

Statement by Senator Lee Metcalf on the Floor of the Senate, Nov. 18, 1970

Mr. Metcalf:

Mr. President, in previous statements before the Senate, I have voiced concern over management practices in our National Forests. This is a concern shared by other Senators, who have also commented extensively on Forest management in their respective States. We are increasingly brought to realize that this is an issue which is national in scope, and it is an issue which directly involves the public, since what are at stake are public lands managed by public agencies.

I am pleased today to present an important news report on this problem. This is a report which was originated by concerned members of the public and produced by experts at their own expense. Approximately a year ago, I received a large number of letters from constituents in western Montana who were particularly worried about what they saw happening to their surroundings. Pictures, angry words, and news articles describe logging practices which appeared to disregard every value of forest use except that of the cheapest removal of logs. In response to this, I expressed my concern to the Forest Service and, at the same time, requested Dean Bolle of the Forestry School in the University of Montana to do an independent study of the problem.

The possible dangers of clearcutting have been sited often before. These include soil disruption, ill effects on wildlife, scenic degradation, and water pollution, among others. The Federal Water Quality Administration, for example, warns that, "logging operations all too frequently result in adverse impacts on many other multiple uses of Federal lands, as well as on the uses of the water above stream, far down stream from the logged areas, even to the estuaries, the rivers, and to the sea."

The select committee's report, however, goes further. It focuses upon what have been considered the primary defense of clearcutting - economy, efficiency. The report disputes the common assumption that clearcutting, in the way that it has been used in the past, is the profitable method of timber harvesting, and beyond this, the report suggests a new look at land classification in terms of what it designates as "timber mining."

The report recognizes the difficult situation in which the Forest Service stands in regard to policy formulation. The Forest Service is constantly pressed by the administration for greater lumber output to meet national needs. Industry pressures for more cutting are enormous, but the Agency may be too willing to exceed to these pressures "from above." The report sums up this dilemma in its statement of findings. "It appears inconceivable and incongruous to us that at this time, with the great emphasis upon a broad multiple use approach to our natural resources - especially those remaining in public ownership - that any representative, school, or institution in our society would advocate a dominate use philosophy with respect to our natural resources. Yet, it is our judgement that this is precisely what is occurring through the Federal appropriation process via Executive Order in the Public Land Law Review Commission's report. It would appear to us that at this time any approach to public land management which would de-emphasize a broad multiple use philosophy, a broad environmental approach, a broad open access approach, or which would reduce the production of our public lands resources in the long run is completely out-of-step with the interest and desires of the American people. What is needed is a fully funded program of action for quality management of all of our public lands."

The conclusion is, then, that we are not just dealing with questions of natural beauty, wildlife, and pollution, however important these may be, but with the fundamental processes of forest economics. This is an important finding in coming as it does from a committee composed of three professional foresters, a professor of wildlife, a political scientist, a sociologist, and an economist, it deserves to be heard.



I might add that this report embodies the finest example of public interest and involvement in environmental issues. The people of Montana took the initiative in making their own concern known. A local newspaper, The Missoulian, printed a series of outstanding articles on the problem, and the faculty members of the University of Montana devoted countless, unpaid hours to the study, discussion, and analysis of the issue. On behalf of the other members of the Montana Congressional Delegation, Senator Mansfield, Representative Olson, Representative Melcher, and myself, I would like to thank the people of Montana who made this report possible. I ask unanimous consent that the select committee's report be printed in the Record and commend it especially to members of the Interior, Agriculture, and Appropriation Committees, to the resource management agencies, and to Office of Management and Budget. I ask unanimous consent that biographical information on the select committee also be printed in the Record. There being no objections, the items were ordered to be printed in the Record as follows:

(The University Committee's Report)