

WATER LEGISLATION - 1967

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"You don't miss the water until the well runs dry." And if you are wise you don't wait until the well runs dry to do something about it. A Fort Worth consulting engineer recently told some 60 Deaf Smith County Texas farmers they had until 1985 to do something about their wells running dry. He said:

"By the year 2020 the High Plains of Texas would need 15-18 million acre feet of supplementation water annually.

Suggested Mississippi River importation.

State it would not be impossible, but it must start with people like you--interested groups, beginning work now!"

New Mexico--particularly Eastern New Mexico--must begin work now in order to participate in this work and effort. We must do our part and take care of our responsibilities if we are to benefit from usage of this water.

I begin this talk about Water Legislation in the 28th New Mexico Legislature in this manner in order to point out the growing realization among many New Mexicans that perhaps our water laws need updating in some areas. This fact was emphasized by the introduction in this session of some 37 bills and memorials pertaining to water primarily and indirectly effecting water law and its administration.

I am a little familiar with the subject of water as I make my living as an irrigation and dryland farmer. I know what it means to use a shovel and irrigate from a ditch--the convenience of underground tile and gated pipe--and the use of sprinkler irrigation systems. We use all these methods where I farm in Curry County. I also know a little about water engineering and hydrology as I have a degree in Agricultural Engineering from New Mexico State University. I remember taking a soils course under Dr. Harold Dregne and being in school with Dr. George Dawson--both of whom are here tonight. I have become acquainted with water law and water legislation as I am now serving my third term as a State Representative of the rural area of Curry County. So, you see, I know the essential importance of water--what it means--its value from the text book, to the ditch bank, to the law book.

In the New Mexico House of Representatives for the past five years, I have had the opportunity to debate quite often with Mr. Harlan Flint, my

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district court and makes the State Engineer a party on the same basis as the other participants. I believe our District Judges are very capable of rendering fair judgment based on the facts presented in cases of this type.

House Bill 133 stated that if an applicant applies for a drilling permit on private land he does not own, and the applicant does not have mineral or oil and gas rights under the land, or is not a governmental body, then the applicant must submit a statement that he has the land owners permission.

House Bill 396 is very important to the future of New Mexico. It appropriates \$6000 for the first year of a two year study to the Agricultural Economics Department of New Mexico State University for the purpose of making a study of the agricultural water needs of New Mexico to the year 2060. Texas has already made such a study to the year 2020. Other states have done this and are doing this as a part of an overall water plan for their areas. New Mexico needs this done as soon as possible so that we will have available information on which to base our requirements for participation in water importation projects. This bill states that the Agricultural Economics Department of New Mexico State University shall cooperate with county agricultural extension agents and county water planning committees in making this study. You people need to help with this study in your individual counties.

It has been a pleasure to present this information to you tonight. Only time will tell if everything we did in Santa Fe this year was the best for New Mexico. I believe that a lot has been accomplished in the area of water law and I hope it will be for the good of those concerned.