

NEW MEXICO AND SOUTHWEST WATER

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With a thin crust of earth, a scant few inches of rain, and a layer of air, life for man on this planet has been made possible.

Vigorous action is needed if we are to continue.

Earthquakes fracture our land, human activities foul the air, and man posts signs around his water sources reading, "Unfit for Human Consumption."; "No Swimming, Beach Closed".

We react to these quakes, the dirty air, the vile water and the ugliness with disgust - and we demand changes.

But, as the users - consumers - of an ever-increasing supply of goods and services, we are the ones who contribute on a rising basis to the very things we protest.

We treat our land, air and water as disposable products - the no-deposit, no-return six pack of beer - with the complacency that if this store - our earth - runs out - we'll simply buy from another merchant, in this case move to a new frontier of some other planet.

I do not subscribe to this "disposable society" idea - nor do any of you here today. I am an optimist - I believe that with action now we can renovate, rejuvenate and recapture our environment.

I did not come here today before the Fourteenth Annual New Mexico Water Conference to talk in terms of population growth rate, economic growth rate, gross national product, or billions of gallons a day run-off of our water supply. You know those figures too well for me to review at 11:30 A. M. I came, rather, to talk about people - because that's what our concern is all about - and to talk of participatory politics - for that is where the solutions to our fouled air, ruined water and torn earthrest.

Of the people, it is sufficient for me to say now that we have 200 million, and it is projected the United States will see a population of 468 million in the year 2020. You know what this means in terms of human air needs, water supply and land usage.

If the trends of increasing demand for water and the decreasing supply are allowed to continue unchecked we will have a crisis of extreme scarcity, widespread hardship and economic stagnation.

Fortunately, this nation possesses the means to avert this crisis - if we convert our courage and intelligence into action.

^{1/} United States Senator from New Mexico.

Our water problems can be solved by four keys:

1. Capital
2. Scientific-technological know-how
3. Proper organization - and -
4. Genuine concern for public welfare.

We are "brim-full" with the first three - capital, technology and organization - but I fear we shall come home with an "empty cup" under the current Republican Administration unless we take the action now to stimulate participatory politics - people at every level in our nation actively participating in the decisions made by government affecting our environment.

We have the laws on the books today to assure public participation in these policy decisions - a good example is the first stage of the Water Quality Program, when states were required to hold public hearings on what kind of water quality the public wanted.

Those who have benefitted from the lack of statutes will, however, come to these hearings better prepared, better financed, and spend more time.

The individual citizen - the people most concerned with their own survival - tend to only join the fray on a crisis-to-crisis basis and to fight in an unorganized way.

This is where we, today, - public and water officials of the State of New Mexico - can take a key action role. The consumer concern must be translated by state and local environmental control agencies into meaningful standards which will meet the tests of time and usage and enhance our environmental quality.

The creative people of our state and nation deserve a creative government. This is where I fear for the public interest in water under the current Republican Administration if the record of the past becomes the fact of the future.

In the years of the administration - of which Mr. Nixon was a part - there was an indifference to, and betrayal of the public welfare in the water area. Capital was refused, attempts were made to shift Federal responsibility to local interests and the private sector, the well-established and successful multiple-purpose river basin development principle was discarded for the proven useless single-purpose approach.

That Republican Administration - which was the training ground for Mr. Nixon - failed to support a comprehensive development program of such closely related activities as soil conservation, scientific forestry, land - use management, small water-shed protection, wildlife management, and pollution control.

Not content with simply this do-nothing position, that Administration aggressively sought to shut the faucet of public water rights by the giveaways, grants of privilege and subsidies to private monopolistic corporations.

I do not charge here that Mr. Nixon will follow these policies - I simply say that I have seen no firm indication of where he stands on the historic, constitutional responsibility of the Federal Government in this crucial area and I do call upon him today to come forth with a program so that we may get on with the business of "human survival" in this world of polluted air, water and land.

Our challenge is clear - too frequently that which is destroyed today cannot be recovered tomorrow.

We must undertake an action program now - whether it be from the Administration or from participatory politics.

Our capital, technology and organization skills must be blended with a genuine concern for the people - we must initiate and move with bold programs of technical assistance and grants-in-aid to support the efforts of state and local governments and farmer cooperatives to develop water projects.

Our natural resources are a national birthright - and our national goal must be to maximize the general welfare of this nation by a complete, total, scientific development of our water resources for all beneficial purposes.