

We need to maintain that. We also need to import. I feel strongly on that. But it needs to be in the balance as spelled out by the mandatory oil-import program.

Now, where do we need to go as far as looking is concerned? Here we have in the past 12 years or in the past decade moved up in consumption in the magnitude of 50 percent. The searching for petroleum, the wildcat wells, have declined and I have just done an intensive study on this.

In 1956 we drilled 8,700 wildcat wells, new field wildcats. In 1968, just 12 years later, that has been reduced to 5,200, or a reduction of 40 percent, at the same time this tremendous demand increase has been going up. I maintain that it is absolutely vital that we double the wildcat exploratory effort in the United States and this can only be done under the circumstances of a stable import program together with the economy of the oil business moving with the general economy.

We do not seek nor would we recommend that this Nation move its petroleum economy over and beyond the economy which exists, but we do think it has, a right and a responsibility to move within the economy that exists. Those two things we feel will find the reserves that are here to be found.

Mr. BATTIN. We hear a lot of discussion of new methods in finding oil. I wonder if you have a figure on the percentage on the average, drilling a hole wildcat, how many dry ones are there compared to producers?

Mr. McCLURE. These present some very interesting figures. For every 100 wildcat wells drilled, you will be able to complete approximately 10 of those and call them a discovery but then you have to look behind the scene and see what is a discovery; in other words, is that a discovery that will pay back the cost of drilling and so forth.

There are only three out of that 100 that will ever be economic ventures and turn out to be something that we would call an important discovery so that, to answer your question, it is three out of 100 wildcats that will turn out to be successful, important discoveries.

Mr. BATTIN. Hasn't that been pretty much the rule through many years of exploratory work?

Mr. McCLURE. The 10 discoveries method out of every 100 wells has been a historic pattern for the least two or three decades. It has been very consistent.

Where the consistency breaks down is that in any given year or any given 5 years you can't tell whether your discovery of gas is going to be greater than your discovery of oil or whether in that given interval you will have as great a number as in the prior year.

In our own particular business we have a 5-year cycle. In our small company we figure if we have 1 good year out of 5 we are doing well.

Mr. BATTIN. You keep looking in the vast State of Montana?

Mr. McCLURE. They are there to be found, Congressman.

Mr. BATTIN. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Bush.

Mr. BUSH. Mr. Chairman, I see the distinguished Chairman of the Appropriations Committee here so that I will try to be very brief and save some of these questions I have for the substantive witnesses.

The CHAIRMAN. He does have a legislative program beginning at 12, do you not, Mr. Mahon.