

Appalachia, for instance, partially created by uncontrolled strip mining, is not so evident—only a few of our citizens are aware of damages caused by strip mining because such operations are usually not evident from primary thru-ways, etc. However, in a flight over the mountains in the Appalachian region and parts of Illinois and Indiana, it is clearly evident to any discerning observer that the damages sustained by the land and its people are almost beyond belief.

Such observation compels us to question ourselves if the stripping of coal is worth the price in parts of these regions. And we are forced to ask ourselves if the short-term gains are worth the long-range detrimental effects on our other resources and to the people, foremost, who are left with an empty, depressing and purposeless environment. Can we justify to the future generations such churning of the bowels of the earth, in parts of our country, that in effect dim man's desire for dignity and his chances for a good living as well as social and spiritual advancement?

Our economic system is the best in the world but it sometimes exposes a questionable face—for it is paradoxical that we are destroying the beautiful mountains and valleys of one area to create an Eden in another. Such a practice is not consistent with the Federal government's declared concern for resource management nor the President's concern for natural beauty.

It can and must be said that some surface mine operators have shown great concern about the problems arising from surface mining and their efforts to reclaim mined land should be extolled. But not enough of these mining conservationists are in a position of influence within their own industry. If such were the case there would be little need for the hearing here today. The efforts of this segment of the industry have been overshadowed by the image created by the less concerned—for the latter have created an image that labels all operators in some regions as being rapists of the land and greedy grabbers of resources.

In some instances the operator is ignorant of the total damages done—that is to day he does not understand the extent of damages caused by land erosion, water pollution and long-range effects caused by major soil disturbances. This situation has been readily recognized by reclamation associations where, in some states, symposiums have been and are being conducted to educate the operators.

Then there exists the problem of geographical land structure where no amount of conscience or physical effort can completely correct or prevent widespread devastation from surface mining. This situation exists in mountainous and hilly terrain where contour stripping on some localities is a disgrace that, in our opinion, supersedes the right of mineral ownership. Even under strict laws and regulations now in effect in Kentucky and West Virginia it is questionable whether such practices can continue for long. Since the inception of the strong Kentucky law additional regulatory measures have been necessary to further restrict mining on steep slopes reducing the degree of slope from 33° to 28° where contour stripping can be reasonably practiced. Certainly more time is needed by these states to give their law and strict regulations a chance to work. Then too reclamation methods presently being used must have the benefit of some average climate seasons before they can be judged fairly in these states.

The problems involved in area surface mining (flat or rolling terrain) are relatively few when compared to contour strip mining. The rolling or flat terrain makes reclamation not only feasible but frequently leaves the land in an improved condition compared to the unmined land of the same area. Such reclamation successes have presented opportunities for coal publications to refer to the surface mining industry as "The Total Benefit Industry" since it is not difficult to provide improved recreation opportunities in some regions where area surface mining is carried out. Then too, in the arid western part of our country there is less soil erosion and contamination of the streams. As reported, the mining carried out there is more in harmony with the land but not without its own peculiar problems and need for controls. The large open pit mines are considered to be long-term operations with most of them lasting for several years. These too, present specific problems that should be included in any federal legislation.

We must remember that the need for state controls was recognized and initiated something like 30 years ago and since that time a few states have been able to gradually strengthen their laws to where effective controls are now in existence, as in West Virginia, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania. In some cases industry supported these trends towards more stringent laws but all too often every little item of improvement was strongly opposed by an alliance of related industries and associations whose repetitious cries of woe extended from one state to