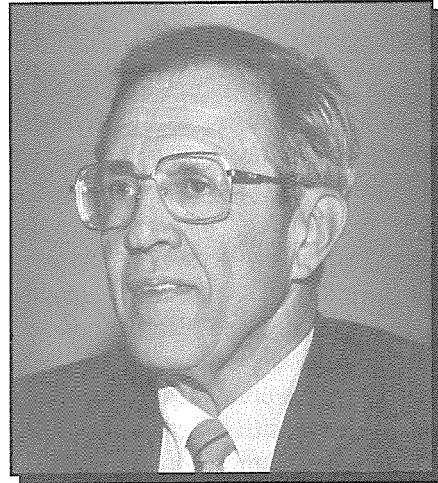
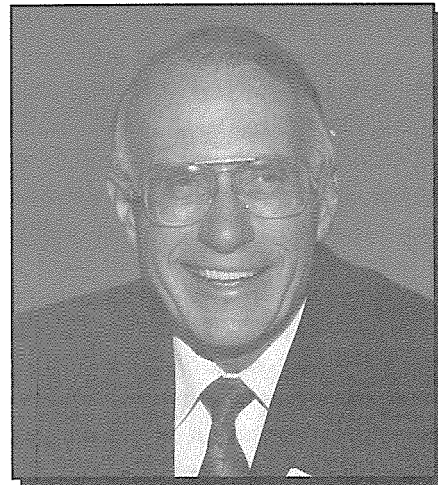


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FINDING CONSENSUS

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The title of this session is "Finding Consensus," and I am very positive about "finding a consensus," particularly if we go away with the

kinds of things we have heard locked in us and with a willingness to do something about developing a consensus on future water use in New Mexico. I spent six months in New Zealand recently and they use the phrase there: "at the end of the day." "At the end of the day" will New Mexico really be able to find its water future, or will we someday very soon just sort of be there? Will we be no better prepared then than we are today to answer questions of how our aquifer and stream

systems behave? I am very optimistic about our water future from what I have heard at this meeting.

About consensus—I have heard almost no posturing, very little acrimony; maybe its because our sessions have been run so tightly that nobody has had a chance to say anything. You will have that chance now. I have been very pleased with the great deal of “listening” that has been going on here. I heard people say: let's avoid crisis management; let's have flexibility; let's work together; let's have better negotiating procedures; and let's have better communication and cooperation with local, state and federal government on shared concerns. These are all very positive signs and will lead us to a shared water-use future.

I have heard some great suggestions. John Hawley wants to stop the brain drain and that really is important. We need new people, but we also need to keep the productive people who have been out there working as long as John and I have. John and I are both in our 40th year as is Bob Grant. Frank Titus is still at the wheel and a lot of the guys I went to school with, like Ormonde Earp, are sitting here in the audience today still active.

Norm Gaume said we have to build public support; Bob Grant said we have to build political support; they are both right. Tom Davis wants to get on with the job, and John Wilson just said let's make sure we do a good job and he suggests that peer review is one of those ways of insuring a good job. Bob Grant said it is not all bad news, Kelly Summers said “manage, manage, manage,” and John Tysseling, Kelly Summers and Bill Turner agreed that our water issues are regional and I certainly agree with them.

I thought Pete Domenici kicked this conference off just right. The Senator made a call for joint action. He made a positive statement about the need for a sense of direction, and that this sense of direction can be found by putting us all to work together on a technical study to develop the kinds of information we really need to make future decisions in the Middle Rio Grande Valley. When we finish that, we go on to the next basin where we have similar problems.

Last night, I went to a Lobo event and there was a little old lady sitting next to me. She was from the class of '34 and after hearing what I did,

she said, “How could the experts have been so far wrong in 1960 about the available water supply here in the Albuquerque area?” If we do not do something now, we will be here in the year 2010 saying the same thing.

“At the end of the day” there will be a morning after. Will we be better prepared to deal with these water issues? I think so, particularly if all of us keep our shoulders at the wheel as John Hawley and Frank Titus and many others are going to do.

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The reason I asked to follow John Hernandez in this “Finding Consensus” session was that I thought John was going to tell some joke about me and I wanted to be in a rebuttal position. Now I have a rebuttal ready and no joke to respond to!

I want to give you a few snapshots to refresh our memories of some comments made yesterday and some things that John just pointed out. I thought it was interesting that we were told yesterday that we do not know what arsenic standards are coming and we do not know how to meet them. That was a challenging thought. We heard that we must change the administration of the aquifer so that we do not augment downstream flows at the expense of the aquifer. Belen, what do you think about that? Isleta, how about that?

We certainly have challenges for the future—geographic enhancement is a euphemism for extending pumping further afield. Someone has been good at developing eloquent ways of saying unpleasant things.

We need to build the institutional memory in New Mexico, according to Bill Turner. Kelly Summers woke us up by saying we are not running out of water, we are running out of cheap water. That sounds like an economist speaking.

“We are all in this together.” “It is a regional problem and both surface and groundwater should be dealt with regionally.” I think we heard a lot from a regional perspective. Bob Grant had opti-

Finding Consensus

mistic words, "We're not in as bad shape as we think we are. This city has an incredibly bountiful world-class aquifer below it when we consider such things as porosity." He said the only question is how to get water into the aquifer and recharge it. Amongst the things John Hawley said was that we should not treat this valley as a sewer. John went on to say we need to enhance the information capability of the State Engineer Office and the U.S. Geological Survey, but we do not need new agencies. We need to coordinate, enhance, and work more effectively with what we have.

John Tysseling challenged us a bit. He said with our 2-3 percent population growth rate, we are compounding our population growth annually, and thus in the process we have to define a new reality. We saw lots of consensus about having to deal with strong population growth.

We also have consensus on the need for much more information. We have consensus on the need to build institutional memory. There is consensus that we need conservation. We need to work together regionally. We are all in agreement on these points. I did not hear any disagreement—it's like motherhood.

But, we don't have consensus on some issues: we do not even know how to define the public welfare, that legal doctrine that has been handed to the State Engineer. The State Engineer, somehow, has to define public welfare. The State Engineer raised the question about some uses being preferred over other uses. He speculated that if a request had been made to irrigate a 1,000-acre alfalfa field rather than to provide water to an industry such as Intel, no one would have questioned it. I doubt we have consensus about the question of preferring some uses over others. Apparently all uses are equal, it is just that some should be more equal than others. Is that right? Do we believe that?

Do we have consensus that endangered species should have priority over all other uses? We have touched on all these issues and we have lots of consensus, but then, as they say, "the devil is in the detail." Much may depend upon where we stand, in which region we stand.

We are all in favor of regional water planning but some of us are afraid of the implication that one region might want to borrow from another

region. That might put the cat amongst the pigeons, as we say.

These are a few thoughts about consensus here at this conference, but a reminder that there is a lot that we do not have consensus about.