NEW SECRETARY OF INTERIOR AGREEABLE TO RECONSIDERATION OF RESTRICTIONS ON USE OF FEDERAL LAND

Our new Secretary of Interior has announced her support for "self policing" as to pollution standards. Self policing is, of course, no policing whatsoever. Equally frightening is that she and George W. have indicated that fees paid by mineral, grazing, and other Federal lands users, who pay just a fraction of what is paid by lessees of private land, will be considered favorably.

Thirty one years ago, the Johnson administration announced that the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service would increase grazing fees charged Western ranchers using 266 million acres of Federal grass land. But the Nixon administration annulled the plan to increase grazing fees because, it was claimed, higher fees discriminated against cattlemen. On hearing this news, the 6,000 member American National Cattlemen's Association convening in Washington D.C., "rode out of town tall in the saddle and happy as a bee in clover about the government decision". The happy convention delegates also passed a resolution demanding that the Federal government stand firm against reducing limits on imported meat so that "the American cattle industry can be preserved and the consumer provided with high quality beef." The convention also passed a resolution citing the cattlemen as "one of a dwindling special breed who makes his money from the land, receiving no artificial props." A further resolution stated concern "over the gradual deterioration of self reliance we see in America and the growing tendency of many Americans to lean on someone else for their nourishment and comfort." Oh, glorious self reliance, may it never deteriorate. ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ☞

☞ If our new Secretary of interior acts in accordance with statements made by her and by George W., prior to the election, to the cattlemen and other rugged individualists, seeking special consideration, she will be the worst Secretary of Interior since Albert Bacon Fall. Fall, who served under President Harding, accepted $100,000 (worth almost 10 times as much in today's purchasing power) for favorable consideration of proposals made by Harry Sinclair and E. L. Doheney in connection with the leasing of the Teapot Dome (Wyoming) and Elk Hills (California) naval oil reserves that were transferred to his department. Fall was tried and convicted of accepting a bribe.

On the other hand, she might consider the suggestions of Theodore Roosevelt on August 6, 1912, before the Progressive National Convention. At that time, as now, there was great interest in tapping subsoil resources in Alaska.

Theodore Roosevelt first noted that, "We must conserve the soil so that our children shall have a land that is more and not less fertile than our fathers dwelt in. Governmental efforts, and the best preparation for such wise action is to test by actual experience . . ."

"We must conserve the mines. Moreover, we must insure, so far as possible, the use of certain types of great natural resources for the benefit of the people as a whole. The public should not alienate its fee in the water power which will be of invaluable consequence as a source of power in the immediate future. We do not intend that our natural resources should be exploited by the few against the interests of the many. Nor do we intend to turn them over to any man who will wastefully use them by destruction and leave to those who come after us the heritage damaged by just so much."

After stating that the government should keep the fee of all of the coal fields and allow them to be operated by lessees, with the condition in the lease that nonuse shall operate as a forfeit, Roosevelt concluded: "It would be well in Alaska to try a system of land taxation which will, so far as possible, remove all the burdens from those who actually use the land for building or for agricultural purposes, and will operate against any man who holds the land for speculation, or derives an income from it based, not on his own exertions, but on the increase in value due to activities not his own. There is very real need that this nation shall seriously prepare itself for the task of remedying social injustice and meeting social problems by well-considered governmental effort."

If Theodore Roosevelt were alive today, he might be labeled an impractical "tree-huger." We hope that our Secretary of Interior will not think so. ● ● ● ● ● ✍