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**Article for George Washington University Law Advocate on
Federal Government and Environment**

Edmund S. Muskie

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Article by Senator Edmund S. Muskie
George Washington University Law Advocate
Submitted February 5, 1970

Few Federal programs and executive agencies have undergone the constant change in a relatively short period of time which has marked the Federal effort to control air, water, and land pollution. And few Federal "wars" are being fought with as much room for improvement in effectiveness and efficiency.

Without a thorough reorganization of the executive branch, the pursuit of environmental quality will never achieve a pre-eminent position in the Federal government. And if policies for the protection and enhancement of the environment do not dominate in the future, we will never be able to correct the mistakes of the past.

I am not the first to note the way in which pollution control and abatement protection programs are scattered through several departments and agencies.

For example, the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration is housed in the Department of the Interior. The Air Pollution Control Administration is part of the Consumer Protection and Environmental Health Services Program in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, along with the Environmental Control Administration.

Such proliferation of activities and overlap of responsibilities are not unique to environmental protection programs in the Federal government. But, increasingly, such proliferation and overlap are intolerable because of their adverse effects on our efforts to improve the environment.

The time has come for us to create an independent, watchdog agency to exercise the regulatory functions associated with environmental protection. Bureaus, divisions and administrations housed in separate departments cannot marshal the resources required to combat the interlocking assaults on our air, water and land resources. They have neither the status nor the manpower to deal with one of the fundamental and insidious threats to our society.

There are those who favor the creation of a Department of Natural Resources or a Department of Conservation to handle such functions. Whatever the merits of such a department to serve other purposes, such a move for these purposes would be a mistake for several important reasons.

First, it would ignore the fact that our environmental protection problem involves competition in the use of resources-- a competition which exists today in the Department of the Interior and would exist in any department which must develop resources for public use.

The Department of Transportation is not the agency to determine air pollution control requirements for the transportation industry. The Atomic Energy Commission is not the agency to establish water pollution control requirements for nuclear power plants. The agency which sets environmental quality standards must have only one goal: protection of this and future generations against changes in the natural environment which adversely affect the quality of life.

The problem of environmental pollution will not be solved by picking up the rhetoric of anti-pollution concerns and then assigning the control of pollution to those responsible for the support of promotion of pollution activities.

Second, we must recognize that environmental protection is not the same as conservation, although sound conservation practices should enhance the environment. For example, some conservation projects developed and promoted by the Soil Conservation Service, the Bureau of Reclamation or the Corps of Engineers are not consistent with broader societal needs and the quality of life. Our conservation projects in South-Central Florida, for instance, have seriously threatened the ecology of the Everglades.

Finally, the traditional concerns of conservation activities have been too closely identified with the protection

of natural resources separated from the population centers.

Our primary concern must be man where he lives and the inter-relationship between the natural environment and his man-made environments.

An independent agency, charged with responsibility for developing and implementing Federal environmental quality standards, supporting basic research on problems of environmental quality, stimulating and supporting research on control techniques, and providing technical assistance to State, interstate and local agencies, would reflect the national commitment we need if we are to avoid ecological disaster.
