

# A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE

Remarks by  
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*Upon accepting the  
1992 Man of Conscience Award from  
The Appeal of Conscience Foundation  
New York City, October 8, 1992*

Thank you, Rabbi Schneier.

I'm honored to receive this award, and I accept it with special thanks to my family and to my many colleagues at Procter & Gamble, who deserve a large measure of any recognition that I may receive.

I happen to be fortunate enough to have spent nearly 40 years working for a Company whose central and overriding principle is to always try to do the right thing.

We may not always succeed -- but that deeply instilled sense of corporate conscience has provided a framework in our Company in which individuals of all backgrounds, all nationalities, and all persuasions are bound together. As a product of that environment, I am proud to represent our more than 100,000 P&G employees here tonight.

I also want to congratulate President Salinas on his award.

Mr. President, our Company first entered Mexico in 1948 -- the year you were born -- and because of the coincident timing of those two events, I cannot resist at least one small analogy.

In many respects, we grew up together in Mexico through times of sacrifice and struggle -- times that were framed by a vision of limitless opportunity which would someday become reality for the citizens of your country. That day, it seems to me, is at hand.

In the course of your lifetime, Procter & Gamble de Mexico has grown from humble beginnings to a company of more than a billion dollars in sales, five manufacturing plants and thousands of employees -- many of them young men and women fresh from your high schools, your trade schools, and your colleges and universities -- all of them eager to have that vision fulfilled in their working lifetimes.

I can tell you, Mr. President -- and I'm speaking on behalf of our P&G employees as well as myself -- that we take great pride in being a part of what is happening in Mexico today under your courageous leadership.

We are particularly pleased to see the North American Free Trade Agreement going forward. This treaty, which you have championed, will greatly enhance the future economic vitality of our hemisphere. We at Procter & Gamble strongly support NAFTA, and we will work side by side with you and with our counterparts in Mexico until the day is finally won.

I also want to congratulate the men and women of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, and particularly Rabbi Schneier, on your outstanding purpose and impressive record of achievement. Each of us is born, I believe, with a need to help make the world a better place than the one we found -- better in terms of the physical environment, better in the way we deal

with one another as individuals, better in the way nations act toward other nations, and toward their own people. Institutions like the Appeal of Conscience Foundation help meet this need, and I'm proud to be a part of that process here tonight.

### THINKING ABOUT CONSCIENCE

One cannot receive an award from an organization with "conscience" in its name without thinking deeply about the meaning of conscience, and its role in our lives and its role in our society.

As a businessman, I often deal with social issues from the standpoint of moral and ethical responsibility, economic necessity, and, of course, legal obligation. But conscience is a deeper human trait, and perhaps the most difficult of all to instill in an entire society.

Why is that? Well -- conscience is not something we are all automatically born with. We're born with the capacity to develop conscience -- but we need help. Help through example from our parents -- learning from our teachers -- guidance from our religious institutions -- and effective leadership from our governments. And, we must have that help in the very earliest stage of learning... when we are children.

Children are the key to using the power of conscience to change the world. As we think about the moral education of the world's children, what are the priorities?

Human rights and religious freedom -- two focal points of this Foundation's mission -- rank at the highest level of moral priority. But there is yet another area of need -- another, where the power of conscience can make a difference. It is the environment in which we all live.

### THE ENVIRONMENT -- A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE

The creation of a global conscience toward environmental responsibility is one of the most

urgent priorities of our time. We are using up our planet. We are abusing nature -- both out of ignorance and out of disregard for its fragility -- to the point where the quality of life awaiting future unborn generations could be seriously threatened.

That worries me, as I know it worries most of you. And like you, I have a strong sense of commitment to protecting our environment, which I pursue privately and through our Company. The environment is a matter of conscience with me, but I was not always that way.

When I was a young boy growing up in Los Angeles in the '30s, virtually every home had a backyard incinerator. I remember that one of my daily chores was to burn the trash. Can you picture 500,000 backyard incinerators burning trash in Los Angeles? We all thought we were doing the right thing. We were helping the community reduce garbage collection cost.

But I was damaging the environment, and I didn't know it. I was conscience-free because environmentally, I was ignorant. Millions of people are still like that today.

Yet, whole nations have developed a strong environmental conscience, but not without education and not without pain. Germany is a case in point. Germany today is one of the world's most environmentally conscious nations, driven by stringent laws and regulations, but also by an informed national conscience, but it was not always that way.

A few weeks ago I had the privilege of meeting with Chancellor Kohl in Bonn, and here's an interesting personal anecdote he shared with our group.

He said, "In 1949, when I was 19 years old, I made my first political speech. If I had talked about the environment, a promising political career would have ended right then. People were more

anxious to see that smoke stacks produced smoke, because it would say that we are working again."

The Chancellor added that, "Had we known then what we know now, we could have saved enormous sums of money preventing the problems that we now have to fix."

And now, there is hope that in the future all nations will know what they should have known. This past June, 182 nations and 105 heads of state convened the Rio Summit on the world environment and formed a global partnership committed to sustainable development. What a great step forward.

But it's not enough. If we really are going to make a lasting change -- then all the world's children must be taught to love nature and to respect the fragility of our environment -- not just as a matter of survival -- but as a matter of conscience.

#### **THE ROLE OF BUSINESS**

Here is where business and industry can make a real contribution. For example, at P&G we sponsor a primary school program called Planet Patrol. This teaching unit provides schools with information and materials to explain environmental issues like solid waste, recycling, and composting.

Planet Patrol provides teachers with hands-on environmental projects ranging from simple worksheets to keep a daily log of how much each family throws away -- to the construction of a classroom compost pile -- all teaching tools to help educators teach their students about the importance of environmental responsibility.

More than six million students throughout the United States have been involved in the Planet Patrol program. We're also expanding it to Canada and looking at other countries around the world. Other companies have similar classroom programs, but we need much more of a corporate effort, and we need it everywhere.

Finally, we adults need to become living examples of the environmental conscience we want our children to embrace. This is no small task, because it requires a voluntary re-education of ourselves. It means we have to change our own behavior patterns and adapt our own values to reflect the belief that respect for nature is as sacred a trust as respect for family, God and country.

#### **A MORAL OBLIGATION**

It is our moral obligation as adults to do all we can to protect our children's future -- and so we must endow the children of our planet with a deep and unshakeable environmental conscience.

Conscience is a wonderful thing. It can change the world. It can do what no laws - - no rules -- no threat of punishment or penalty can ever do -- because it is an enduring self-regulating positive force.

We must bring the power of that force of conscience to future generations through the education of our children -- so that this beautiful, naturally abundant world of ours may be protected for all time.

I accept this award with my personal, continued commitment to advance this goal. And, I thank you again for this honor.