

ernment has dallied and delayed and many opportunities have slipped away unused. Today we face a dilemma that baffles our best minds and intentions, and may prove insoluble short of catastrophe.

The other great crisis deals with the American land—a land cluttered with tumbledown structures any self-respecting European country would have razed decades ago; a land sown with junk and trash and drained by filthy streams; a land from which multitudes of people flee; and saddest of all, a land torn and racked by industrial processes which treat it with a contempt unworthy of civilized men.

This crisis, too, is far advanced. Neglect in dealing with it has already caused irreparable injury but if we act boldly and imaginatively now we can assure that our inventory of man-made desolation does not grow and that many old scars will heal. Let us frankly recognize that the earth is just as important as the people who inhabit it and that the right to be free is matched by a responsibility to preserve freedom's land. Liberty in a wasteland is meaningless.

There is reason to believe that the American farmer has learned the essential lesson that unless the soil survives he and his country will perish. There was a time 30 years ago when misuse of our crop and grasslands had brought the Nation up short on the yawning brink of disaster. Since then Government programs have worked long and patiently to teach farmers in all the States that the land must be neither overcropped or overgrazed, that cover crops must be sown, and that many areas should be returned to timber. But despite this progress our priceless land base is still in mortal danger.

While our farmers have learned much there is reason to doubt that our industrial managers have learned in proportion, if anything. If the blue-overalled farmer is often the guardian of the earth, the blue-suited executive is often its destroyer. Today it is the businessman who threatens the land we hold in trust for our descendants, buying short-term corporate profits at the cost of long-term national interests.

Nearly a year has passed since the Congress received the Interior Department's report on surface mining. Its figures were out of date and erred on the cautious side, but the document leaves no doubt that the problem is vast, the damage severe and the need for remedial action urgent. To the beginning of 1965 more than 3,187,000 acres of American land had been turned upside down by miners digging coal, copper, iron ore, phosphate rock, clay, gravel, gold, silver, sand and other minerals. One would suppose that as a matter of commonsense and simple gratitude people who profit from the mineral riches of our mother earth would willingly and eagerly heal what they had scarred—bringing to restoration the same zeal and technological genius they devote to extraction. But with a few notable exceptions they have treated their mineral lands with unparalleled greed, resisting even those gentle measures suggested by Secretary Udall. Expressing industry's lamentable attitude, Clyde E. Weed, chairman of the executive committee of the Anaconda Co. and president of the American Mining Congress, has called Secretary Udall's proposals "Emotional, hasty, and ill-conceived."

In a letter to the Secretary he acknowledged that strip mining "in certain areas may involve undesirable side effects" but asserted that strip-mining companies are reclaiming ravaged land wherever they deem it "feasible and practical."