

Remarks by John A. Carver, Jr., Assistant Secretary for Public Land Management before the National Advisory Board Council, Washington, D. C. March 11, 1963.

Chairman Hughes, and members of the Council:

This message of greeting will be read to you. I apologize for such presumptuousness. But I know that very few in this room will conclude that I am unconcerned about your proceedings today. We have spent too many hours together the last two years for that.

Although I am not with you, I sense similarities between this meeting and one I attended with you in October 1961 at Salt Lake City. The taut and tense atmosphere which prevailed there was a symptom of a belief, shared by many, that the continuance of the Council itself hung in the balance.

We had a choice to make. I've never had any reason to regret the choice I made for a strong, constructive, and proud Council.

Eighteen months ago the crisis was over the procedures and regulations governing the operation of the Council, and its constituent State and district councils. Today's choice, if my analysis is correct, is not concerned with how we work together, but with whether we can continue to work together at all.

Divisive forces are testing our ability -- on both sides -- to keep our attention on the conservation job to be done, and to resist the forces which tempt us to a sterile and pointless dialogue of invective.

The music of praise is especially sweet to the ears of government administrators. They hear it seldom enough. The Department is hearing some of it now -- some of the editorials from about the country credit us with a great victory over the unanimous selfishness of the livestock industry.

I happen to know, as you do, that this is simply not accurate. But how easy it would be to forget the facts, to accept the premises in the accolades, to reduce the complexity of public land management to the false simplicity of resistance to the livestock industry.

The livestock industry did not resist the increase in fees. Some of its members did; some of the members of this council did.

But since when did a minority of dissent get the right to frame the terms of the controversy?

The livestock industry which uses the public land under the terms of the Taylor Grazing Act, as represented at this meeting today, so far as I am concerned has acted with complete responsibility.

I think we are in agreement on many things. For example, no one reasonably should expect you to like to have your fees raised. Fee setting is a governmental function committed to the Secretary of the Interior. But you were consulted, and you participated in the decision-making process.

We also agree that many issues are a great deal more important. As I have had occasion to tell some of you, and many of the Senators and representatives from your States, we will not permit the heat of the recently-concluded controversy to obscure the fact that an intensive review of many of our procedures is in order.

The climate for such review ought to be the constructive one that marked our year-long efforts on the fee question. I see no reason why we cannot come a great deal closer to common understanding of grazing capacity, scheduling of reductions or increases in permitted use, procedures for review of administrative actions, appellate procedures, and the whole complex of law, regulation, and exercise of sound judgment at the local level.

We will get at these issues, I pledge, in continuing adherence to a principle I announced to the House Interior Committee a month ago -- that a decent conservation job on the public's lands is possible only with the cooperation of those who share in its use. I said then that the consumptive users who have a legitimate right to be on the public land must be considered as valuable and necessary allies in achieving the kind of total conservation effort which must be mobilized if we are to turn upward the graph of the condition of our public lands -- to prevent waste.

The task demands our best efforts, freed from either intellectual or emotional hobbies. The temptation to regard each other as adversaries, rather than allies, will continue to be very great -- on both sides.

It is my hope to be with you before the meeting ends. In the meantime, you have my best wishes.