

As I review my concerns, I can think that maybe our company shouldn't be allowed to continue operating if we are destroying more value than we are creating. But, what are we destroying, if anything?

The Department of the Interior special report to the Nation entitled "Surface Mining and Our Environment" deals with several items in the chapter "Impact on Environment."

In connection with the effect of surface mining on reshaping the surface, the comment is made that the piles of low-grade ore "may either be considered an attractive feature in an otherwise monotonous landscape or as unsightly, depending upon one's viewpoint."

We also read that "the minerals in the formation are chemically inert and the terrain is flat; thus the mining operations cause little or no water pollution."

Furthermore, "* * * surface mining, per se, cannot be considered a major contributor to air pollution." We do not find anything directly describing the effect on vegetation of operations on the iron ranges; however, dumps and pits which have been unused or inactive for a period of time begin growing grass, brush, and trees and, if left undisturbed, take on the appearance of the surrounding area. When I really look at the whole picture, I wonder why Federal legislation is needed.

In general, good mineral conservation practices have been followed on the Minnesota iron ranges. As mines were opened, waste materials were removed and placed where they would not interfere with future operations.

The State of Minnesota, as a fee owner, is one of the stricter landlords in this regard. Low-grade materials were segregated and stockpiled for future possible use. Our company has processed large quantities of these materials using the tools and technology available to us today to produce usable concentrates.

As pits were exhausted of economic ores, they were generally left so that they could be reentered with minimum cost and effort. These practices contributed to the ability of the iron mining industry to expand operations at an incredible pace during World War II.

As to the appearance of the countryside, last summer some 80,000 tourists were counted at the viewstand overlooking the Hull-Rust Mine at Hibbing, which is the largest open pit iron ore mine in the world. Our Congressman, John A. Blatnik, succeeded a few years ago in having a new four-lane highway between Hibbing and Chisholm routed across one of the large open pits, recognizing that this would be an attraction for tourists.

There is essentially no water pollution from surface mining. Our company has worked closely with the Minnesota Water Pollution Control Commission in designing dikes and water handling systems. The two largest communities on the Mesabi Range obtain all or part of their water supplies from adjacent active open pit mines.

There is essentially no air pollution. At times there is windblown dust from active operations; however, our company, as have others, has planted vegetation to abate these problems where they are objectionable and where it is practical.

It seems to me that this act would unnecessarily burden the iron mining industry in Minnesota and could very well bring my company's operations to an end. If this were to happen, it would affect the some 250 families which our operations directly support, and would have