

STATEMENT BY CONGRESSMAN PAUL TSONGAS AT THE
DEDICATION OF THE NORTHEAST SOLAR ENERGY CENTER

JUNE 23, 1978

IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE AND LONG EXPECTATIONS THAT I AM ABLE TO SPEAK TO YOU TODAY AT THE CEREMONIES DEDICATING THE NORTHEAST SOLAR ENERGY CENTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY. AS YOU ARE WELL AWARE, THIS CEREMONY REPRESENTS THE REALIZATION OF A DREAM THAT ONE DAY THE NORTHEAST WOULD HAVE AN ENERGY RESEARCH AND COMMERCIALIZATION CENTER. IT ALSO REPRESENTS A TRANSITION OF SORTS -- FROM THE PLANNING STAGE TO THE PRODUCTION STAGE. IN THE LAST THREE YEARS, THE POLITICIANS HAVE COMPROMISED, THE PLANNERS HAVE EVALUATED VARIOUS OPTIONS, AND THE ADMINISTRATORS HAVE MANAGED THE DELICATE PROCESS OF ORGANIZING THIS CENTER. THE BURDEN NOW RESTS UPON ITS STAFF TO PRODUCE MEANINGFUL STEPS TOWARD THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF SOLAR ENERGY.

THIS PROCESS WILL NOT BE AN EASY ONE. THE LACK OF A NATIONAL ENERGY PROGRAM INCREASES THE UNCERTAINTY IN OUR ENERGY OUTLOOK. PROBLEMS WITH OUR ECONOMY, BOTH ON A NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL, LIMIT THE POTENTIAL INVESTMENT IN NEW SOLAR ENERGY EQUIPMENT. AND IN MANY CASES, SUBSTANTIAL PROBLEMS MUST BE OVERCOME WITH THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS ON NEW SOLAR TECHNOLOGIES. BUT THESE ARE NOT INSURMOUNTABLE BARRIERS. THE CHALLENGE WE FACE IS ONE OF PROVIDING INCENTIVES FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS, CUTTING THROUGH THE BEAUROCRATIC MAZE OF AGENCIES AND RED TAPE, AND DEVELOPING A FAVORABLE VIEW TOWARD THE USE OF SOLAR ENERGY BY THE PUBLIC.

IT IS A CHALLENGE OF DIRECTING RESEARCH PROGRAMS AND DEMONSTRATION EFFORTS. IT IS INDEED THE CHALLENGE OF THE 1980'S.

AS WE LOOK AHEAD, WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR SOLAR ENERGY? ONLY THE LIMITS OF OUR IMAGINATION CONSTRICT THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION. IN THE NEAR TERM, SOLAR HEATING AND COOLING CAN PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN REDUCING OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN ENERGY SUPPLIES. ONE DAY IT WILL REPLACE MOST OTHER ENERGY SOURCES USED FOR THE HEATING AND COOLING OF BUILDINGS. IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS, THE ECONOMIC BARRIERS TO THE USE OF SOLAR ELECTRIC TECHNOLOGIES WILL BE REMOVED BY IMPROVEMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY AND INCREASING COSTS OF ALTERNATIVE SOURCES. SLOWLY BUT SURELY, SOLAR CELLS, WIND TURBINES, AND OTHER DEVICES WILL BECOME COMMONPLACE INGREDIENTS IN THE ENERGY MIXTURE.

THE QUESTION IS -- HOW SOON WILL THESE EVENTS TAKE PLACE, AND HOW SOON WILL SOLAR ENERGY SUPPLY A SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF OUR ENERGY DEMAND? PROJECTIONS OF THIS KIND ARE HIGHLY UNCERTAIN BUT THEY CAN BE MADE. RECENTLY THE COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY SUGGESTED THAT ONE-QUARTER OF OUR ENERGY NEEDS COULD BE MET BY SOLAR ENERGY IN THE YEAR 2000. IMPOSSIBLE?? -- NOT IF THE STAFF OF THIS CENTER AND THOSE INDIVIDUALS IN OTHER CENTERS, UNIVERSITIES AND INDUSTRY NATIONWIDE DO THEIR JOB -- AND HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC AND ELECTED OFFICIALS.

I PLEDGE TO YOU THIS SUPPORT. TO SPEND TIME AND EFFORT IN ENSURING A SECURE ENERGY FUTURE SHOULD BE THE GOAL OF ALL OF OUR ELECTED PUBLIC SERVANTS. IT IS MY GOAL AS WE FACE THE CHALLENGES OF THE 1980'S.

TO PARAPHRASE ONE GEORGE ALLEN, FOR SOLAR ENERGY, THE FUTURE IS NOW.