

But the recharge rate is not a significant factor in the development of the reservoir for beneficial use since the recharge is balanced by outflow. This balance in the reservoir has been established over many centuries. Consequently any withdrawal from the reservoir is, in effect, "mining" of the water. It begins to throw that reservoir out of balance as it is tapped. Thus the critical policy question in the development of the nonrenewable resource devolves around how rapidly it will be exhausted and who will benefit from its use. Everyone, not only the farmers, ranchers, and businessmen in the area, but the whole national community have a stake in the proper development of the resource.

Senator NELSON. Do you mean to say that this aquifer is not rechargeable?

Mr. LEHMAN. It is rechargeable but picture, if you will, a bathtub with a faucet on this end and a drain on the other end. The intake is equal to the outgo. Then you put a pump in the bathtub and the balance is immediately disturbed, so you are, in effect, mining as soon as you tap it.

Senator NELSON. Are you saying that in this aquifer the outflow is equal to the inflow?

Mr. LEHMAN. That's right.

Senator NELSON. Regardless of what you pump out the input cannot restore that which is taken out because the outflow is equal to the inflow?

Mr. LEHMAN. Your balances are immediately disturbed.

Senator NELSON. It cannot be restored?

Mr. LEHMAN. Well, except artificially. It can be restored artificially, but if the natural balance is disturbed it will continue to be disturbed and will remain that way.

Senator NELSON. If you pumped out 10 million acre-feet, regardless of what the rainfall was, is it correct that the inflow wouldn't restore that 30 million acre-feet?

Mr. LEHMAN. Within a brief period of time this will change. In years of high precipitation there would be a high level of restoration. In years of low rainfall periods there would be a low level of restoration, but over a long period of time, if you will again look at this proposition of a faucet running into a bathtub and an outlet draining out of the bathtub with the water level stable at the moment. As soon as you begin to put pumps in, you begin to disturb this balance, you begin to mine the water. It is a nonrenewable resource unless there is artificial recharge. Now, of course, there is a good deal of research going into the question of how artificial recharge could be accomplished. There are any number of methods being explored.

Senator NELSON. Is it a peculiarity of this aquifer?

Mr. LEHMAN. Yes.

Senator NELSON. If they reduce the water table and not disturb it, will it come back up again?

Mr. LEHMAN. Yes. In the case of an aquifer being recharged by a stream, this is not true. But this aquifer is what is commonly referred to in popular language as a closed basin. That is, it is not directly associated with a surface stream or with any body of water.

Some industrial and conglomerate corporations see the underground