

Green USA in Los Angeles. The meeting, which was chaired by Green Cross President Mikhail Gorbachev, the former president of the Soviet Union, was attended by many of the leading water policy scholars, advocates, and administrators in California. I would like to share my remarks at the conference with my colleagues.

In addition, I know that all Members of the House will want to join me in paying tribute to those who received awards from Global Green USA for their outstanding leadership in environmental advocacy. The Founder's Award was given to the president emeritus and founder of Global Green USA, Diane Meyer Simon. The Entertainment Industry Environmental Leadership Award was given to actor Pierce Brosnan for his work on dolphin protection and other issues. James Quinn, the president and CEO of Collins Pine Co., one of the leading U.S. companies practicing sustained yield forest management. The Individual Environmental Leadership Award went to David Brower, the legendary founder of Friends of the Earth and Earth Island Institute, a great leader in environmental causes in California and nationwide for decades. And the International Environmental Leadership Award was given to the National Geographic for its outstanding educational and scientific work:

INTERNATIONAL FRESHWATER SYMPOSIUM

President Gorbachev, fellow panelists, ladies and gentlemen, I am very pleased to participate in this program today.

Much of the world has struck a Faustian bargain over the past century; develop natural resources to promote economic growth with little consideration for long term environmental damage or remediation. Nowhere has this trade-off been more dramatic, or more cataclysmic, than in the case of water development in the American West.

In California, as in the Aral Sea, or the forests of Indonesia, or the polluted rivers of Eastern Europe, we are paying a huge environmental price for short-term economic growth. Correcting those past errors will not be cheap or without political risk.

Because of our rapid economic development, we in the United States committed serious resource management blunders earlier than many other nations. But we also have been among the first to recognize the errors of the past and to develop, if haltingly, innovative solutions.

Western water policy provides a textbook example. The great dams, reservoirs and waterways planned over the last century were supposed to reconfigure Nature for 500 years. Now, in the Pacific Northwest, in Utah, Arizona, North Dakota and California, we are confronting the urgent need to redefine the mission of these projects.

The goal of the great water planners in arid California was to make the deserts bloom and to permit cities to flourish. The decisions to build the great dams and canals were made by farsighted, powerful and wealthy interests who spent far more time asking "How" than "Should we?" We built dams when destruction of wetlands and fisheries was ignored; we became addicted to subsidies in an era when long-term deficits and inflation were not considered; we allowed irrigation of low-quality lands without adequate drainage; we allowed urban growth that within a generation will push the population of our water-short state to nearly that of France and Britain.

We created, in short, a population, an economy and a political system that thirsted for water, and that has created a host of economic and environmental problems.

On the cusp of the 21st Century, as we were compelled to modernize a water policy conceived in the twilight of the 19th, many doubted that the political system could exercise the bold leadership that is essential to alter destructive, costly habits.

And yet, five years ago, we did begin a unique experiment to conform water policy to the environmental, political and economic standards of our own time. Interestingly, these changes were not initiated by local officials in California, but rather were imposed by the national government which recognized that reform was urgent.

The Central Valley Project Improvement Act included, for the first time, environmental restoration and fish and wildlife mitigation as fundamental purposes of a major federal water project. This law represents something rather remarkable, even for those who are utterly disinterested in water policy. The CVPIA is fundamentally a mandate to reconfigure our most crucial resource in a way that preserves the vitality of the economy, and then does more.

Unlike earlier periods, we are not basing policy solely on what engineering, money and political muscle can achieve. Now, we must pay attention to what science and ethics tell us is necessary to pass a healthy, diverse and prosperous California on to future generations.

Policy can no longer only benefit those who arrived first and struck their best bargains. Today, fishermen and hunters, Native Americans, fish and wildlife, the environment itself, must be included. The CVPIA law established the right of all of these parties to a seat at an expanded table and to participate fully in making the fundamental decisions about how we remedy the severe mistakes of the past and plan for more equitable sharing of our resources in the future.

Securing such change is difficult enough within a single, heterogeneous state like California. Adding the overlay of clashes between cultures, nations and religions, make solutions seem impossible unless great tenacity is displayed by political and other leaders.

And yet, we in California have begun to make great progress, in no small part because all parties have begun to recognize the inevitability of change; to understand that it is cheaper, better science and smarter business to help create a new framework than to be the last defender of the old order.

I am encouraged that the progress we are making through the CALFED process and CVPIA implementation, however halting and difficult it is at times, represents the only course for California. And it can serve as a successful model for those in the Middle East, in South America, and elsewhere where water politics threatens both political stability and environmental quality.

Lastly, Mr. President, may I say that it is an honor to participate in this meeting with you. Your willingness to venture great thoughts and take enormous risks—both political and personal—stand as one of the great legacies of our century, and I am tremendously gratified that you are lending your distinguished efforts to resolving the problems of the environment around this world.

MOOD OF THE COUNTRY

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 22, 1997

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I am inserting my Washington Report for Wednesday, Octo-

ber 22, 1997 into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:

THE MOOD OF THE COUNTRY

This is an unusual time in American politics. The Cold War is over. Communism has been defeated. The federal budget is basically in balance. Americans are feeling better about themselves and upbeat about the economy. Politicians in Washington are asking themselves what the American people want us to do or not to do.

POSITIVE VIEW OF COUNTRY

Politicians are looking for issues and symbols to capture the attention of voters. Most of us remember that only a few years ago they were angry and wanted to take out revenge on incumbents. Today voters seem much more content and their mood more agreeable.

Economic issues have always been the dominant feature of American politics. Today those issues have not moved off the minds of voters but their concerns are muted, due, I suspect, in large measure to the strong economy and the agreement between the Congress and the President to balance the budget and to cut taxes. By a wide margin Americans feel that the country is headed in the right direction, and two thirds say they are satisfied with the state of the U.S. economy—the highest satisfaction levels we have seen in the 1990s.

Most people I talk to across southern Indiana believe that the economy is doing well, and many tell me their personal situation has improved in recent years. The performance of the economy has been impressive, with solid, noninflationary growth, low unemployment, and stable inflation. Unemployment in some southern Indiana counties is at 2%—the lowest in a generation. All of this translates into a sense that people want things to remain pretty much as they are, and they aren't looking to Washington for major policy changes.

VIEW OF GOVERNMENT

There is also a strong level of satisfaction with the political status quo in Washington. There is a feeling that we are finally getting done what they wanted us to do, and people are pleased that the nasty tone and partisan bickering in Congress has subsided somewhat. Americans like the way both parties worked together to balance the budget, and it is clear to me that they are satisfied with divided government. We have a Democratic President and a Republican Congress. Republicans control 30 of the 50 state houses; the Democrats control more of the court houses. More people identify themselves as Democrats, but the balance is fairly even and volatile.

This general support for divided government seems to stem, in part, from the desire to prevent either party from going too far. The American people have made it clear that they want us to govern from the center.

At the same time, I get the sense that the American people are increasingly disengaged from government, at least the federal government. They now seem to have more important things to do in their own lives than to follow every development in Washington.

ISSUES

Politicians are always trying to determine what the mandate of the voters is. No single issue dominates, but several concerns do come through.

I'm impressed that education has soared to the top of the public policy concerns of Americans. It is remarkable to me how often improving the quality of education comes up on the conversations I have with voters. Parents, of course, are particularly concerned because they see education as the pathway

to success for their children, and local business leaders increasingly talk about their need for well-educated, skilled workers. All the education issue—national testing, vouchers, school choice—have become hot-button issues. Even so, I think most Americans are satisfied with the schools in their communities, which makes all of the interest in education a little puzzling.

Everyone thinks we need to look out for the middle class. People often tell me they are concerned about their ability to meet major health care and college costs, and they want to make sure that the government helps promote opportunity. They especially support efforts to promote education and skills training, which they see as key to opportunity and a bright future for their families. A large number of voters still talk to me about declining moral values as the biggest problem in the country. They want to

make sure that traditional values are promoted, and they are very concerned about drug abuse in their communities.

As always, the politician is receiving mixed signals today. Many Americans want additional tax cuts; but they also want us to begin to develop spending plans for the looming budget surplus, and they opt for more spending on education and health care.

Although people feel positive about the economy, and interest in reducing the deficit has declined sharply, it would be a mistake to think that economic issues have disappeared. In a recent public meeting, I spent three quarters of the time talking about jobs and trade and other economic issues. But it is also clear that people are focused on health, education, crime, and the environment. They also very much want to protect Social Security and Medicare. What impresses the politician most, I think, is that

no single issue dominates the voters' ranking of concerns.

CONCLUSION

Satisfaction with the economy and widespread support for the balanced budget agreement reached this summer has meant that the voters aren't looking for major changes. My own impression is that Americans are rejecting politicians whom they consider too extreme, and they want the politicians to be compassionate and strongly supportive of the middle class. They favor a mainstream, centrist approach that is based on fiscal responsibility, opportunity, and traditional values. I also think the views of voters are very fluid today, and that things could easily change in the future, particularly if there is a change in the outlook for the economy.