

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Bible?

Senator BIBLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am very happy to see a longtime friend of mine, Edward Weinberg, moving up the ladder of the Department of the Interior and being nominated for another position. I have worked closely with Mr. Weinberg on many, many problems that have come over our desk in the field of rural land management—land problems, water problems, power problems; you name them and I think we have them. He has always been very helpful and very knowledgeable. I am only going to ask you about one problem that has bothered me personally for a long time and that is the attitude of the Department of the Interior on the geothermal steam bill.

I know you are acquainted with it because my staff people have contacted you about it. This is a bill that did pass the Congress of the United States and it was vetoed with what I thought was a very unreasonable Executive veto.

The Department does have viewpoints on it but we are trying to reach some type of accord whereby we can give some type of preference—and I think deserved preference—to the early founders and early pioneers in the industry. This is something that has been called to your attention, and I am wondering if you have any viewpoints on it.

Mr. WEINBERG. Well, it has been some months now since I have even thought about geothermal steam.

Senator BIBLE. I am advised my staff people talked to you on it sometime after March 28; namely, Stewart French.

Mr. WEINBERG. Not that I recall on geothermal steam. We had a meeting in the Department on a facet of geothermal steam that does not involve the pending legislative problem.

Senator BIBLE. Not to be mysterious about it, the question asked of you is whether or not there is any possibility of working out an area of accord between the hard line of the executive branch, including, of course that of the Interior Department, which I think is a wrong line, and the position of the legislative branch. I think our position is the correct one, in that we are trying to work out some type of recognition of, and protection for, the early pioneers in geothermal steam development. We are willing to adopt a limitation of some 25,000 acres or so for all of the States. This amount would be the maximum to be available for the preference right, with a limitation of something like, say, 6,000 acres in each of the States; that is, not to exceed 6,000 acres in any one of the States.

I am told by Mr. French that he personally talked to you about this. Maybe I am in error?

Mr. WEINBERG. I can only say if Stewart says we had a conversation, then we did, but my mind is blank on it.

Senator BIBLE. You say you had not looked at this for a long period of time and I was advised by Mr. French that he did talk to you about it. His memorandum to me shows he did. In any event, all I am interested in is your position on this new compromise proposal.

Mr. WEINBERG. The Department is willing to explore any possibility with an open mind.