Remarks by Assistant Secretary of the Interior John A. Garver, Jr., at 10 a.m.,
Monday, October 28, 1963, at the Fifth American Forest Congress of the American
Forestry Association in Washington, D. C.

If I had had the time or the self-discipline to compile and edit my own
speeches, official comments and testimony over the past two and a half years,
it wouldn't be necessary for me to speak here today. I could distribute in
book form a compendium on the subject under discussion -- for I feel that all
of my efforts in these years have been devoted to finding some common ground
for defining the job of managing the resource represented in the remaining
public land base.

Although the topic assigned to me would have me assume the role of landlord,
I think it necessary to clarify that point to some extent. Congressman
Schwengel's participation on the panel would be a sufficient reminder, if I
needed one, that we in the Department are not the real landlords over the
public domain. Fortunately, I can document the fact that I need no reminder,
for I have emphasized on a number of occasions that our function is that of
the manager charged with the duty of executing policies laid down by a Board
of Directors elected to Congress by the real owner-stockholders -- the 190
million living Americans and their heirs and assigns of future generations.

Any attempt on my part to review or even catalog the problems and the things
that need to be done in exercising sound stewardship would take longer than
the time allotted to this entire panel. Suffice to say that the breadth of
our activity is pretty well symbolized by the interests represented on the
platform. Congressman Schwengel, from the Board of Directors, is confronted
with the difficult task of providing the policy guidance we need in an era
of dynamic change. Your Chairman comes from a State where everything is
gargantuan, even its population growth. The public lands, 16 million acres
of them, provide the foundation for California's future growth and they
must be brought into the planning picture in every affected community. Our
three principal commodities, timber, livestock and minerals, are represented
by the other three panel members. I am proud of the association I have had
with each of them and the wide areas of agreement and cooperation we have
discovered between and among us.

I think I can use these few minutes profitably, however, by using just one
of the great public land issues of the day to illustrate a general condition
affecting the total spectrum of our responsibilities. Historically, the
livestock man has been the dominant user of the public lands; he was the
first to put them to economic use and a large segment of an important
industry still relies on the public lands for that purpose. The relation-
ship between landlord and tenant has not always been the smoothest one
imaginable, but today I think there is recognition on both sides that co-
operation is absolutely essential to conservation of the resources and to
the prosperity of the tenant.
The chief problem disturbing the grazing industry on the public lands is not related to the fees we set or the limits of carrying capacity we require them to observe. These can certainly affect their economic welfare, but they are not matters of life or death. Tenure is just such a vital matter. If a grazer is suddenly displaced -- as is happening every week and month -- by some other use of the land, then his whole business structure is likely to collapse because the economy of his ranch has been built upon the expectation of continued access to public grazing areas. It is a part of his capital base -- and when it is taken away it is as if you had eliminated a part of the base ranch itself. It is no wonder then that the public land livestock operator feels insecure in his position and reluctant to invest in improvements which would make the land more productive.

The ways in which he can be displaced are myriad and often out of joint with the times. But regardless of how he is displaced the certain fact is that he faces constantly increasing pressures toward that end. The needs of an exploding population -- for living space, for industrial development, for raw materials, for recreational open space -- all of these look to the public land base. And the present tenant-at-will is in an exposed position indeed.

But the situation of the cattle man is only symptomatic of a general condition arising out of the accelerating competition for land. The insecurity of the grazer is one aspect of a legal structure which has not been reformed to keep up with social and economic change. As managers, we need tools to use the resource committed to our custody for the greatest public benefit. Those tools are not available at the present time and we are acutely conscious of our inability to do the job Congress and the people expect of us.

But there is light on the horizon. This is why we have supported the concept of a comprehensive Commission review of the public land laws -- to come up with modern criteria to govern disposal of the public lands where that is socially desirable and to formulate policies for the management of the land resources which are retained for public benefit. We think this step is critically needed in the legitimate interest of the cattleman and the miner; it is even more needed if the interests of the real landowner -- the general public -- are to be protected.