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Statement of Rep. Paul Tsongas to the New England
Energy Congress, May 20, 1978.

Last August, I suggested to the New England Congressional Caucus that we organize a workshop to develop an energy plan for New England. At that time, I anticipated that Congress would pass a national energy plan by the Fall, and so, by Spring, 1978, we would know how the President was going to implement the national plan. It seemed to me that it would be an appropriate time for New England to decide what steps we needed to take -- beyond the national plan -- to protect and foster our region's economic and social development for the next 25 years or more.

Ten months later, as you are well aware, we have no national energy plan. But today -- as a result of the efforts of the Congressional Caucus and its staff, and everyone here -- we can be certain that New England will have its own energy program -- whether or not we have a national plan. While the Congress hasn't gotten itself together to meet the energy crisis head on, it is gratifying to know that hundreds of New England citizens not only took the crisis seriously, but were willing to participate in this Congress. It is one thing to talk about the crisis, and another to sacrifice many hours to find concrete solutions.

Our undertaking over the next eight months is formidable as well as critical. We must consider the policies and choices which face the New England states. We must develop a plan that specifically details the policies, economic initiatives, and legislation which the New England governments and Congressional delegations should adopt. We cannot afford to waste any more time on producing another litany of energy facts and figures or a theoretical star gazing into alternative energy futures. We must be responsible and produce an energy blueprint that meets the needs and reflects the best interests of our region.

From my experience as a member of the Ad Hoc Committee on Energy, I became convinced that conservation must be the priority of any energy policy. The environmental, economic and social impacts, not technologically-limited fuel supplies, provide the fundamental basis of the energy crisis. Yet, even the most vigorous conservation program still requires the development of adequate energy supplies for the future. Whatever national plan eventually is implemented, we need to work on a regional basis to determine how we can limit the social, economic and environmental costs to New England. For us in New England, it is critical that we use what meagre resources we possess, together with special regional bargaining relationships with other regions and nations, to sustain economic prosperity and full employment.

I am particularly enthusiastic about the Energy Congress because it brings together an extraordinary gathering of people -- the public and private sector decision-makers -- who can actually make an energy program work. The dialogue which begins here today will produce no less than an energy plan for New England, and in my opinion, the spark that will be the catalyst for the rest of the nation to finally take responsibility for our energy crisis and create a national program.

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