

But no action was taken on the question of the underground water table. The water table is one of the most valuable resources that we have in the country. There is a measurable amount of water that can be taken out of any water table without depleting it and ultimately destroying it. In other words, it's a renewable resource at some measurable rate depending upon the trends of the climate in 5- and 10-year cycles.

Whenever there is a project which withdraws water from the aquifers, a study can be made because you can measure the drop in the water table and you can measure how much is going back into that water table. In order to protect this resource, whether it be against excessive withdrawals by large corporations or large numbers of small operators, it may be necessary to establish some policy to maintain the level and the quality of that aquifer.

Do you think it's important that we establish some kind of a national policy and that we have some regulation in the use of the water from the aquifers and the water tables?

Mr. BERTSCH. Water law and water policy is perhaps the most complex problem with which we are faced in this country. I think that in the Western States generally there are more thoughtful, more thoroughly developed water use control measures than in the States east of the Mississippi River where water was really never considered much of a problem until recent years. I think the answer to your question is; "Yes," indeed.

The economy of whole regions, not just the agricultural economy but the total economy of whole regions is dependent in large measure upon, let us say, the rationing of that ground water to preserve and protect and continue its availability.

I have traveled extensively in my work around the United States and I have been in areas recently in west Texas, for example, which when I visited them in 1949, 1950, the ground water which was being pumped for irrigation was being pumped 40 feet. Today it's being pumped 400 feet and the recharge, they tell me, of this aquifer is somewhere in Wyoming or Montana and the recharge is slow and the use of water has been infinitely greater than the annual recharge. The result is that what was feasible economically, from an agricultural standpoint, in that area 15, 20 years ago, is not feasible now because the cost of raising water has increased. The tremendous investment that's gone into that whole region based upon 40 foot water is now being threatened because available water is now 400 feet. So all the small businesses, all the schools, all the institutions, both public and private, which were developed and established and based on an economy of water with a 40-foot lift, all of them are now threatened by the fact that there is a 400-foot-lift requirement. And this is obviously, it seems to me, a subject for national concern. It is a far more complex problem than I am qualified to deal with, with any expertise, Mr. Chairman, but there are many who have made a career of studying only this phase of rural resource conservation and development.

First we have to help family farmers reach a competitive position in purchasing fertilizer and tractors, in obtaining capital, and in selling their produce.

The recent proposals that have been made to increase the bargaining power of farmers, the further development of our system of