

"DEVELOPING RECOGNITION OF NEW MEXICO'S WATER PROBLEM"

R. R. Aston*

The interest of Southspring Foundation in our local and national water problem is certainly not academic. The investigation and study of our water problem was one of the prime purposes in forming this non-profit agricultural research organization. The officers of this Foundation experienced the complete failure of water supply on farms located in the Mohawk Valley of Arizona during the late 1920's. Our background is one of grim reality concerning the vital role of water in each of our lives and fortunes.

It became necessary for the Southspring Foundation to establish policies and plans to determine where they might help on our great and complex water problem. In addition it was necessary to determine just what the major elements of this problem were. The following problems are basic in any discussion of water in New Mexico:

1. First and foremost the problems and the solutions should and must be approached in a CONSTRUCTIVE and POSITIVE manner. Solutions are not to be found in generalities or platitudes. A genuine public concern can result in much constructive action, but, under no conditions, should the problem be approached in a spirit of alarm and panic. Each effort should be measured by the yard stick of WHAT CAN BE DONE!
2. Secondly, that our Great Plains area, and New Mexico in particular, are undergoing A GREAT DROUTH PERIOD. We in the Great Plains must realize that DROUTH IS AS NORMAL AS RAINFALL. This physical fact is complicated by a rapidly growing population. The population of the United States is expected to be 330 MILLION BY 2000 A.D., almost DOUBLE IN 43 SHORT YEARS. The Kiplinger Letter estimates that NEW MEXICO POPULATION WILL GROW 42% BY 1970. This tremendous additional burden on our limited water supply will be complicated by the fact that WATER USE ACCELERATES TWICE AS FAST AS POPULATION.
3. Thirdly, that the whole water problem is SURROUNDED BY A CLOUD OF NEGATIVE THINKING. IGNORANCE and INDIFFERENCE IS MORE COMMON THAN ANIMOSITY.
4. Fourthly, that the PROBLEMS OF WATER SUPPLY ARE EXTREMELY COMPLEX. That an INFORMED AND AWARE PUBLIC is THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS FINDING A SOLUTION TO OUR WATER PROBLEMS.
5. Fifthly, that NEW MEXICO MUST PUT INTO EFFECT A COMPREHENSIVE AND EFFECTIVE WATER CONSERVATION PROGRAM.

*Southspring Foundation, Roswell, New Mexico

This, very generally and in a simplified way, states the Foundation's view of the problem concerning water. This brings me to a discussion of WHAT CAN BE DONE TO SOLVE THIS VAST, COMPLEX, VITAL PROBLEM.

1. SOUTHSRING FOUNDATION URGES THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO TO UNDERTAKE A COMPLETE WATER STUDY. Mr. John L. Gregg of Elephant Butte Irrigation District expresses the need most effectively:
 - a. An impartial study of New Mexico's water problem, including an accurate inventory of its surface and underground water resources;
 - b. An estimate of present and future water requirements, including an appraisal of domestic and industrial uses contrasted with agricultural uses; and,
 - c. The outlining of a comprehensive and effective water conservation program.

"This would be highly beneficial if properly conducted, on a practical and strictly impartial basis, and kept free from influences of pressure groups and politics. This study should place proper emphasis upon underground water in addition to thoroughly analyzing surface water problems."

2. The Foundation urges a NATIONAL WATER INVENTORY, using the vast amounts of information already compiled and supplementing it with a comprehensive study to determine the actual COMPOSITE WATER SITUATION in our great country. This survey should coordinate all of the agencies working on this complex problem. IT MUST BE NON-PARTISAN AND DONE WITH FULL RECOGNITION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY, PRIVATE OWNERSHIP, REGULATED FREE ENTERPRISE, SELF GOVERNMENT AND JUSTICE.

There are several approaches that may play a part in future solution of some of our water needs: CLOUD SEEDING - DESALTING - ATOMIC POWER - EVAPORATION CONTROL - REDISTRIBUTION.

THERE IS AMPLE WATER IN THE UNITED STATES. THE MAIN PROBLEM IS ONE OF DISTRIBUTION. THE UNITED WESTERN INVESTIGATION carried out by the DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR in 1951 shows that each year 294 MILLION ACRE FEET OF PRECIOUS WATER SPILLS USELESSLY INTO THE PACIFIC OCEAN. As a yardstick, the PECOS VALLEY ARTESIAN BASIN ESTIMATES ANNUAL USE AT 360,000 ACRE FEET.

This problem is not only a PROBLEM OF TODAY, BUT A PROBLEM OF TOMORROW. It will require not only ENGINEERING, BUT IMAGINEERING. America has been built by people doing the IMPOSSIBLE. In our approach to this problem, I like to keep the SEABEE slogan of World War II in mind: "THE DIFFICULT WE DO AT ONCE, THE IMPOSSIBLE TAKES A LITTLE LONGER!"

THE EVALUATION OF GREAT NATIONAL PROBLEMS SHOULD BE UNDERTAKEN WHILE THERE IS TIME TO ORGANIZE THE THINKING AND MARTIAL THE FACTS...TODAY'S PLANS ARE TOMORROWS ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Let's not turn our backs or close our minds to this problem of water. There are many who view our GREAT SOUTHWEST AS A VAST AND INEVITABLE BOOTHILL. The OPPORTUNITIES OF TOMORROW ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF TODAY. WE ARE BLESSED TO HAVE BEEN BORN IN THE TRUE PROMISED LAND. LET US INSURE THE BLESSINGS OF OUR LAND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.