

The stake of the taxpayers in this proposal is tremendous. And since natural beauty is beyond price and stripping and beauty are incompatible, such mining ought to be banned in areas of significant scenic loveliness and in important wildlife habitats. Nor should it be authorized in heavily populated territories where important human values will be disrupted.

(2) It should authorize strip mining for minerals only where total reclamation of the land can be carried out promptly and effectively. It should require that the topsoil be scraped off and saved with the subsoil and the rock strata being similarly lifted out of the pits and segregated. When the minerals have been removed the rock should be restored to the pit first with the subsoil following its natural order. The subsoil should be compacted and coated with the original topsoil and, where there is enough rainfall to sustain vegetation, the surface should be treated with fertilizer and limestone, planted with trees and sowed to suitable grass or leguminous cover. All these things are done now routinely in Germany, England, and Czechoslovakia.

(3) The Federal Government should commence a massive program to purchase, reclaim, and revegetate lands already stripped. The inventory of ravaged earth is growing daily. It already exceeds, I believe, the whole land area of the State of Connecticut. It is enough to make a swath a mile wide extending from Times Square to the Golden Gate and back again almost to the border of Nevada. In 10 years an area the size of West Virginia will have been ruined. In the name of all that is just and sensible let us use some of the money we are now devoting to the destruction of Vietnam to reconstruct stricken portions of our own country.

The task of repairing our mutilated lands will prove to be difficult and frustrating as well as expensive. The reassembling of dismembered mountains should be assigned to engineers and conservationists rather than farmers. In many areas, if acceptable results are to be achieved, enormous quantities of dirt will have to be dragged back up the hillsides by machines which have yet to be invented.

Vast tonnages of stone may have to be crushed to release their nutrients for new crops of timber. Other stone will have to be buried. Lavish quantities of fertilizer and limestone will have to be applied, perhaps by giant helicopters designed and built for the purpose. Historic experience has indicated that the Bureau of Reclamation in the Department of the Interior is best suited to accomplish this gigantic undertaking.

As an Appalachian mountaineer, I hope the task of reclaiming my shattered homeland will be assigned to the Bureau. I know that an objection will be raised that the Bureau does not operate in eastern America, that its mission has traditionally been restricted to the West. But this is no argument at all. Its experience and whole orientation has been in reclamation, in bringing life to barren land. It has successfully handled giant projects over broad regions, as countless verdant acres now attest.

In the millions of acres in our orphan banks the Bureau of Reclamation can find a new challenge worthy of its best men and greatest traditions. It is the logical organization in the Federal Government to combine the expertise of the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, the National Park Service, Bureau of Mines,