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The Water Crisis, by Senator Frank Moss

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BOOK REVIEW


America's water crisis is the potential inability to meet her water needs. An expanding population and an increasing per capita use results in a constant demand for more water; yet, the supply is essentially fixed. Moreover, this supply can be reduced by urbanization, by qualitative deterioration through pollution, and by other practices that fail to maximize the useful yield of water as it moves through our water courses to the sea. Our water problem thus requires intelligent centralized planning and control if we are to make the most beneficial use of this resource.

The first half of The Water Crisis documents the dimension and varied nature of our water problem, yet emphasizes that these are facets of the greater problem of managing our water resources to meet the needs of the nation.

The second half of the book examines the failure of our political and social organizations to properly resolve our water problem. While technology has kept pace with societal needs, our social organizations have not met the demands placed upon them. At the present time we have no national water policy. In addition, not only is coordination lacking between the various agencies dealing with our water problems, but water resources are also allocated and abused according to the political strength of the users. Senator Moss concludes that we must manage our water resources much more effectively. He suggests that the interstate arrangement establishing riverbasin authorities must be strengthened, and that all federal water management agencies should be centralized under one administrator. Our water needs can only be met by long-range planning through governmental agencies with sufficient authority to carry out their plans.

Senator Moss' book is well organized and provides interesting reading. Further, his position is well presented and adequately supported. Nevertheless, while the book can be recommended to the reader seeking a general introduction to our Nation's water crisis, it is somewhat disappointing for the informed reader. One would expect that a book dealing with water problems, and written by a Senator with substantial experience in the water resources
field, would add to the body of knowledge dealing with the writer's area of specialization. This book, however, reads as though a person with a flair for writing, but with little comprehension of the subject, prepared the book from "aged" secondary and tertiary sources. Superficial analysis combined with numerous minor factual errors permeate the text. For example, the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare is used when the Secretary of the Interior is the person that should be listed. Material on the Great Lakes was outdated when written. Alewives are listed among fish disappearing from our waters, when actually this undesirable species is the subject of an extensive government eradication campaign. The myth of Yucatan having jungles is repeated. And the information on strip mining is inaccurate.

The Senator can and should do better. He has experience that few people working with water resources can equal, and he could make an enormous contribution to the limited body of material presently available dealing with the political aspects of water legislation passed in the last 20 years, as well as with the political activities of the large government and non-government organizations actively engaged in water development and control. However, the Senator has produced an enjoyable book, and his emphasis on the need for more effective government control and planning

1 Senator Moss has been a member of the Senate Select Committee on National Water Resources, The Committee on Public Works, and Chairman of the Subcommittee on Irrigation and Reclamation. He is also a member of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs and the Subcommittee on Water and Power Resources.
4 F. Moss, supra note 2, at 144.
A dramatic example of an upset in the balance of nature is the invasion of the Great Lakes by the alewife. These little fish, descendants of a species which has migrated into the Lakes from the ocean and adapted itself to the fresh-water environment, have become pests mindful of the great locust plagues. . . . The alewife is a virtually useless fish. They are not good to eat, and there is no sport to catching them. Efforts to find a commercial market for them, as animal food, have been only partially successful. By competing for food supply, they crowd out more desirable species. Worst of all they move in enormous schools from the deeper recesses of the lakes, especially Lake Michigan, into inshore waters and die there by the millions — clogging water intakes and piling up in stinking masses on shores. U.S. DEP'T OF INTERIOR, WATER POLLUTION PROBLEMS OF LAKE MICHIGAN AND TRIBUTARIES 43 (1968).
5 F. Moss, supra note 2, at 232.
6 Id. at 113, 189.
for our water resources is timely, and one which most knowledgeable people would heartily endorse. Perhaps in his next endeavor Senator Moss can utilize his experience and add to the body of knowledge dealing with this important subject.

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