

INAUGURAL STATEMENT OF SENATOR PAUL TSONGAS

JANUARY 15, 1979

In taking the oath of office today as a United States Senator from Massachusetts my thoughts are of new responsibilities and opportunities. My goals reach in two different directions. I want to be remembered as the senator from Massachusetts who did more for the cities than anyone before me. I also want to be remembered as a senator who took a generational perspective on global issues: energy, our environment, the Third World.

I have talked for months now in my travels throughout the Commonwealth of fostering a long-range outlook--of getting us to think not just of ourselves and our immediate needs but also the kind of state and the kind of world we will leave to our children. Through a coincidence which I interpret as a signpost, 1979 has been designated by the United Nations as the International Year of the Child. I want it to be a year in which there is progress for Massachusetts and for the nation.

In the Senate I will work to see that progress is made in our fight to slow inflation, particularly through curbing our seemingly insatiable appetite for energy. The fight to decrease our dependence on foreign oil cannot be put off either by reports of vast oil deposits in Mexico or by changes of power in global oil markets. The fight to control our demand for energy is a fight we must redouble, now more than ever, if our children are to live the kind of active and productive life they deserve in the 21st century.

Massachusetts can offer the nation unique help in the development of alternative energy resources. I plan to draw upon the diverse talents of Massachusetts' universities and industries to speed up the implementation of solar, wind, biomass and other forms of renewable energy sources.

The International Year of the Child is also a time for us to think of what we can do to make the future a good one for us all. It is a time to think of ensuring a lifetime for our children in which they do not go off to war. World peace will depend first upon negotiating limitations on the nuclear arms race. It will also depend upon our ability to increase our understanding of the needs and unique aspirations of developing countries. I want to continue my involvement in issues affecting the Third World because I am convinced that only by increasing our knowledge about developing nations will we be able to avoid repeating mistakes we made when we involved ourselves in the Vietnam War.

Cities are becoming America's last frontier. Cities are where new ideas are needed and where untried, often bold methods can be tested. These next years will bring increased interest in revitalizing our urban centers because the realization is growing that keeping the cities healthy is as important to the suburbanite as it is to the city dweller. If a city fails, its decay can only spread to the towns that surround it. In the Senate I will continue to work on revitalization efforts which I feel must be marked by planning and cooperation by all levels of government, business and the public.

After serving for 10 years in public office I have become keenly and sometimes painfully aware that there is much to be done to improve the quality of life for the people who live in our cities and towns. I will continue to speak out in favor of welfare and social security reform; to work for more housing; to make health care affordable for all of us; and to add my voice to others in the Senate who know that the elderly in our country need a strong voice to represent them.

Part of what improves the quality of our lives is the growth of our economy. The major role I see for myself in Massachusetts is as a facilitator of economic development. I hope to focus that impact on two levels: short-term and long term results. 25 percent of my staff will work full time, covering every region of the state, to ensure responsible expansion and development of business and job opportunities. This section of my office will be known as the Economic Development Staff and represents part of my pledge to be a senator who knows and cares about the day-to-day happenings in his state. The staff will coordinate its efforts with my Washington office to ensure that the benefits are lasting ones for our communities.

A senator is many things to many people. Above all, I want to be accessible and informed. For my staff and I this will mean listening to all sides of the issues; it will mean visiting Massachusetts cities and towns to hear, first-hand, peoples' needs, criticisms and opinions; it will mean establishing advisory committees whose members are Massachusetts residents and whose task it will be to keep me informed of what the people in the Commonwealth feel about local and national issues. I have said I intent to be both a 'local' and a 'national' senator. Massachusetts deserves that kind of full representation.