

FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1965 -- 10:50 a.m. CDT

REMARKS BY MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON
TO AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF PARK EXECUTIVES
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

Standing here and listening to these citations is an education in itself. You become very much aware that good park management consists of research papers and typewriters as well as trees and trails. And I congratulate each of you.

You have made me feel very special indeed by making me a member of your Institute and I thank you.

For me, this past year has been one of discovery of so many new facets to the whole business of enhancing the beauty of our country, and making it available to the people.

Yours must be a very satisfying profession, for you are the conduits of that very goal. As planners and administrators of America's parks, you provide the places so essential to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

It was John Muir who said, "Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play and pray in, where nature may heal and cheer and give strength to soul and body alike."

We have come to a moment in history when the blessings of progress -- modern vehicles for everyone, bustling factories pumping forth the evidence of payrolls -- are in many cases engulfing us.

No one wishes to turn back the clock of progress. But surely a civilization that can send a man to the moon can also find the ways and means to maintain a clean and pleasant earth.

It has been exciting to me -- as it must be to you -- to see the increased momentum in doing just that -- whether it is the garden club providing great masses of seasonal flowers in a downtown area or the research laboratories seeking to solve problems of waste disposal.

As a nation, we have become beauty-conscious. Almost everyone has set about to help. I was so pleased to learn that one major industry of this city -- some eight or nine beverage companies -- have spent a quarter of a million dollars trying to get the anti-litter message across. They are making simple -- but helpful efforts -- to remind their customers to "stow away" instead of "throw away" the used carton.

Litter is something which every individual, young and old, can do something about. It is one of the greatest detractors of beauty as anyone who drives the highway or strolls along a sidewalk knows -- and who better than your park executives?

MORE

In this invigorated effort to put nature within the reach of everyone, there are many new challenges for you who have been at it so long.

I would ask that you look at your own domain and see what your park can do that it isn't doing.

To me, the most challenging opportunity to the cause of a beautiful America lies in the young visitors to your parks.

Somehow we must find the ways to make them want and preserve beauty as a way of life.

I like to know what is growing around me. I like to know whether that tree is a spruce or a fir. And I believe that a greater effort to teach young people the names and the wonders of nature would be a forward step. Expanded nature classes can do this. Simply labelling trees and shrubs can help increase appreciation.

To see a park is recreation and pleasure, but it is infinitely more interesting, as I found when I visited the national park in the Virgin Islands, to know that the iridescent blue and yellow fish is called an "angel fish" and that the dome-like, corrugated mass on the ocean floor is called "brain coral", formed by thousands of years of work by tiny creatures.

It is quite possible to look at the world and not see it. You can stand on the Acropolis and see only a pile of rocks, not the Agora where Socrates taught or the hill on which the Apostle Paul told the Athenians about Christ.

It is quite possible to walk in a park and see only the path beneath your feet. The whole idea of interpretation of nature originated with the Europeans, was embellished by the Americans, and you and your predecessors are perfecting it and making us look upward.

Not long ago, I heard an eminent conservationist say that Americans are on the threshold of winning the conservation battle-- that the challenge ahead is to "use" -- to make full USE of the areas we have staked out.

That is why I hope you who are the key to the knowledge of nature will continue to open new doors to us.

I was so glad to hear about several park systems which hired 14 and 16 year old boys this summer in a Youth Workrecreation Program. I am quite sure that in addition to the money they earned, those boys got a new appreciation of the world about them.

You remember the lines of Shakespeare:

"And this our life, exempt from public haunt
Finds tongues in trees, books in running brooks
Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

You and your parks are our entrance to an intensified educational program for the young. You have the laboratory and I am sure that you can find new ideas for new students.

If so, you will have contributed a great deal to the whole drive for a more beautiful America.

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