will continue the fine effort you have already begun in insuring that we at the state level, at least, have an opportunity to deal comprehensively with transportation systems and not continue to deal singly with the problems of highways or with other systems of transportation on separate and un-integrated basis.

Finally, we can't continue progress on one-time legislative sessions. We can't even continue progress on a series of seminars and meetings such as this. It seems to me we need to tie all of these efforts together with a continuing environmental research program. I hope you will give real consideration and perhaps even present us with some ideas to go with those we have already put
together on how the State of Washington might develop an effective environmental research program to continue and help lead in the efforts that will never cease if we are to insure over the years ahead, a quality environment.

Now, these are just some of the problems ahead of us. We presented some of them to the last session and the session before that, of our state legislature. Up to now we have not succeeded very well. I don't believe the legislature is yet fully awake to the needs or fully responsive to the desire of our citizens. They cannot be fully responsive or perhaps even fully awake unless they are made responsive and jolted awake by the action and the involvement and indeed the pressure of citizens throughout this state.

So your leadership and the multiplication of your leadership many, many times is going to be required if any comprehensive program of any environmental quality is to have any chance of success in the 1970 session of the legislature or any future session. No issue or no combination of proposals that we could present to a legislature could be more bipartisan in nature or even perhaps more non-partisan in nature. There is room and there ought to be room for Republicans and Democrats alike to join together in issues that ought not to divide for clean air is certainly no province of just one political party although hot air seems to be a province of both. This is an opportunity to diminish if we can, partisan differences that sometimes appear on other issues, to join everyone together, citizen and legislator alike to prove that here in Washington State at least, we can do a real job.

Thank you.