

OCTOBER 7, 1965

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT

TO THE

DELEGATES TO THE DESALTING SYMPOSIUM

(In The East Room)

(AS ACTUALLY DELIVERED, 2:30 PM EDT)

Distinguished members of the Congress, Secretary Udall, distinguished signatories, symposium delegates, members of the press, ladies and gentlemen:

We are very pleased that you could join us here this afternoon. You represent more than sixty nations. You have come here from all parts of the world. You have come to search together for a common solution to a very common problem, and I think that no event could hold more promise for the peace and progress of man.

No international gathering ever met anywhere for a more important purpose. If science can unlock the door to an unlimited supply of pure and drinkable water, I think it will be an event in human history as significant as the harnessing of the atom.

Since the beginning of time, fresh water has always been one of humanity's most precious needs. For it many wars have been fought throughout history. Without it whole civilizations have vanished from the earth.

Now, we of this generation have an opportunity to put an end to all of that. Our generation realizes that we have the power. It is the power which you at this conference really represent. That power is the power of science. But if we are to use that power effectively we must use it together.

Nature is not impressed by the lines that we draw on these little maps. The clouds above us refuse to stop for border guards and so the rain falls upon the just and the unjust alike.

The Earth's water belongs to all mankind. Together we just must find ways to make certain that every nation has it in full share and that there is really enough of it for all nations.

Now, that is the central purpose of the international symposium that you have been attending here in Washington. Since that is also the purpose of the agreement that we are about to sign, it seemed appropriate to me to ask you to come here and join us in this ceremony.

The United States of America and our good neighbor to the South, Mexico, share much in common, including the great areas which are very short of water. Together, with the help of the International Atomic Energy Agency, we are now going to explore a promising answer to a very difficult but a very mutual problem.

This agreement will help us discover whether nuclear power can be applied in a practical and economical way to convert sea water to

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generate electricity for the great arid region which joins our two countries.

President Diaz Ordaz and I are equally determined that every effort possible must be made to find new water for this thirsty part of this continent. We are going to look to the oceans and to the modern technology that you have been studying at your conference. We hope that that study will be a model for future cooperation among neighbors in all the regions of the world that are suffering from water shortage.

We have barely left the shore for the start of a very long journey. None know better than you how difficult is the task before us. But we cannot -- we will not -- we just must not delay it any longer.

Over various areas of the world today water is the key to man's prosperity, or man's poverty -- the key to his comfort or to his misery. Every twenty-four hours there are nearly 200,000 more people on this earth. A billion human beings also live on the ragged edge of starvation. Water is a prime necessity, for only if we have water can our growing populations ever be fed. Only water can give future generations a chance to escape wholesale misery and wholesale starvation.

My country, as you know, supports with enthusiasm a continuing Food for Peace program. We support an Atoms for Peace program. We are committed to harnessing the awesome power of nuclear energy for the betterment of humanity.

And today I want to announce the beginning of a Water for Peace program. Under this new program we will join in a massive cooperative international effort to find solutions for man's water problems.

As I have already announced, the United States has already launched a new 5-year, \$200 million program of research and development to lower the cost of desalting water. But the time has now come to move beyond research and development.

Therefore, I shall present to the next session -- I repeat, next session -- of the United States Congress a plan and a program with proposals and recommendations -- realizing that the Executive makes proposals and you make disposals -- for constructing practical prototype plants to make the fullest use of our technological discoveries. Those discoveries already promise plants that are capable of producing up to ten million gallons of fresh water every day by 1968, and 100 million gallons a day by 1970.

But the need is world-wide. It is not limited to any one country. Not even ours. And so should be our effort in trying to meet that need.

Therefore, today I call upon all the nations of the world to join us in the creation of an international fund to bring the fruits of science and technology to all the corners of a parched and thirsty world.

The United States is prepared to contribute its share of the resources needed for an international crash program to deal with world water resources. We ask other nations to join us in pursuit of a common objective.

That objective is: Water for all humanity.

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In pursuit of that objective, the United States -- in addition to efforts that I have just described -- is prepared to build upon the achievements of this desalting conference by announcing now that we would convene within a year another great conference to deal with all the world's water problems; and by announcing now to increase our support for the scientists of more than seventy nations that are now working on water problems for the United Nations; and to announce now that we are willing to send our own best experts abroad, when requested, to establish a program of grants or fellowships to bring scientists from other lands to our own United States to engage in further study and additional research.

All this, I think, ~~will~~ be the beginning and not the end by any means of our efforts.

I earnestly believe that desalting is the greatest and is the most hopeful promise that we have for the future. I have believed it for a long time.

It was more than ten years ago, as a United States Senator, that I warned -- and I quote:

"We have reached a point where very serious consideration must now be given to the pressure of individual, industrial, agricultural needs upon water resources of this nation. We have already passed the time when we can afford to be complacent."

Well, the problem is far greater today than it was ten years ago. There are more people in the world for one thing. They need a great deal more to eat. They need a great deal more to drink. They need more industry to clothe them, and more houses to house them. They can really never have any of these things without water.

And in the decade ahead we must accomplish more -- much more -- than in the decade past.

And I pledge to you that as far as I am concerned the United States is going to accomplish much more.

So the occasion which brings us together here this afternoon is testimony to the sincerity of our purpose.

The agreement that we are about to sign is just one more example of the joint efforts that are going forward every day under the Alliance for Progress program. Under that program, last year we dispensed \$159 million more than the combined allocation of the previous two years.

The nineteen independent republics in Latin America and the United States have a partnership. We are all working to bring to all the peoples of the Western Hemisphere the fruits of modern science and modern technology.

So let us then extend that partnership. Let all of us -- East and West -- apply our science and our technology to this, the greatest of problems.

Let future generations remember us as those who freed man forever from his most ancient and dreaded enemies -- drought, and famine.

And now our efforts to free him from the enemies of drought and famine are to be extended to free him from ignorance by international

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educational programs; free him from disease by cooperative health adventures together.

And what a satisfaction it would be to everyone in this room if at some future date we can point back to this year when the United States of America was willing to put forth leadership to free humanity from the ancient enemies of mankind -- poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, disease, thirst.

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