

WELCOME ADDRESS

HONORABLE ERNEST VANDIVER, *Governor of Georgia*

PRESIDENT PHELPS, MR. BRIGGS, MR. LOVELL, GAME AND FISH DIRECTORS AND COMMISSIONERS OF THE SOUTH-EASTERN STATES AND DISTINGUISHED GUESTS . . .

I deeply appreciate those warm words of introduction from my good friend, Georgia's able game and fish director, Fulton Lovell.

It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of almost four million Georgians, to extend to each of you a cordial welcome to Atlanta—The Gate City of the South—and to Georgia, a state which is generously blessed with nature's bounties.

We are deeply honored to have as our guests the administrators and technicians from the 14 states that compose our beloved Southland. We are equally honored that you chose this city and this state for your convention.

As administrators of conservation programs in your respective states, the mantle of great responsibility has been placed squarely on your shoulders.

If this nation is to survive these perilous times, and conquer the forces that are out to destroy us, we *must* have the resources to keep our defenses strong.

We must remember constantly that soil, water, forests and minerals produce the raw materials and power that, when transformed into finished products provide Americans with the highest standard of living in the world, and keep alive our hopes for peace and freedom for all.

Certainly, we cannot forget that the real strength in our conservation movement lies with people like you . . . responsible people who command local conservation programs.

Many important and forward steps have resulted from action taken right here in the southeast by this association.

Among these have been the region-wide dove study . . . the cooperative deer disease study . . . our wildlife and game bird disease study . . . and the expansion of our fish and game programs in every state represented here.

Our Southeastern states have also made excellent progress in the conservation of land and water which furnish living and breeding places for our fish and wildlife.

And this is more of a problem than many of our lay citizens realize. For, if we continually allow our surface water to run off into the Gulf-bound streams, and our ground water to be wasted, then how can we keep up the population of game fish?

And if we fail to conserve our soil, and preserve natural habitat for game, then where will hunters find the quail, the grouse, the doves and pheasants?

Here in Georgia we have made excellent progress in soil and water conservation. Through last December 30, more than 8 million acres of soil had been surveyed in the National Cooperative Soil Survey.

And our state is one of the leading ones in the nation in watershed projects.

Our wide-awake game and fish department has utilized every available resource and every feasible program to meet the demands for wholesome, healthy recreation out-of-doors—hunting, fishing, boating and camping.

Our fishery biologists have actively pursued projects in reservoir management . . . farm fish pond management . . . stream survey projects to uncover more fishing areas . . . trout stream research and development and survey projects to develop salt-water fishing potential.

And studies devised to enhance the populations of squirrels, deer, turkeys, rabbits and other game have long been underway.

Many, many other programs of a similar nature are underway in Georgia, as I'm sure they are in other Southern states.

Much of this progress has been made possible by cooperative programs between state and federal agencies through the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Game and Fish Restoration Acts.

What we have done in these fields is indicative of the progress being made throughout the South, simply because the Southern area is "game and fish conscious."

But I know you, as game and fish commissioners and directors in your respective states, cannot adequately do your jobs if you are hampered by overly restrictive federal programs and legislation.

Such programs and legislation can present many problems.

In far too many cases, federal regulations and programs ignore the broad range of responsibilities which exist within the various state game and fish agencies.

While in one state the agency may deal completely with wildlife, it may have authority in another to delve into the entire field of conservation, both in land and in game and fish.

For that reason, there must be a broader scope given to federal regulations which govern many of the state's activities.

There must be regulations which recognize the varying responsibilities within the agencies of the several states . . . regulations which will not confine and limit their activities to meaningless plodding.

If they are to fulfill their missions, state game and fish agencies must be given full authority in their local jurisdictions to supervise the full range of conservation efforts.

Despite our tireless endeavors to educate the people of the South to the need for conservation, many of our citizens remain unaware of the importance of soil and water, fish and game, and other natural advantages.

The answer to the "whys" of soil and water conservation also furnishes the answer on why conservation is needed for game and fish.

In 1975 the population of the United States will reach 230 million or more, an increase of 50 million in 15 years.

To feed these additional people we will need an extra 16 billion pounds of meat, 21 billion tons of fruits and vegetables, 47 billion pounds of milk and 20 billion more eggs.

Scientists tell us that we would need 200 million more acres of land to produce this, if crop yields remain the same as today.

There is virtually no virgin land to bring into production, and super highways, airports, industrial plants and urban expansion is covering up good farmlands and fish and game habitat at an alarming rate.

To meet this challenge it is mandatory that we conserve, improve and safeguard our remaining land at an accelerated pace.

If we neglect our responsibilities in fish and game conservation, where will these 230 million Americans of 1975 find fish to catch, and game to bag? Where shall they find recreational areas?

Here in the South, I feel we have set the pace for the nation, pointing the way to the solutions to conservation problems.

With your continued dedication, and with more cooperation and understanding from the federal government, we shall achieve our goals.

Thank you for the privilege of allowing me to speak to you.

Again, may I wish you the most successful convention you have ever enjoyed.