12-16-1970

Statement of Senator Mansfield - Management of Public Lands

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.
Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches

Recommended Citation

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Mike Mansfield Papers at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mike Mansfield Speeches by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
Mr. President, concerns for our public lands, environment and pollution have, in the past few years, been brought very much to the forefront of this Nation's issues and problems, not only by a continued and escalated rate of deterioration and degradation, but by the far reaching expressions of concern on the part of millions of Americans. I have, in the past, and will continue to believe that the Congress has a clear mandate to join with the concern in providing the impetus to bring about an essential change in course.

This past year, from travels in my State of Montana and from considerable correspondence received from a great many people, I have been made keenly aware of the dimension of the problem. The need and desire for continued and increased economic growth has, in the past, often taken precedence over other and equally important considerations. In Montana these have been particularly manifest in the areas of forestry and mining on both federal and private lands.

My distinguished colleague, the junior Senator from Montana, Mr. Metcalf, has recently and eloquently brought national attention to the problems of timber management on federal lands. In the past few years, the Government has effectively developed the concepts of multiple land usage, a concept and philosophy based on the principle that maximum consideration be given to the potential of federal holdings including mineral and timber production, recreational use, agricultural use, and other considerations. Where effectively administered, this approach has met with the wholehearted support of the people of this nation. There is little question that the time has come for the reaffirming of the multiple use concepts. Mining exploration on the part of a number of this Nation's major mining companies in the Lolo, Custer, Gallatin and ________ (Lincoln) has resulted in severe damage to the ecology of the region with far reaching impacts affecting the watersheds and fish and wildlife of the area.
In September of 1964, the Congress created the Public Land Law Review Commission and in its creation charged it with the responsibility of reviewing existing public land laws and regulations and asked that it advise the Congress of its findings. A substantial portion of the completed report deals with the environmental impact of industries deriving raw materials from public lands. The public reaction to the commission's report are many and varied. The one thing surfacing above all considerations is, however, the fact that past managerial practices and environmental considerations have been, without question, deficient. It is not my intention at this time to discuss the Commission's report. It is my hope the Congress will rapidly move to recognize the magnitude of the problems so amply demonstrated in this report, and that expeditious consideration will be given to the reviewing and eventual adoption of recommendations which will provide for long range governmental control of its lands.

One of our major problems in providing for adequate land management is a direct result of past legislation, of jobs half done and poorly done which lead that segment of the national economy dependent upon resources belonging to the people to believe erroneously that the Federal Government intends for the ultimate relinquishment of public lands, either in fact or in philosophy. For anyone to assume an inalienable right to the natural resources of this Nation without essential consideration for the concepts of multiple land usage and the changing social values of the people is making a grave mistake. The mining laws of 1872 were promulgated by a philosophy to encourage westward movement and economic development. To that end this legislation was most successful. The problems we meet today are problems of this century --not the last-- and to assume that measures effective in the 1870's can be applied to the 1970's is erroneous. The time has come for a reordering of the legislation in these areas.
I appreciate that the concern I express is shared by a great many of my colleagues in the Congress and that a number of responsible people elsewhere are giving serious consideration to the revamping of these laws.

I am among the first to support and promote economic development. It is essential that we move ahead in these areas, but this should not be done at the expense of our Nation’s basic resources. There exists today far too many examples of blatant disregard for human values and ecological considerations. The existing levels of industrial technology, as well as the efforts of a few conscientious firms in the timber and mining industry, attest to the fact that quality and balanced development -- and I would stress quality and balanced -- cannot take place while giving consideration to the avoided impact resulting.

Earlier this fall, in expressing my concern to the Forest Service, I asked that I be provided with a detailed report indicating the present level of activity on federal properties, as well as the course of action being taken to assure environmental considerations. I have now had an opportunity to review preliminary reports on this matter. There is little question that the problems are both real and substantial.

Pursuant to appropriate legislation, my immediate concern has been in providing the necessary funds for federal agencies for the enforcement of existing rules and regulations and I would express to the distinguished Senator from West Virginia, Mr. Byrd, my sincere appreciation for his favorable consideration of a request which Senator Metcalf and I made for the inclusion of sufficient funds in the recently passed Senate Supplemental Appropriations Bill, quote "for forest land management to intensify environmental protection associated with land development and protection of national forest lands, including protection of soil and water values, surface resources and aesthetics." In addition I would like to extend to the distinguished Senator from Idaho, Mr. Church, my personal appreciation for his most timely decision to consider public land management hearings early in the coming Congress.
Our work is certainly not complete in these areas but I do believe that we are making substantial progress in recognizing the extent and scope of our problems, as well as what measures are necessary to bring about a solution.

Mr. President, I would ask to have inserted in the record at this time the written portion of the recent reports I have received from the Forest Service pertaining to land exploration activities in the Stillwater complex of Montana.