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Pepco Power Plant 3/13/90 [OA 4728]

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 14, 1990

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
DURING VISIT TO PEPCO POWER PLANT

Chalk Point, Maryland

10:30 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: I want to first thank Ed Mitchell and Hula Edmonds who have shown us around this plant -- Ed being the top executive and familiar with all the economic dimension of this tremendous utility, and Hula running the plant here -- described by his leader as one of the best in the business.

A few months ago, we sent to Congress -- it was in July of last year -- a very comprehensive Clean Air Act bill -- Clean Air Act amendment. And these amendments had as their goal cleaning up the smog in our city, reducing the toxic chemicals that are being emitted into our atmosphere and halting the damage that's caused by acid rain.

Now those proposals, which were the, I think most dramatic proposed revision of the Clean Air Act in history, are subject to debate and compromise forged with the Senate leadership. And I am grateful to Democrats and Republicans alike who have come together with what we think is a very sensible approach. The Dole-Mitchell compromise substitute is now under consideration, and my appeal again would be to urge all members to move forward on it within the parameters hammered out in compromise by Senator Mitchell and Senator Dole.

The bill is consistent with the need to balance environmental benefits and to sustain economic growth for this country. And Hula, I would put that in more personal terms -- that means jobs for the men and women that you have under you. We cannot let this country screech to a halt, but I am determined to clean up the air. And we're going to work hard for the passage of this bill. I am confident now that it will remain intact, and that I am confident that it will prevail in the Senate. And the same time, we're pursuing an equally-balanced measure in the House of Representatives.

So to get this balance, we're going to rely on market forces -- incentives for technological innovation, provide the private sector with the flexibility to make emissions reductions in the most cost-effective manner possible. Ed was telling me there's megabucks involved in all of this. And we want to be as helpful as possible in making these changes as cost-effective as possible while still meeting our environmental goals.

Now PEPCO, your company, sir, like most, is committed to take these additional steps to meet these even tougher standards under the Clean Air Act, and for that we're very grateful. Under the Act, we try to provide these utility companies with flexibility to meet the new and tougher standards. We give them options -- burning coal with a lower sulfur content or switching to other fuels, installing new emission control technologies, or utilizing some of the emerging clean-coal technologies. Providing this flexibility, we can ensure that the environmental benefits are gained at the least cost to the guy that pays the bill -- the consumer.

And I'm confident that a good-faith attitude toward these environmental goals prevail on the part of most of the companies, and we've seen evidence that today in projects it is going forward. We see this evidence now.

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And I also must say I am very impressed with this fish culture here, because raising over a million stripers to replenish the Chesapeake Bay is a significant environmental contribution, not just for fishermen such as myself, but I think it's good for the entire environmental background of the Chesapeake Bay. You've got a wildlife sanctuary here. That's good citizenship, very good citizenship. And in our new Clean Air Act we're going to be challenging PEPCO and these other great companies to do even more in terms of the environment.

So, I think we're on the road to a balanced, environmentally aggressive, economically responsible piece of legislation. And this has given me an example to get a really -- feeling of how this energy is produced, and a feeling for the kinds of people that are producing the energy, and then also to have a broad look at an environmental dimension that has not always been a part of the equation; and today it is.

And I salute you, Ed, and your associates in this company for carving out some new ground here. I hope it will serve as an example to others all across this country. So we've had a good day here.

Q Mr. President --

THE PRESIDENT: Hey, listen, I had a press conference yesterday. This is a one-way street, where I do the talking and you guys --

Q About that news conference, though, yesterday, Mr. President --

Q Three hundred million dollars at this plant alone.

Q -- there are some conflicting signals coming out of there and out of Mr. Darman's briefing yesterday on taxes. Is that something that's negotiable?

THE PRESIDENT: -- got to read all the tea leaves and listen to the nuances. I mean, it's out there, very clearly.

Q How about the lips?

THE PRESIDENT: Keep reading.

Q What about the cormorants?

THE PRESIDENT: Are you a cormorant lover?

Q No comment.

THE PRESIDENT: Come on, Ellen, you've seen those guys.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

10:35 A.M. EST