

You will forgive me if, as I stand before you today, I take a moment to look back with some pride and satisfaction on a date now three and a half years in the past. It was on that date — May 20, 1960 — that the first Conference of the Appalachian Governors was held in Annapolis at my invitation. May I for a moment quote from the remarks which — in my capacity as host — I used to open that Conference.

I said at that time: "Efforts to help find a solution to the problems of the Appalachian region have, up to now, come from one or another of three different sources — the individual states, the federal government, or private groups. All of these have been doing excellent work, but it seems to me they would be able to function more effectively if the states that comprise the entire Appalachian region get together and give a visible and forceful demonstration of their united concern"

"I believe," — I went on to say — "that the time is ripe for the launching of some forceful interstate action in regard to the pressing problems of the Appalachian region, and I am most hopeful that this Conference will be the seedbed out of which will grow a new awareness of our obligations to the mountain areas of our states."

That was three and a half years ago, and I think we are justified in saying that the "new regional awareness" of which I then spoke has indeed grown and developed to the point which has made today's gathering possible. That "regional awareness" has been fostered first through the establishment of the Conference of Appalachian Governors as a permanent body, and secondly through the interest which President Kennedy has shown in the conference and his decision to use the conference as a partner in the development of federal plans for the Appalachian region.

In looking back over the period between today and that first meeting at Annapolis I feel a deep sense of obligation and appreciation for the devoted and dedicated efforts which so many have given to this project. John Whisman of Kentucky, George Stevens of North Carolina, Harlan Matthews of Tennessee, and Governor Barron of West Virginia are some of the names that come to mind. I am grateful, too, for the guidance and council that has been given to me and to the Governor's Conference by Harry Boswell of our State who served as the first chairman of the staff committee and who has worked so hard on such Appalachian problems as Area Redevelopment and highway planning. Lastly, I cannot forget the invaluable contribution which has been made by Bert Combs, the brilliant