

Remarks of
Senator Hubert H. Humphrey (D., Minn.)
on the floor of the Senate
Wednesday, July 23, 1953

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MR. HUMPHREY. Mr. President, I send to the desk for appropriate reference a Joint Resolution, calling for establishing a Joint Committee on Natural Resources by the Senate and House of Representatives. A companion was introduced earlier in the session by Representative Heller of New York.

Mr. President, the American people are quite properly concerned over indications that we as a nation may be slipping backwards from some of the great conservation policies established since the days of President Theodore Roosevelt.

Much of our nation's strength and progress has been made possible by our abundance of great natural resources -- land, water, timber, oil and minerals -- and the wisdom with which we have developed and used them.

But we have long ago learned the dangers of exploiting and wasting these valuable resources.

We know they are not unlimited. We know that they must be carefully safeguarded from exhaustion.

We have seen what happened down through history to other civilizations, when they exploited their resources beyond replenishment.

We cannot let that happen in our country.

We have tried to make certain it will not happen, as a matter of public policy.

For years we have responded to the will of the people by establishing safeguards over the uses of these resources, and sought to protect them for future generations to share.

Yet short-sighted pressures still exist for raids on these great national treasures. There are those who would be willing to exploit them for whatever immediate profit they could obtain, regardless of the consequences in the future.

We have seen those forces at work in virtually every field of natural resources; we have seen develop a growing demand for an abrupt

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turn-about in public policy that would cause Gifford Pinchot to roll over in his grave.

Now, if ever before, we need a strong revival of a crusading spirit for the protection of our vast forests; for protection and proper development of our water resources; for protection of our soil fertility on our farms; for the safeguarding of our petroleum resources.

We need firm national conservation policies, embracing all forms of natural resources, and putting foremost the public's stake in preservation of such resources for useful purposes in generations to come.

One of our great weaknesses in development of national conservation policies has been the multitude of agencies and groups concerned with different phases of the conservation problem.

We have conservation responsibilities and problems in the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Interior, the Department of Commerce, the Army Engineers.

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We have conservation policies being passed upon in various forms by the Senate Committees on Agriculture and Forestry, on Interior and Insular Affairs, and on Public Works.

Often we in the legislative branch of government have protested and objected to overlapping or duplicating authorities in the executive branch; we have also protested lack of effective coordination where divided responsibility exists.

Perhaps we should put our own house in order.

There seem to be sound grounds for creation of a Joint Committee on Natural Resources between the Senate and the House of Representatives as this resolution proposes -- a bi-partisan joint committee.

It would be a "watchdog committee", to help develop sound, coordinated national conservation policies, and safeguard the execution of those policies.

It is not the purpose of the resolution to interfere with or curtail existing functions of any Congressional committees with reference to conservation of natural resources; rather, it would create supplemental

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functions that should be helpful to all of the existing committees.

The purpose of the joint committee would be to investigate the operations and effects of all Federal statutes dealing with natural resources, to investigate the administration of such statutes by the executive departments, boards, bureaus, agencies, independent establishments and instrumentalities of the government charged with their administration, and to make such other investigations with respect to conservation of natural resources as the Joint Committee shall deem necessary.

The Committee shall be required to make reports to the Senate and House from time to time concerning the results of its investigations, together with such recommendations as it deems advisable.

The resolution calls for a Joint Committee on Natural Resources consisting of 16 members, 8 from each of the two Houses of Congress, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate, with not more than eight of the members being from any one political party. The committee will select its own chairman.

Mr. President, by creating such a Committee, Congress will be

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protecting the interests of all the American people in safeguarding our valuable natural resources. It will be rejecting the pressures of giveaway raids, and reaffirming the traditional American policy of protecting its natural resources for the benefit of all the people rather than permit them to be exploited for the private profit of the few with special privilege and influence.

A similar resolution has been introduced in the House of Representatives by Mr. Heller. It is a call to protect the public's interest that should not be ignored. It is an opportunity to aid, not raid, our natural resources. I want to commend and thank Congressman Heller for his activity in behalf of this measure.



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