

MAINTENANCE OF WATER QUALITY IN CLEAN STREAMS

Mr. McCARTHY. Of course, are we not getting into a basic question? Alaska, with untouched streams, adopt water quality standards with their degraded streams in view, say, those around industries. Way up, they have crystal streams and lakes. Should those streams be permitted to be degraded to a lower quality?

I mean, eventually we may have to vote more money so they can go and clean that one up, so it seems to me, first that the water quality standards are sort of a minimum. Some streams are pure. I personally do not see why they should be permitted to degrade them because we are going to have to put in money to clean them up.

Here we are spending billions to clean up degraded streams. How can we, at the same time, tolerate the policy that permits pure water to be lowered?

Mr. COFFEY. Well, I think there are two points in your question. One; as long as the use which the State has determined for those waters are not impaired, we are not talking about pollution. It is only when those uses are impaired that we are talking about it. If those uses remain the same, we would never have to restore the original quality of that water.

And, No. 2, on your cost question, there is a cost involved with keeping the water at that level as well as the cost of restoring water to that level.

Mr. McCARTHY. What is the cost of keeping them at that level?

Mr. COFFEY. The cost may be the economic development of that State.

STATE DETERMINATION OF WATER USE

Mr. McEWEN. It seems to me what we are dealing with here is whether or not we are going to let the people of the State of Alaska or any other State, through their elected officials, determine what standards they want to set, what is best for them.

In other words, if the State of Alaska wants to decide, Mr. Chairman, that their greatest interest lies in keeping every stream a trout or salmon stream, and this is what the people of the sovereign State of Alaska want, they can set their standards and they will have nothing but trout streams, no paper mills, no industry of any kind that would affect that water.

If, on the other hand, they want to set standards near the estuaries in some parts of these streams that will be less than a trout water stream, believing, in their judgment, that best serves the interest of the people of the State of Alaska, then that, as I understood the law we have passed, saying the State should set these standards, and have them approved by the Water Pollution Administration, that is what was intended.

In my own district I am proud to say we have some beautiful trout streams which, under the classification by our own people in the State of New York, have been classified as that type of water to be maintained as trout streams. But, by heavens, we have not been trying to make trout streams out of some of our industrial streams. We have said if the water is good enough for industrial use in some cases, or