

all of the policy alternatives, and I will assert it as my own present judgment that we have taken into consideration every one of the statements that were made, every one of the policy alternatives that were outlined. I can say to you very honestly here today that the policy that we have developed and which we hope to evolve has benefited greatly from the searching analysis that was carried out by this Oil Shale Advisory Board.

It does seem to us, and it has seemed to me from the beginning, that we would rather go a bit slow and be sure that our policy was sound, that it would stand up under any kind of scrutiny or criticism, than move too fast toward an ill-considered policy. The confusion arising from a poorly conceived development effort could easily set back the progress of an overall program. So I want to make these two general statements, Mr. Chairman, more or less to provide a setting for what I am going to say in my prepared statement, and I will now proceed to it.

Two years ago this committee performed a very useful public service by conducting a seminar on the basic nature and character of the national oil shale resource. By providing that forum you were able to throw considerable light on a subject that has perplexed both the public resource managers and our mining and energy industries for half a century.

I do not think that any useful purpose would be served by repeating what was said on that occasion. Rather, I have looked upon your current invitation as a request for a briefing on more recent developments and our plans for moving ahead on this subject.

Two years ago we had to confess a considerable amount of ignorance on how this resource could be developed under existing statutory standards with adequate protection for the public interest. In terms of an actual leasing program open to all comers on a long-term basis, there are still many unresolved problems. But we believe we have made good progress in analyzing the situation and in plotting a systematic course that will aid in the development and utilization of this valuable resource.

The results of this effort are referred to in recent announcement of a five-point program. Some of the committee members and staff were briefed at the Department prior to release of our announcement. For purposes of review as well as convenience of other members, I shall like to summarize the essential elements of that program.

First, we recognize that 50 years of uncertainty have given rise to legal questions about title to some of the lands involved. Prior to 1920, oil shale as well as conventional petroleum deposits had been locatable under the U.S. mining laws. Thousands of claims were filed on the Green River oil shale formation. Some of these went to patent in due course. Others were contested or rejected for failure on one ground or another to meet the standards of the mining law. But the vast majority have never been adjudicated to this day. Many holders assert the continued validity of their claims. On many of them, the Government is equally adamant that they are invalid and should be formally canceled. If the Government is right, the cloud on its title should be removed promptly so that development can proceed with confidence; if the claims are indeed valid, then the holders are entitled to a prompt decision and a clear title.