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Challenge of Growth

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With dominion over the earth and the fullness thereof man bears a great responsibility to his Maker, to himself and to all the living world around him — a responsibility for maintaining and developing the natural endowments with which he cohabits the earth.

Each year we give recognition to an important part of this responsibility in observance of Soil Stewardship Week. We do so this year from May 23 through May 30 with the theme "The Challenge of Growth." We acknowledge man's dependence on the soil and his duty to care for it. We have come to know that a land of conservation is a land of plenty.

Our conservation responsibility is a product of the growth that characterizes the United States, and growth presents a challenge that becomes more demanding with time. Midway the decade of the Sixties, as we venture into the total and awesome universe, we are fast becoming aware of an extension of man's responsibility. There dawns upon us the realization that, bit by bit, man is slipping his veil of ignorance and misunderstanding, sweeping aside the aged shrouds of timidity and fear, to approach new horizons of human achievement.

In the laboratory, on the soil, beneath the sea and into space, our forays into the unknown in search of the "whys" and "hows" bring us always closer to truths we have only vaguely suspected. Our imagination leaps to engage more profound mysteries.

It is imperative, in the face of this remarkable boldness, that we pause with each unfoldment to understand our role and its meaning.

We are stewards of what we survey. Whatever we may chance to discover about our world, or worlds beyond, we are privileged by a Higher Authority than ourselves. The rewards of this privilege are accompanied by serious obligations. Nowhere will we become more constrained to meet our responsibility, to honor our trust, to discharge our obligation as stewards, than on earth with its soil and water resources, the stuff on which, after all, our lives depend.

We have learned from bitter experience the price of disregard for those obligations. Where we misused and abused the land we reaped subsequently the floods and dust and utter desolation.

We in America have survived those mistakes. We are earnestly

endeavoring to husband and develop our soil and water resources — to heal the scars of our land. In this effort there are yet too many who believe the problems of soil and water to be problems only for land owner and operator. They must be impressed with the meaning of stewardship. They must come to know that although our resources to meet present and future needs are adequate, they will remain adequate only as we of country and city together use and develop them wisely. The speed with which stewardship becomes a fact in our life in our cities can well be marked as a facet of the challenge of growth.

The best use of land and water to meet human demands on a continuing basis becomes more urgent. As each day passes, this fact looms larger in importance in both urban and rural areas.

This is the nature of the challenge of growth that confronts us: To cultivate more widely, among all our people, the conservation

attitude, for conservation is the essence of stewardship and stewardship is the God-given privilege of humanity.