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3-25-1972

Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie to the Wisconsin Resources Conservation Council

Edmund S. Muskie

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Recommended Citation

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REMARKS BY SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE
WISCONSIN RESOURCES CONSERVATION COUNCIL
MADISON, WISCONSIN
11:00 A.M. (C.S.T.), SATURDAY, MARCH 25, 1972

THE FACT THAT WE ARE IN MADISON TODAY TO TALK ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT TESTIFIES TO OUR DETERMINATION TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. THE FACT THAT WE ARE MEETING IN WISCONSIN ALSO REMINDS US OF HOW MUCH WE HAVE LOST AND HOW MUCH WE STILL HAVE TO SAVE. FOR YOUR STATE SHOWS BOTH THE BEST OF THE EARTH GOD MADE AND THE WORST OF THE EARTH MAN HAS REMADE.

ROBERT FROST COULD HAVE BEEN THINKING OF WISCONSIN'S WINTER SPLendor WHEN HE WROTE OF WOODS AS "LOVELY, DARK, AND DEEP" -- YET THE WORD "SMOG" COULD HAVE BEEN INVENTED TO DESCRIBE THE SUMMERTIME SKY OVER MILWAUKEE.

THIS IS A STATE WITH NINE THOUSAND LAKES -- YET YOUR NATURAL SURROUNDINGS ARE THREATENED BY THE NAVY'S INSISTENCE ON AN UNPROVEN GIMMICK LIKE PROJECT SANGUINE . . . AND BY A POWER COMPANY'S DECISION TO SEEK A LICENSE RENEWAL ON THE CHIPPEWA FLOWAGE.

I AM DELIGHTED THAT GOVERNOR LUCEY AND OTHER WISCONSIN LEADERS WILL TESTIFY AGAINST PROJECT SANGUINE HERE NEXT MONTH IN A HEARING ARRANGED BY CONGRESSMAN OBEY.

THE CRISIS IN THE ENVIRONMENT IS CLOSE TO EACH OF YOU -- AND IT REACHES ACROSS THIS COUNTRY. YET IT IS A DIFFERENT CRISIS FROM MOST THAT WE HAVE KNOWN. NO BREADLINES SIGNALLED ITS COMING AND NO BUGLES SOUNDED THE ALARM.

THERE WAS ONLY A SLOW, ALMOST UNNOTICED SCARRING OF OUR LAND AND FOULING OF OUR AIR AND WATER, UNTIL WE COULD NO LONGER ESCAPE THE DANGER AROUND US . . . HERE OR ANYWHERE IN AMERICA.

SOME AMERICANS WERE EARLY TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL STRUGGLE . . . AND IN THE EARLY DAYS, THE STRUGGLE WAS A LONELY ONE. I CAN REMEMBER HOW DIFFICULT IT WAS TO ENLIST PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE FIRST ANTI-POLLUTION LAWS OF THE LAST DECADE. YOU CAN REMEMBER WHEN THIS COUNCIL WAS FOUNDED UNDER GOVERNOR GAYLORD NELSON . . . WHEN THE STIRRINGS OF PUBLIC CONCERN WERE STILL FAR FROM EQUAL TO THE TASK OF CONSERVATION IN WISCONSIN. BUT AS WE ENTERED THE 1970'S -- AND ALMOST WITHOUT REALIZING IT -- MOST AMERICANS STARTED TO SEE THE CRISIS IN THE ENVIRONMENT FOR WHAT IT TRULY IS -- MORE THAN A PART OF THE NORMAL PUBLIC DEBATE ABOUT HOW WE SHOULD LIVE -- AND NOTHING LESS THAN A DECISION ABOUT WHETHER WE CAN ULTIMATELY LIVE AT ALL.

TWO YEARS AGO, WHEN SENATOR NELSON LED THE FIRST EARTH DAY, MILLIONS OF PEOPLE ANSWERED THE CALL TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL CAUSE. THEIR COMMITMENT HAS BEEN AN INDISPENSABLE FORCE IN THE PASSAGE OF REFORMS LIKE THE CLEAN AIR ACT. I KNOW . . . BECAUSE I HAVE WRITTEN AND SPONSORED MOST OF OUR NATIONAL AIR AND WATER POLLUTION LEGISLATION SINCE 1960. EACH TIME AMERICANS HAVE UNDERSTOOD MORE ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT, I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SECURE STRONGER MEASURES TO PROTECT IT. YET I ALSO KNOW THAT THESE ADVANCES HAVE NOT BEEN SHAPED BY ANY SINGLE INDIVIDUAL OR AN SINGLE POLITICAL PARTY. TOGETHER, SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES ON BOTH SIDES HAVE WORKED AND VOTED FOR SWEEPING CHANGES, OFTEN WITHOUT A DISSENTING VOTE. THE DECISIONS OF THE CONGRESS HAVE REFLECTED THE WILL OF THE COUNTRY.

SO THE ENVIRONMENT SHOULD NOT BE A POLITICAL QUESTION. IT IS A QUESTION OF SURVIVAL -- AND WHEN SURVIVAL IS AT STAKE, WE ARE ALL REPUBLICANS AND WE ARE ALL DEMOCRATS. ONLY LAST AUGUST, PRESIDENT NIXON SAID: "THE WORK OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT. . . SHOULD UNITE EVERY ELEMENT OF OUR SOCIETY -- OF EVERY POLITICAL PERSUASION AND EVERY ECONOMIC LEVEL -- IN A GREAT COMMON COMMITMENT TO A GREAT COMMON GOAL."

BUT THERE IS A DISTURBING DISTANCE BETWEEN THE RHETORIC OF THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECHES AND THE REALITY OF THE PRESIDENT'S POLICY. IT IS NOT A DISTANCE SEEN FROM A PARTISAN PERSPECTIVE ALONE, BUT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ANYONE COMMITTED TO CONSERVATION.

THE WHITE HOUSE HAS GIVEN US ENVIRONMENTAL BUDGETS WHICH ARE A BLUEPRINT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL NEGLECT. LAST YEAR, THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION ASKED FOR LESS THAN A THIRD OF THE AUTHORIZED SUM FOR AIR POLLUTION CONTROL AND LESS THAN A SEVENTH OF THE AUTHORIZED SUM FOR RECYCLING DISCARDED PRODUCTS. THIS YEAR, THE ADMINISTRATION HAS AGAIN ASKED FOR LESS THAN CONGRESS HAS AUTHORIZED. . . \$1 BILLION LESS TO FIGHT WATER POLLUTION, \$300 MILLION LESS TO FIGHT AIR POLLUTION, AND \$200 MILLION LESS TO FINANCE RECYCLING.

THE LIVES OF HUMAN BEINGS ARE OFTEN DETERMINED BY THE DRY AND PRECISE FIGURES OF A GOVERNMENT BUDGET. THE NIXON BUDGET SLIGHTS MILLIONS OF INNER CITY CHILDREN WHO BREATHE AUTOMOBILE FUMES INSTEAD OF FRESH AIR AND SUFFER FROM EXCESSIVE LEVELS OF LEAD IN THEIR BLOODSTREAM -- AND YET THE SAME BUDGET CALLS FOR A SPACE SHUTTLE OF DUBIOUS VALUE WHICH WILL ULTIMATELY COST FOURTEEN BILLION DOLLARS. THE NIXON BUDGET SLIGHTS TWO HUNDRED MILLION AMERICANS WHO DEPEND ON FRESH WATER AND THE CONSERVATION OF OUR LAND -- AND YET THE SAME BUDGET CALLS FOR A SIX BILLION DOLLAR INCREASE IN WEAPONS SPENDING, EVEN AS THE PENTAGON ADMITS THAT THE RUSSIAN THREAT TO OUR MISSILE FORCES HAS NOT DEVELOPED ACCORDING TO ADMINISTRATION PROJECTIONS.

IT IS EASY TO SPEAK OF PRIORITIES -- THE WORD HAS BEEN SO OVERUSED BY ALMOST EVERYONE THAT IT NOW HAS A MEANING FOR ALMOST NO ONE. YET THE IDEA BEHIND THE WORD IS STILL VITAL. WE MUST CHOOSE -- EACH OF US -- WHETHER WE ARE IN THE WHITE HOUSE, ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL, OR AT HOME IN WISCONSIN. WE MUST CHOOSE -- A SPACE SHUTTLE OR A CLEAN LAKE MICHIGAN -- AN ABM OR CLEAR SKIES -- A LOAN TO AN INCOMPETENT CORPORATION LIKE LOCKHEED OR GRANTS FOR SEWAGE TREATMENT AND REFORESTATION.

THIS IS NOT JUST A CHOICE IN THE 1972 ELECTION, THOUGH ALL THE CANDIDATES SHOULD BE JUDGED AS THEY CHOOSE. IT IS ALSO A CONSTANT, DAILY CHOICE IN THE HIGHEST COUNCILS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND FOR EVERY CITIZEN. AND THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION HAS CHOSEN THE WRONG COURSE ALMOST FROM THE DAY IT TOOK OFFICE.

THE PEOPLE WANT TO CONSERVE THE ENVIRONMENT. YET THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS NOT EVEN LIVED UP TO DISRAELI'S DEFINITION OF LEADERSHIP: "THERE GO THE PEOPLE; I MUST FOLLOW THEM."

WHAT WE FACE IS NOT JUST A FAILURE TO FUND THE FIGHT AGAINST POLLUTION. THE PRESIDENT HAS ALSO FAILED TO ENFORCE THE CONSERVATION BILL HE HIMSELF SIGNED INTO LAW -- AND HE IS TRYING TO PREVENT THE PASSAGE OF EVEN TOUGHER LEGISLATION. AGAIN AND AGAIN, PRESIDENT NIXON HAS SACRIFICED ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN THE WAKE OF PRESSURE FROM CORPORATE LOBBYISTS. AGAIN AND AGAIN, HE HAS ALLOWED THOSE WHO MAKE A PROFIT FROM POLLUTION TO DICTATE HIS POLICY ON POLLUTION CONTROL. IN SHORT, THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION HAS AMENDED DISRAELI'S MAXIM TO READ: "THERE GO THE SPECIAL INTERESTS; I MUST FOLLOW THEM."

THE SPECIAL INTERESTS HAVE OPPOSED THE CLEAN AIR ACT OF 1970, WHICH REQUIRES POLLUTION-FREE CARS BY 1975. AND JUST LAST WEEK, THE WHITE HOUSE ISSUED A STUDY OF THE DEADLINE WHICH SOUNDS LIKE IT WAS WRITTEN BY THE EXECUTIVES OF THE AUTOMOTIVE BIG THREE -- WHO ALSO HAPPENED TO BE AMONG THE BIGGEST CONTRIBUTORS TO THE LAST REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN.

THE WHITE HOUSE STUDY ARGUES THAT THERE SHOULD BE TWO STANDARDS FOR AUTO EMISSIONS -- ONE FOR URBAN AREAS THAT ARE ALREADY POLLUTED AND ONE FOR RURAL AREAS WHERE CONDITIONS ARE STILL TOLERABLE.

WHAT WOULD BE THE RESULT? IN MUCH OF THE COUNTRY, CARS WOULD CONTINUE TO SPEW EXHAUST INTO THE AIR UNTIL ALL OF THE COUNTRY HAD EXPERIENCED SERIOUS POLLUTION AT SOME POINT. AND ANYONE WHO DECIDED TO MOVE FROM A RURAL AREA TO AN URBAN AREA WOULD HAVE TO BUY A NEW CAR OR MODIFY AN OLD CAR. IT WOULD BE A BOON FOR AUTO PROFITS -- AND A BURDEN FOR EVERY RURAL WORKER LOOKING FOR A NEW JOB AND EVERY RURAL FAMILY SEEKING A NEW LIFE IN OUR CITIES AND OUR SUBURBS.

THE WHITE HOUSE STUDY CITES EXAGGERATED COST ESTIMATES TO JUSTIFY ITS CONCLUSIONS -- AND IF THE STUDY EVER BECOMES POLICY, THE COST TO AVERAGE INCOME AMERICANS WILL BE HIGH. . . THE DAMAGE TO THE ENVIRONMENT MAY BE SEVERE. . . AND THE WINDFALL FOR THE AUTO INDUSTRY MAY EXCEED ANY OTHER GOVERNMENT GIVEAWAY IN AMERICAN HISTORY.

YET WE SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED THIS FROM AN ADMINISTRATION WHICH IN 1971 GUTTED THE OTHER GUIDELINES MANDATED BY THE CLEAN AIR ACT. THE GUIDELINES WERE DRAWN UP ACCORDING TO THE LAW. THEN, IN VIOLATION OF THE SPIRIT AND INTENT OF THE LAW AND IN RESPONSE TO OPEN INDUSTRIAL PRESSURE, THE WHITE HOUSE CHANGED THEM, WEAKENED THEM, AND PUBLISHED THEM A MONTH-AND-A-HALF LATE. AND AGAIN, THE LOSER WAS THE ENVIRONMENT WHICH SUSTAINS OUR LIVES.

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THE SPECIAL INTERESTS HAVE ALSO OPPOSED THE EFFORT TO LIMIT CLEAR-CUTTING. . . THE PRACTICE OF CUTTING DOWN EVERY TREE IN A FOREST INSTEAD OF CUTTING ONLY THE TREES THAT HAVE MATURED. THE COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY DRAFTED RESTRICTIONS ON CLEAR-CUTTING AND ASKED THE PRESIDENT TO APPROVE THEM THIS YEAR. BUT IN JANUARY, THE RESTRICTIONS WERE SUDDENLY SHELVED AFTER LUMBER INDUSTRY LOBBYISTS MET WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION. SO UNCHECKED CLEAR-CUTTING WILL GO ON. . . AND MORE OF OUR SCARCE OPEN LAND WILL COME TO LOOK LIKE THE BARREN AND ERODING HILLS OF MONTANA'S BITTERROOT NATIONAL FOREST. IT IS A BREAK FOR THE SPECIAL INTERESTS. . . AND IT IS A TRAGEDY FOR US AND FOR OUR CHILDREN.

AND, WITH ALL THE POWER THEY POSSESS, THE SPECIAL INTERESTS HAVE OPPOSED THE CURRENT WATER POLLUTION CONTROL BILL. THE BILL ^{sets a} ~~CALLS~~ ^{goal} FOR THE ELIMINATION OF ALL POLLUTION DISCHARGES INTO AMERICA'S LAKES AND RIVERS BY 1985. THE BILL PASSED THE SENATE UNANIMOUSLY. THE BILL WAS SUPPORTED BY THE PRESIDENT. THEN THE PRESSURES FROM BIG BUSINESS MOUNTED -- LED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION CONTROL COUNCIL -- A GROUP WITH PRIVATE ACCESS TO THE HIGHEST PUBLIC OFFICIALS IN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH. TWENTY-FOUR OF THE COUNCIL'S MEMBERS DIRECT FIRMS WHICH WERE SUED IN 1971 FOR THEIR FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH FEDERAL CONSERVATION LAWS. THE COUNCIL INCLUDES ALL THE MAJOR CORPORATE POLLUTERS IN AMERICA. YET FORMER COMMERCE SECRETARY MAURICE STANS PROMISED THEM: ". . . VIRTUALLY NO MAJOR MOVE HAS BEEN MADE IN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY WITHOUT YOUR ADVICE AND CRITICISM."

THE PROMISE HAS BEEN KEPT: THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION HAS JOINED THE COUNCIL'S MEMBERS IN DENOUNCING THE WATER POLLUTION CONTROL BILL THE PRESIDENT ONCE SUPPORTED. THE WHITE HOUSE HAS CIRCULATED BOGUS COST FIGURES TO FRIGHTEN AND INTIMIDATE THE CONGRESS. THE WHITE HOUSE HAS PUSHED FOR A SERIES OF CRIPPLING AMENDMENTS. WHAT THE WHITE HOUSE AND INDUSTRY REALLY WANT IS LITTLE MORE THAN A LICENSE FOR CONTINUED AND WHOLESALE WATER POLLUTION. ONCE AGAIN, THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION HAS DONE THE WRONG THING. ONCE AGAIN, THE PRESIDENT HAS CAVED INTO BIG BUSINESS AND JEOPARDIZED OUR NATURAL RESOURCES.

AND IT HAPPENS ALMOST EVERY DAY. INDUSTRIAL PRESSURE AGAINST ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IS NOT A SOMETIME THING, FELT ONLY WHEN WE FACE MAJOR POLICY DECISIONS. THE PRESSURE IS UNREMITTING -- AND THE ADMINISTRATION'S RESPONSE IS A CONSTANT SURRENDER OF THE PUBLIC INTEREST TO THE POLLUTER'S INTEREST. INDEED, THE WHITE HOUSE EVEN SEEMS READY TO PROVIDE A PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT AS THE DEFENSE COUNSEL FOR ANY CORPORATION THAT IS DESPOILING THE ENVIRONMENT, BUT SUPPORTING THE REPUBLICAN PARTY.

LAST SEPTEMBER, THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY WON A COURT ORDER PROHIBITING ARMCO STEEL FROM DUMPING TOXIC CHEMICALS INTO THE HOUSTON SHIP CHANNEL. THE PRESIDENT OF ARMCO PROTESTED DIRECTLY TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

A WHITE HOUSE ASSISTANT THEN INTERVENED -- AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGREED THAT ARMCO COULD CONTINUE ITS DUMPING UNTIL THE SUMMER OF 1972. THIS AGREEMENT WAS WRONG. IT WAS NEGOTIATED IN SECRET AND IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF POLITICAL PRESSURE. AND IT IS MADE EVEN MORE SUSPECT BY THE FACT THAT THE EXECUTIVES OF ARMCO DONATED AT LEAST FOURTEEN THOUSAND DOLLARS TO THE 1968 NIXON CAMPAIGN.

A NATIONAL NEWS MAGAZINE RECENTLY DESCRIBED THE PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT WHO INTERVENED IN THE ARMCO CASE AS "MR. FIXIT". HE IS THE SAME OFFICIAL WHO INTERCEDED FOR ANACONDA COPPER TO PREVENT STRICT AIR POLLUTION CONTROL IN MONTANA. HE IS THE SAME OFFICIAL WHO APPARENTLY INTERVENED IN THE I.T.T. ANTITRUST CASE, WHEN I.T.T. PLEDGED FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS TO THE REPUBLICAN CONVENTION. HE IS ALSO INVOLVED IN THE RESERVE MINING PROBLEM ON LAKE SUPERIOR.

IT IS ALL PART OF A PATTERN -- A PATTERN OF INFLUENCE PEDDLING AND CLOSED DOOR DEALS THAT HAVE LED MILLIONS OF AMERICANS TO BELIEVE THAT THIS ADMINISTRATION IS WILLING TO TRADE THEIR FUTURE FOR A CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION.

AND WHO PAYS THE PRICE? ALL OF US -- AS WE ENDURE FURTHER EROSION IN THE LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEMS WE CALL THE ENVIRONMENT -- AS WE WATCH A GOVERNMENT THAT IS SUPPOSED TO SERVE ALL THE PEOPLE TAKE ON THE APPEARANCE OF A SPECIAL INTEREST LOBBY, LITERALLY AT THE BECK AND CALL OF BIG BUSINESS.

NO WONDER SOME AMERICANS NOW ASK WHETHER RICHARD NIXON HAS FORGOTTEN THAT HE IS THE PRESIDENT OF A COUNTRY, NOT THE PRESIDENT OF A CORPORATION.

BECAUSE I AM A CANDIDATE IN THE WISCONSIN PRIMARY, WHAT I HAVE SAID HERE TODAY WILL INEVITABLY BE PLACED IN A POLITICAL CONTEXT. YET IT IS NOT MY INTENTION TO BRING THE 1972 CAMPAIGN INTO THIS CONSERVATION COUNCIL. I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT CONSERVATION IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANY ELECTION ISSUE. I HAVE WORKED IN THE SENATE WITH REPUBLICANS AS WELL AS DEMOCRATS TO SHAPE THE LAWS WHICH CAN SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT. I HAVE SOUGHT THE SUPPORT OF THE WHITE HOUSE. AND I STILL WISH THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD RESUME ITS EFFORT TO PROVE THAT THE PRESIDENT IS THE LEADING ENVIRONMENTALIST IN WASHINGTON.

BUT I CANNOT BLINDLY SUPPORT POLICIES TO PERPETUATE POLLUTION IN THE NAME OF NON-PARTISANSHIP. I CANNOT ACCEPT THE CLAIM THAT IT IS POLITICAL TO TALK ABOUT A BETRAYAL OF THE ENVIRONMENT WHICH SEEMS ROOTED IN POLITICS. I CANNOT AGREE TO SAY NOTHING WHILE THIS ADMINISTRATION DOES THE WRONG THING ABOUT OUR AIR, OUR WATER, AND OUR LAND.

SO I AM NOT HERE TO ASK FOR YOUR SUPPORT IN THIS ELECTION, THOUGH I WILL ASK FOR THAT AT ANOTHER TIME AND ANOTHER PLACE IN THE WEEK AHEAD.

I AM HERE INSTEAD TO STAND WITH YOU IN FIGHTING FOR THE PURPOSES WHICH GAVE THIS COUNCIL LIFE.

I STAND WITH YOU IN OPPOSITION TO PROJECT SANGUINE.

I STAND WITH YOU IN OPPOSITION TO LICENSE RENEWAL ON THE CHIPPEWA FLOWAGE.

I STAND WITH YOU IN DEMANDING A FEDERAL SUIT TO STOP THE RESERVE MINING COMPANY FROM POURING SIXTY-SEVEN THOUSAND TONS OF TACONITE WASTE A DAY INTO LAKE SUPERIOR.

AND WE MUST STAND TOGETHER FOR A TOUGH WATER POLLUTION BILL.

TOGETHER, WE CAN WIN THREE HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS IN SEWAGE TREATMENT GRANTS FOR WISCONSIN DURING THE NEXT FOUR YEARS -- WHICH IS EXACTLY WHAT WASHINGTON WOULD SEND HERE UNDER THE BILL PASSED BY THE SENATE.

TOGETHER, WE CAN PROTECT JOBS AND THE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH THE SENATE'S NATIONAL WATER STANDARDS -- SO NO INDUSTRY CAN LEAVE WISCONSIN AND ABANDON WORKERS IN THE HOPE OF FINDING A HAVEN FOR POLLUTION IN ANOTHER STATE.

TOGETHER, WE CAN DEFEAT THE ATTEMPT TO EVADE OUR CONSERVATION LAWS -- AND RENEW THE EFFORT TO ENFORCE AND STRENGTHEN THEM.

YOU HAVE SERVED ON THIS COUNCIL AND KNOW WHAT IS AT STAKE.
YOU HAVE KNOWN FOR A LONG TIME WHAT WE MUST DO: WE MUST SAVE OUR
PLANET'S ENVIRONMENT OR PERISH AMID THE POLLUTION OF LIFE ITSELF.

YOU HAVE LED THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION IN WISCONSIN.

YOU WERE SPEAKING UP WHEN OTHERS WERE STILL BLIND TO THE
DANGER.

NOW WE MUST SPEAK UP AGAIN -- IN WISCONSIN AND ACROSS THE
COUNTRY.

IT IS THE ONLY CHOICE WE HAVE -- BECAUSE THIS IS THE ONLY
ENVIRONMENT WE HAVE.

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