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Statement of Senator Mike Mansfield (D. Montana)

Rural Water Supply Program

Mr. Chairman, S. 1766 and its predecessor, S. 493, as introduced by the senior Senator from Vermont, George Aiken, brings before us two of the most important domestic issues of today -- the need for conserving our water resources and the tendency to concentrate on the problems of urban areas at the expense of rural America. Rural communities and our water resources are very basic to the future prosperity and welfare of this Nation.

The Aiken Bill meets this situation directly and would establish a program of Federal aid to rural water systems. An insufficient effort is being made to develop and preserve our small cities and towns. In far too many cases the one major drawback is the lack of a dependable water supply. The program envisioned in the Aiken Bill would provide the necessary aid through a program of loans and grants.

I, as many of my Senate colleagues, am concerned about the movement to the big cities and the complex problems which are compounded by this growth. The cities and urban areas are in need of all the help they can get, but it seems to me that one of the more reasonable ways to approach the problem is to redirect this movement of our population. Not every industry or every family wants to be located in a huge metropolitan area. The Congress can do a great service by authorizing the rural water supply program as proposed in the Aiken Bill. It is the one big effort needed today.

It was with a great deal of pleasure that I joined with the Senator from Vermont in the introduction of this legislation, and it has my enthusiastic support. I sincerely hope that the Committee on Agriculture will report this proposal favorably during the course of its consideration of new farm legislation.