

God put coal under the earth for man's use, and He also made available large powerful machines to obtain this coal, but we do not believe He meant complete destruction in the process.

In Kansas and Missouri the coal companies' investments in tax-supported facilities are held to an absolute minimum. All attempts to impose a severance tax on coal has been beaten.

How practical is it for the Federal Government to spend thousands of dollars for soil and water conservation practices when the same land so benefited by such practices will, within a few years, be completely destroyed by strip and surface mining?

Should taxpayers have to pay to restore the affected area when the damage was done by one industry? Must our natural resources suffer complete destruction for the profits of so few?

We cannot and we must not continue on this disastrous course. We are running on a schedule that is approximately 80 years late in the enactment of reclamation laws, but there is no time like the present to begin.

The mining companies state that without the minerals they mine we could not remain a powerful Nation. This is true, but a hungry nation is not a powerful nation. The philosopher Seneca once said, "A hungry people listens not to reason or cares for justice or is bent by any prayers."

Gentlemen, this coming population explosion and the food shortage that will invariably come cannot be taken lightly. In areas of overpopulation, starvation is already prevalent, and as our population soars, we too will face the same crisis.

At present, thousands of acres of land are lying idle due to the feed grain program, the soil bank programs, and so forth, but even with these acres back in production our need for food will eventually surpass our ability to produce it.

The land and water of the United States belongs to the people of the United States and its future generations who must be protected against the total destruction of our natural resources.

Some of the States in our Union do have strip mining laws, and many do not. In Kansas a strip mining law was passed this year, but since the coal companies were the authors of the new law, the conservation people of Kansas are skeptical and the effectiveness of the new law remains in doubt.

Some day in the coalfields of America, after the coal companies have left and taken their money with them and left a desolation of complete waste and destruction behind, welfare and not mining will provide income for the people who remain.

Our Nation cannot face the future with the remnants of these horrible manmade scars across her face. We must eventually pay a staggering price for dirt-cheap electricity and repair the damages caused by the huge strip machines.

It is absolutely not our intentions to cause a hardship to any company or put any coal company out of business, as almost everyone uses coal or a byproduct of coal in his everyday living. But if this land must be stripped it would seem to us, it should be restored to a condition that would permit the establishment of economically feasible conservation practices and use of the land within its best capabilities for public and community needs.