

who lives within the proposed irrigation area. Your full statement will be included.

(The statement follows:)

STATEMENT OF RALPH HERSETH, HOUGHTON, S. DAK., FORMER GOVERNOR
OF SOUTH DAKOTA

I express sincere appreciation to the honorable United States Senators here present for their indulgence in the proceedings of this assembly of citizens gathered here today. Our purpose is to determine the pulse of our people in this area as it pertains to the intended use of the vast water resources created by the series of dams on the Missouri River. I support unequivocally the intent and purpose of the 1944 Flood Control Act of our Federal Government. I similarly support firmly the 1959 Conservancy District Law of South Dakota, passed by an 81% majority of the legislature then in session. I respectfully refer your attention to the emphatic vote of approval by the people to approve contract authority.

My vigorous support of these principles is not merely recent or temporary. May I submit excerpts from my message on this subject to the 1959 assembly of the South Dakota legislature. Quote: "One of our oldest resources will soon become our newest frontier. As such it offers our State virtually limitless possibilities for power, irrigation, industry and recreation. I refer to what will be when completed one of the largest bodies of fresh water in North America. This chain of lakes in central South Dakota will be formed by the Missouri River dams, stretching in one continuous line from our northern most tip to our southern boundary.

"It is noteworthy that when these reservoirs are filled, South Dakota will rank fourth in the Nation in the amount of usable water in storage. The price we have paid for this is the loss of one-half million acres of agricultural land. Whether or not this sacrifice has been worthwhile will in considerable measure depend on the action taken at this legislative session and upon action taken by this Administration. For simple logic will tell us that there will be a great demand from all the states to our South for the right to use and appropriate this vast water supply. Unless we move immediately and vigorously to lay claim to our rightful share of the river water we will awake one day to find that while we slept our water rights floated downstream.

I therefore earnestly recommend that this Legislature enact permissive water conservancy district legislation to prove unmistakably to Congress, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Interior that we intend to claim and utilize water rights for all of the water we will need in our state. The legislation enacted should be enabling legislation. It should provide a given area or group of people a choice between irrigation or dry-land farming. It should give cities and towns the right to reject or accept municipal water supply from the reservoirs. At the same time it should protect the rights of all the people of our State to use the water for any desirable purpose.

Gentlemen of the U.S. Senate, I contend that the enabling act of 1959 was good legislation, also, that the vote to approve contract authority signaled the voice of free people in the true democratic process of government. I solicit your best efforts in the halls of our National Capitol to aggressively and progressively seek the vote for funds and laws that will refine and further our progress toward a new era in South Dakota. Such an era will invite industry, employ people and enrich the land through the full utilization of an indispensable and often scarce economic item—water.

I commend Senator McGovern for his wisdom and success in sponsoring this forum. I express gratitude to this committee for notable endeavor and success in reclamation and conservation and the emphasis they have placed on the importance of water. I anticipate a fine return to South Dakota from the meditation with you on this day. I regard you, gentlemen, as a liaison between our State and the National Congress. Agricultural and industrial excellence is the ultimate destiny of South Dakota and its neighboring States. We are individually and