

High Country

news

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The Paper for People who Care about the West

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A Western tradition ends with a conference on America's parks

by Pat Ford

The Institute of the American West's conference, *Parks in the West and American Culture*, ended with a story from University of Utah historian Floyd O'Neil. Two years ago, he and his wife were two of 12,000 visitors to the Galapagos Islands -- now an Ecuadorian National Park. In the course of their tour of those remarkable islands, he discovered a plaque placed by Ecuador's parks department:

"In gratitude for the contributions of the National Park Service of the United States of America."

Alive in Ecuador and elsewhere is one of America's finest ideas. Paul Pritchard, president of the National Parks and Conservation Association, said at the conference that there are 2,300 national parks and reserves in 120 nations worldwide. Most were modeled on and still learn from our park system. Most are bound together, and sometimes torn apart, by the two principles guiding our system: open use by the nation's people, and protection of the health and well-being of the lands, plants, animals and cultures within them.

This was the tenth, and last, speculative conference on the West organized by Richard Hart and the Institute of the American West (see related story). Held August 15-18 at Sun Valley Idaho, it attracted 150 people -- park professionals, historians, conservation activists, writers and others.

The conference explored the values rooted in parks and other "reserved lands." Discussion ranged widely over the great Western national parks, state and local parks, urban parks, playgrounds, wilderness areas, historical parks, and new kinds of parks and protected landscapes.

Each day had a theme: history of parks, their place in our culture, their status today, and ethics for the future. There were speeches, discussions,

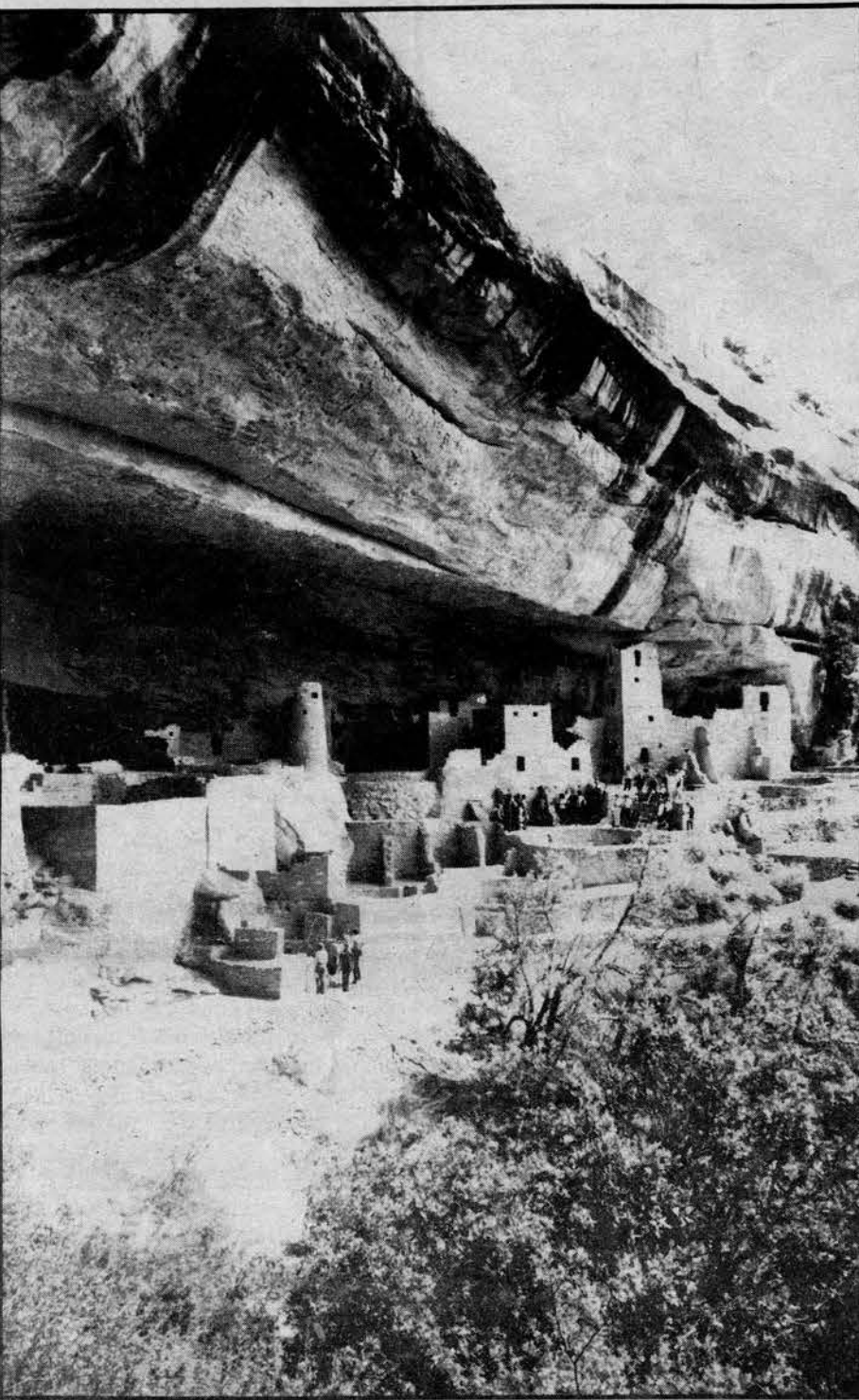
films, slide shows, and photographs. A 48-page tabloid with contributions from many of the participants was distributed free. The conference is also destined for a larger audience. It was taped for future use on National Public Radio and a book will soon emerge from it.

Superintendents and employees from Western parks were absent; they were in their parks working. And there were only two non-whites in attendance. Nevertheless, it was a good conference attended by good people. There was productive conflict, some profound ideas about land and people, good conversation, and fertile suggestions for future thought and work. In retrospect, a few themes and stories stand out.

Parks have come from differing, often inconsistent sources: private philanthropy, the railroads' self-interest, individual crusades, grassroots campaigns, scientific judgments, politics and the zeal of social reformers.

The American parks movement began, historian Mary Duncan said, with a "bunch of radical folks" led by Frederic Law Olmsted, a social reformer who saw parks as an experiment in democracy. Olmsted was the first superintendent of Central Park, which was America's first great urban park (1858), and one of the first commissioners of the then state-run Yosemite Park.

The relationship between Western parks and the railroads was documented by Alfred Runte, an historian at the University of Washington, in an entertaining and informative slide show. He pointed out that the Northern Pacific Railroad lobbied Congress to create Yellowstone in 1871. John Muir gave the Southern Pacific Railroad credit for helping the Yosemite Park bill pass Congress. Glacier Park was a project of the Great Northern Railroad. Union Pacific helped create and develop Grand



Cliff Palace, Mesa Verde National Park

Canyon and other parks of the Southwest.

Having helped create them, the railroads promoted Western parks in brochures and magazine ads that beckoned Easterners to visit -- by rail, of course -- the natural wonders of the West.

Private philanthropists also did their part. John D. Rockefeller's gifts and support gave us Grand Teton National Park. The Harriman family gave Idaho its finest state park and helped force the legislature to create the state parks department.

Were the parks supported only by railroads, preservationists and philanthropists, or did they have broad public and congressional support? Historian Runte argued that Congress was generally willing to carve parks only out of what it viewed as curiosities of "worthless lands." And if they later found the land wasn't worthless as in the case of the Hetch Hetchy reservoir site in Yosemite, Congress didn't hesitate to reshape the park to make room for development. The drawing of park boundaries wasn't very different from the drawing of today's wilderness boundaries. Then as now conserva-

tionists had to compromise to preserve at least some threatened land.

But Sally Fairfax, a professor of natural resources at the University of California, Berkeley, had a different perspective. She wrote in the conference tabloid that the late 19th century roots of national parks and forests were the same -- the preservation of wooded lands to protect watersheds.

"Inspection of contemporary evidence points to the conclusion that the forest reservations when authorized and originally implemented meant, in present-day terms, parks, not national forests." In her view, preservation was very strong back in the 1890s, both for parks and for what were to become national forests.

How did the dichotomy between parks as areas of preservation and recreation, and forests as areas of logging rise? And how did the policy of protecting watersheds at all costs become weakened?

Fairfax writes, "The answer is simple: Gifford Pinchot, the first Forest Service Chief." He succeeded in interesting Congress and the people in timber management. And he was

[Continued on page 10]

Kent and Donna Danner

WESTERN ROUNDUP



High Country News

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Union Pacific cleanup plan criticized

Union Pacific Railroad's new plan to contain and monitor wastes at their closed tie treatment plant outside of Laramie, Wyoming has not been well received either by environmental groups or state agencies. The Environmental Protection Agency says it can't comment until they finish reviewing the plan.

In late August, the railroad released its final cleanup plan for the site, where high levels of poisonous and cancer-causing chemicals were found in four waste ponds, soils, and underlying bedrock. Cleanup of the waste ponds was addressed in an earlier UP-EPA negotiated plan and is now underway (HCN, 7/28/84).

The current plan for the cleanup of the remaining chemicals calls for surrounding the area with a slurry wall designed to stop groundwater flow, and for pumping out and treating contaminated groundwater. The slurry wall would be a 15 to 50 foot deep trench filled with a mixture of bentonite and soil. CH2M Hill, a consulting firm for Union Pacific, said that digging up and removing the wastes would be dangerous and expensive. CH2M Hill also concluded in their final plan that contamination of the Laramie River next to the site falls within "acceptable" levels and no action should be taken on cleanup of the river. The plan, however, recommends yearly monitoring of dioxin levels in fish and contaminated oil in riverbed sand and gravels.

At a Union Pacific-sponsored informational meeting in Laramie September 17, state officials said they were concerned about turning the plant into a "permanent waste

disposal site." Phil Pucel of the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality said "the slurry wall may be a band-aid solution."

Tom Hill, a member of a citizens' group called the Laramie River Cleanup Council, was also critical of the slurry wall plan. He said there is "no way of guaranteeing no seepage" through the wall and charged that the plan was "an experiment."

A risk analysis released with the final plan, and upon which the plan is based, concluded that the wastes pose "no immediate hazard to public health or the environment." But Dr. Raymond Harbison, toxicologist from the University of Arkansas who wrote the analysis, said at the Laramie public meeting that his conclusions were based on "the best data available," and that additional testing would have been desirable. The EPA added that the data available now contains "critical" information gaps.

An earlier report by CH2M that included data and described the extent of contamination at the tie plant was presented to EPA in July. The report concluded that contamination covers 140 acres -- up from earlier estimates of 80 to 100 acres.

Finding that report still incomplete, the EPA submitted an 11-page, point-by-point critique of the document to the railroad company in late July. The critique said more needed to be known about how the contaminants move toward the Laramie River and through soils and bedrock, and about pollution of invertebrate animals in the river. EPA also said then that CH2M Hill relied too much on visual observations and not enough on

chemical tests in defining soil contamination.

By mid-September, UP still had not responded to the critique. Instead, says Tom Hill of the citizens' group, UP released its risk analysis and final plan based on the deficient data of its earlier reports. One example of the data deficiency, Hill said, is that many of the water wells near the tie plant still haven't been tested for contamination. The EPA said it will test them within the next few months.

John Bromley, spokesman for UP, said that the railroad is still looking at the CH2M Hill slurry wall recommendation and hasn't yet ruled out other cleanup alternatives.

As cleanup plans were debated, the Casper, Wyoming *Star-Tribune* reported last month that the CH2M Hill consulting firm has a dual role: it is both an advisor to Union Pacific and holder of a multi-million dollar contract to advise EPA on hazardous waste cleanup throughout the western United States. EPA officials said they would try to minimize the possibility of conflict of interest by requiring that the consulting firm retain separate staffs for EPA and UP work and that CH2M Hill do no EPA work on the tie plant. Both EPA officials and UP's Bromley said only a few U.S. consulting firms are qualified to do hazardous waste work. In an interview with HCN, Bromley added that he couldn't imagine any conflict of interest and that "UP was proud to hire the firm because they had worked for EPA in similar matters."

--Mary Moran

Dear friends,

Long-time HCN readers, accustomed to periodic crises, will not be surprised that we face yet another one. This crisis is occasioned by Lewis McCool's move to Durango, Colorado.

Were McCool moving from Rhode Island, or Alaska, or Alabama, it wouldn't bother us. We have more than one subscriber in each of those states. But he was our sole Mississippi subscriber. It means we can no longer say: *High Country News* circulates to all fifty states."

So we're asking for help, either in the form of a gift to a Mississippi friend, a gift to the governor or some other personage or library in the state, or leads to Mississippians who may be interested in HCN. Alternatively, if any present reader is willing to move to Mississippi for the good of the paper, that would be a very generous gesture.

Our mention last week of the Oregon Law School class that subscribed brought a response from Professor Spencer Havlick; he enrolled his class of forty Colorado University, Boulder, students in *High Country News* for the next three months. In addition to Professor Havlick's class, HCN received 29 other new subscriptions last week -- more than we've received in any one week in the last year.

The spurt may be due to the gardening advice in last issue's 'Dear friends.' Several people have asked how our manhandling of the tomato plants worked. We think it helped, but since we forgot to leave some plants untouched, we have no comparison.

Also, we've been a bit too busy lately to give the garden the attention it deserves. For one thing, our promotions person, Judy Moffatt, is on a leave of absence to try her wings in politics. On September 11, she made her first successful flight, defeating an eight-year incumbent to win the Democratic County Commissioner nomination in Garfield County. Here in Paonia, editor Betsy Marston is working part time while running for Delta County Commissioner as the Democratic candidate. Even if they win, both staffers report they will still devote some time to *High Country News*.

The politicking has made September a bit more hectic. But we've barely noticed it because of the sense of relief fall brings to HCN. October, you see, is the end of HCN's real-world fiscal year. In other operations, the end of a fiscal year means the closing of one set of books and the opening of another. But for HCN, making it to October means we've survived and are good for at least another nine months.

The reason is the Research Fund -- an annual appeal for funds to pay research and writing expenses. Last year, as in past years, several hundred readers contributed almost \$30,000 to the Research Fund. Without it, the paper wouldn't be here today. Assuming the same level of response to the 1984 appeal, we will make it through at least a good chunk of the next twelve months.

Last year, due to the move, the Research Fund mailing went out late. But we're now more organized, and

this year's appeal just may be in the mail on October 1. That depends in part on how well, and with how much distaste, the staff's batch of children remember last year's envelope stuffing marathon.

This issue contains the second profile in a series funded by a grant from an anonymous benefactor. The subject of the portrait is John Barlow, a Wyoming rancher, and the writer is Tom Wolf, who wrote the most mentioned HCN story of last year: the tale of how the Colorado River almost tunneled under Glen Canyon Dam.

We got some interesting reactions to the letters in the last issue. One coffee shop acquaintance told us that it's not just "carnion eaters" who are responsible for overgrazing. Also guilty are people who wear wool pants while cross country skiing.

We love letters; we especially love contentious letters. But we hate very long letters, such as the one in this issue from forester Vern Hamre. But we are publishing it because the Forest Service threatened to otherwise stop all cutting of timbers on National Forests, leaving us with nothing to write about. But it is the last really long letter we intend to publish, no matter what the threats.

Our apologies to Tom Robinson, who was quoted in the story on the Idaho wilderness bill in the September 17 issue under the name Tom Robbins. And, if there is a Tom Robbins out there, our apologies to him also.

--the staff

Cities want wilderness water on tap

The proposed Homestake II Water Diversion Project in Western Colorado arouses strong feelings. To some, it is the technological answer to a problem -- how to bring water to urban areas. To others, allowing the project would set a disastrous precedent because the water in question is in a wilderness area, called Holy Cross.

The two eastern slope cities of Aurora and Colorado Springs are sponsoring the \$100 million project that has been 30 years in the planning. The cities plan to divert water at four points from Cross and Fall Creeks and a wetlands area. From there, the water would be pumped 10 miles through underground tunnels beneath the Continental Divide into the existing Homestake Reservoir, a product of the Homestake I project.

Colorado Springs and the Denver suburb of Aurora are expected to grow by several hundred thousand residents over the next twenty years, and city officials say an adequate water supply must be tapped to match that growth. In a typical year, over 20,000 acre-feet of water, or 90 percent of the spring runoff, would be withdrawn from the wilderness area.

The Holy Cross Wilderness Defense Fund, a coalition of state and national conservation groups, says the water would be pulled from right where it is needed to feed alpine meadows, fragile wetlands, and scenic waterfalls. They also claim that allowing a water project in a wilderness area violates the intention of the 1964 Wilderness Act.

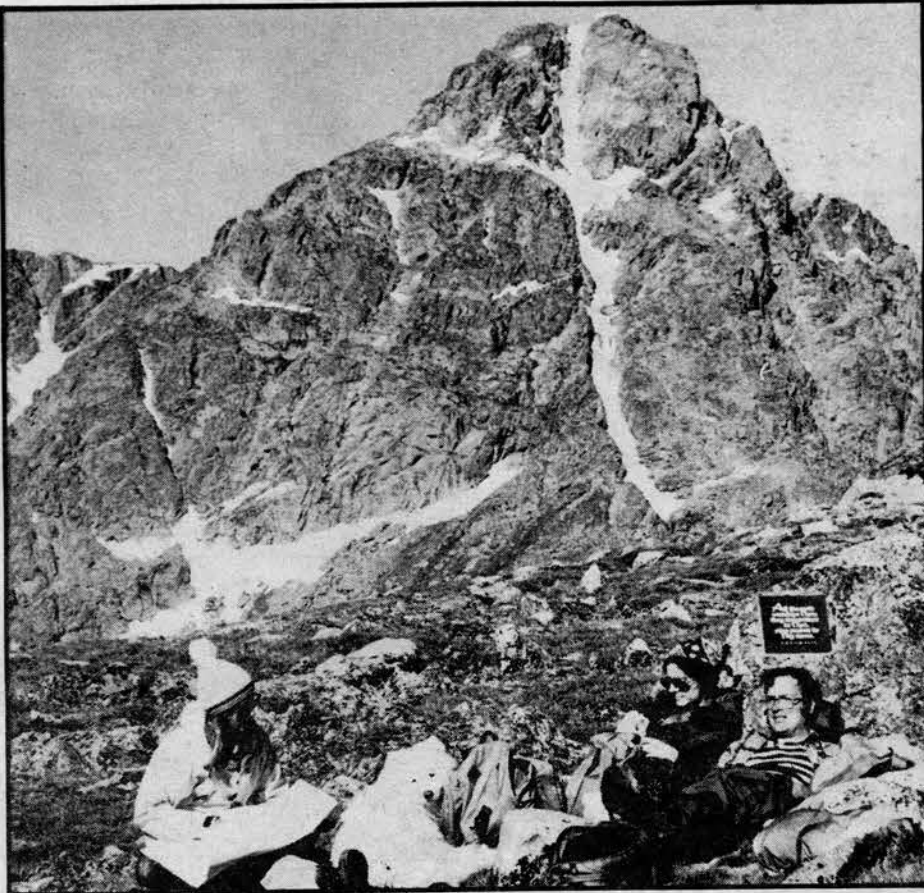
But city officials are confident they can mitigate any damage to the wetlands. They charge that environmentalists are trying to prevent them from using water to which they have a legitimate need and right. Their claim is grounded in the Homestake Clause, a small section of the 1980 Colorado Wilderness Bill which created the Holy Cross Wilderness Area. The clause states that nothing in the act shall be construed to interfere with the construction of the Homestake II project. Rights to the area's water have belonged to the cities since the 1940s, long before the passage of the Wilderness Act, they add.

"We were there first," says Howard Miskel, chairman of the Homestake II Steering Committee. "Those who use the argument that we're infringing on the wilderness bother me. The wilderness is infringing on us."

The proposed project has always spurred controversy. Currently, both opponents and proponents are claiming they will emerge victorious. In August, the Army Corps of Engineers gave the wilderness water project conditional approval. Before the draft permit can be made final, however, District Engineer Col. Arthur Williams says the cities must create a mitigation plan to prevent the wetlands from drying up. To back up their plan, the cities must collect a year's worth of data with extensive on-site streamflow tests to prove the area will not be damaged. Officials from both cities are considering a joint \$800,000 program of stream measurements. Both city councils are deciding whether to finance the tests.

In any case, the cities must submit their data to the Corps six months before construction may begin, to give any opposition a chance to comment.

At this point, Rosalind McClellen, executive director of the Holy Cross Defense Fund, does not believe the project will be built. "A lot of projects that get permitted won't get built. The



Mountain of the Holy Cross, Colorado

cost of mitigation is too high," she says.

That the cities themselves are responsible for collecting the data -- data that will help determine whether the project should be allowed -- is a mixed blessing for opponents.

According to McClellen, "The more they find out, the more it seems they can't prove any damage will be done to the wetlands." McClellen is concerned that "It's up to the cities to take into account our concerns." An independent, impartial data collection firm would be better, thus making the data's accuracy less questionable and less apt to be affected by "political pressure," she adds.

Miskel maintains that the data will be fair and accurate, and that the cities will go out of their way to take into account environmental concerns.

The Boulder-based defense fund has not been pleased with the cities' credibility in the past. This summer, French and Fancy Creeks in Homestake Valley were allowed to run dry despite promises by the cities to restore the streamflows last year. The streams had been diverted to a tunnel leading to Homestake Reservoir as part of the Homestake I Diversion Project. Mitigation of Homestake I damage is required by the Forest Service before construction of Homestake II may begin.

Miskel asserts that the streamflows will be restored by the cities "as soon as we can, economically speaking," which could be one or two years. Also, even if Homestake II is not allowed, Miskel said the cities would correct the Homestake I damage.

There are different interpretations on how wetlands in the wilderness area are replenished with water. McClellen says narrow channels, boulders and beaver dams cause spring runoff to flood the wetlands. The cities contend that the wetlands are flooded by sideslope runoff and precipitation throughout the year.

McClellen says, "We're in a very wet cycle. It's not representative of typical precipitation." Thus, if the cities base the wetland's water requirements on current precipitation averages, the wetlands might be left short of water in a dry year, she says.

McClellen figures it will take 30 small dams crisscrossing the wet-

lands in a stepped fashion to keep the wetlands operating. The dams themselves would diminish the area's wilderness values and could lead to unacceptable damage, she says.

Miskel acknowledges the construction of small dam-like structures might be necessary but he prefers not to call them dams. He terms them "wiers."

"Some people call them dams, but I don't like to use that word. It has bad connotations of big structures," he says. Wiers, he says, would be hardly noticeable, small unobtrusive log and rock structures to raise the water level anywhere from two to 18 inches.

To get to the wetlands, workers would enter through an underground tunnel and haul equipment using llamas and mules. No motorized equipment would be allowed above ground, and no roads would be built to the construction site. The cities claim they will take water from only six acres of the 126,000-acre wilderness area. The defense fund says 240 acres would be drained.

For McClellen, "This is not just a wetlands issue. This would be the first major water diversion project in a wilderness area. We're trying to show that water development is not compatible with wilderness." And the cities, she adds, must realize there is a limit to growth. "They shouldn't expect to expand indefinitely in a semi-arid climate."

Colorado Springs and Aurora, with populations of 215,000 and 158,000 respectively, are rapidly expanding cities, with a combined growth rate of between 6 and 10 percent. Miskel says the area has "lots of amenities" which have caused a massive influx of people. "It just keeps getting better all the time." The people's demand for a high quality of life must be accommodated, he adds.

"If the people think a high quality of life means having bluegrass lawns and shrubs, then they should be able to have it."

Colorado Springs' city council was set to vote September 25 on whether to agree to the Army Corps' terms for the draft permit. Aurora's city council was to vote on October 1.

The cities hope to have the final permit by the end of 1985, construction begun by 1987, and the project operational by 1992.

—Jeff Marti

HOTLINE

Wyoming results

The only damper on primary day in Wyoming for the state's all-Republican congressional delegation was a mild heart attack suffered by the state's sole member of the U.S. House of Representatives, Dick Cheney. Cheney, who plans to be back on the campaign trail by mid-October, ran unopposed in the primary. Senator Alan Simpson received 88 percent of the vote over single-issue tax-reform candidate Stephen Tarver. In the Democratic race for the U.S. House nomination, Laramie attorney Hugh B. McFadden Jr. easily won over Keith Goodenough, a 28-year-old self-employed forester. University of Wyoming Chemistry professor Victor Ryan, in his first run for public office, won the Senate Democratic nomination over Michael Dee, a Cheyenne student and proponent of legalized marijuana, and Al Hamburg, a Torrington signpainter. Wyoming rumor has it that Cheney and Simpson, who have consistently received poor environmental ratings, will be crowned rather than elected next month.

Mitchell wins

Colorado primary



W. Mitchell

Colorado's September 11 primary made the state look a little bit greener, as W. Mitchell won the Democratic designation in the Third Congressional District. That C.D., which covers the conservative Western Slope and the steel town of Pueblo, was expected to vote for Dick Soash, a rancher-legislator from Steamboat Springs who often voted with Republicans in the Colorado Legislature.

Mitchell, who is on the boards of several environmental groups and who is best known for leading the town of Crested Butte against an AMAX mine, won by 2,200 votes out of 50,000. He did it by winning by 3,000 votes in Pueblo while coming close to a draw in Western Colorado and the San Luis Valley.

He will face Republican Mike Strang of Carbondale, who easily defeated his very conservative opponent, Gunnison lawyer Phil Klingsmith. Klingsmith had attacked Strang, who is libertarian on certain issues, for proposing that marijuana be legalized while a state legislator.

In a state-wide Democratic primary, Lieutenant Governor Nancy Dick beat attorney challenger Carlos Lucero for the right to oppose incumbent Republican Senator Bill Armstrong in November.

HOTLINE

Utah bill passes

The House of Representatives passed the Utah Wilderness Bill on September 17, giving the state an additional 750,000 acres of wilderness. President Reagan is expected to sign the bill, which was supported by the Utah delegation. Most of the acreage -- 460,000 acres -- is in the High Uintas. But other significant areas are Pine Valley Mountains, 50,000 acres; Dark Canyon, 45,000 acres; and Mt. Naomi, 44,000 acres. Prior to this bill, Utah had a single 29,000-acre wilderness area. A tabloid titled "At last... WILDERNESS," describing the areas, is available from: The Utah Wilderness Association, 325 Judge Bldg., S.L.C., UT 84111.

Surface mining controls reclaimed



A federal court recently struck down rule changes that weakened surface mining controls. Conservation groups had filed suit after former Secretary of the Interior James Watt rewrote over 90 percent of the surface mining regulations. Under Watt, the Office of Surface Mining turned over all environmental controls of coal mining on federal land to the states. The court said this violated the Surface Mining Coal and Reclamation Act of 1977. The court ruled that before strip mining can take place on public land the Interior Secretary must approve the mining companies' plans to protect the environment. In addition, the Interior Secretary must: regulate mining on private land if it affects public land, regulate the effects of coal-processing plants, protect the environment during experimental mining practices, and require coal companies to replace water supplies damaged by mining activities. The court is still deciding on other rule changes as well.

Agency locks horns with Montana Power

The Public Service Commission's denial of Montana Power Company's \$92 million rate increase may be the least of the utility's problems. For buried in the back of the commission's harsh, accusing 120-page decision is a clear sign that, whatever growth occurs in the future, the PSC may never let MPC sell Colstrip's power to its customers.

Moreover, the decision indicates that the five elected commissioners do not believe Montana Power knows how to run a utility in modern times, and it expresses a determination to manage the company as well as set rates.

In response to these PSC initiatives, company spokesman Bob Amick says, "It is a radical departure from accepted practice." In response to the denial of a rate increase, MPC president Paul Schmechel says the commission was engaging in "radical high risk rate making" that is also "confiscatory."

As a whole, the PSC decision appears to be so far-reaching and uncompromising, at least in tone, that it could lead to a war to the death: either a drastic change in the management and policies of MPC, or the defeat in the courts or in the state legislature of the Public Service Commission by the utility.

The PSC denied the \$92 million rate increase on the grounds that power from Colstrip 3 is not "used and useful" to Montana's consumers. That decision went further than the recommendations of both the Montana Consumer Council and the Northern Plains Resource Council. To reach it, the PSC had to do a number of things, including telling MPC in what month it could schedule its coal-fired plants for maintenance, and that a plant (Bird) should remain in service, a plant which MPC thinks is too old to be reliable.

But the most significant part of the decision may lie in its look to the future. The commission said that even if load growth occurs, it may not let MPC charge consumers for Colstrip 3. It may instead order it to meet the growth from other sources. It wrote:

"It is likely that some additional resources will be needed in the future. Whether such resources will be provided from conservation, firm purchases...or an MPC investor-owned facility (i.e., Colstrip 3 and 4) is not known at this time."

It will be known, the PSC said, when the comparative cost of conservation, new peaking units, surplus power from the Northwest, and other sources are known.



Montana's Colstrip powerplant complex

Montana Power Company

"Accordingly, the commission wishes to have before it at that time the best and most accurate information available."

The PSC ordered Montana Power to provide that information. "The commission does expect MPC to perform an appropriate life-cycle analysis comparing these alternatives (conservation, Colstrip 3, et al) when and if rate treatment is sought for additional resources in the future."

The commission made it clear that it believes the utility ignores or rejects cheaper sources of power in order to make Colstrip 3, with its 6 to 8 cents per kilowatt-hour power, look good. For example, it concluded, "A large energy resource, cost competitive with conventional energy resources, is available from conservation. The commission expects cost comparisons to be done by MPC prior to future procurement of energy from any source. Testimony will be invited in future rate cases to test the exhaustiveness of the utilities' internal comparative analysis."

The commission also criticized MPC for having rejected a contract with the Hanford nuclear plant in Washington for 50 megawatts of power at about 2 cents a kilowatt-hour. The power is no longer available to MPC, but the commission calculated MPC's rates as if it had purchased the power. That means MPC's shareholders may have to pay the difference between the 2 cent power it could have

bought out of Hanford and the 6 to 8 cent power it will generate at Colstrip.

The decision shows an eagerness to mix it up with MPC. It portrays MPC as a utility which had constructed a bed of nails for itself. For example, the decision says that the way in which the utility went about building Colstrip 1 and 2 angered Montana enough to lead to the passage of the Siting Act. That act, the PSC said, is for consumer and environmental protection. It is not a "revenue guarantee statute for the regulated businesses."

Nor did the commission buy MPC's argument that all problems were caused by the unpredictable closing of Anaconda's copper mine at Butte, with the loss of 210 megawatts of demand. It approvingly quoted a witness who said the loss of Anaconda "was not entirely unpredictable." The witness said industrial loads had been volatile in the 1950s and early 1960s, and that volatility could have been expected in the 1980s.

Unlike industrial power use, residential use stays steady; the witness implied that homeowners were subsidizing industry by paying higher rates year in and year out while industry shuttled on and off the system. The PSC, in its decision, instructed MPC to include such risk factors in its next rate case, which means that rates to industrial customers could rise.

--Ed Marston

The Park Service may be down to its last grizzlies

A story in the September 12 *Jackson Hole News* indicates that the National Park Service may be running out of ways to deal with the grizzly bear - man conflict. A graph published by the paper shows that officials, poachers, and natural causes have removed at least 266 bears from the area over the past 20 years, leaving perhaps 200 in the Yellowstone ecosystem today.

That low population, caused in part by the surge of deaths and removals following the closing of garbage dumps to bears in 1970 and 1971, coincides with a very bad year in man-bear relations in Yellowstone, including one death and a series of attacks. But the population numbers

indicate that widespread removals are not possible today. And the politics indicate that long-term closure of large parts of the park to hikers or the removal of people from grizzly habitat such as Fishing Bridge is also impossible.

One official familiar with the backcountry believes the problem is getting worse because of a change in how grizzlies perceive people. Joel Scrafford, a Fish and Wildlife Service agent in Montana, said the people attacked by bears in the last several years were following the rules -- they had secured their food properly, they faced their tent properly, they hadn't buried garbage, and so on.

"They're camping out like we

(experienced backcountry people) do all the time. Some of us have lost our macho ideas. We're vulnerable," he told the *News*.

He said the situation has worsened as the bear has become more accustomed to man. "We're creating an animal that has no fear. Banging pots and pans doesn't work anymore. We all recognize the problem, but there's no solution."

At least no solution consistent with their protected status. Where the grizzly is hunted, he said, "You don't see bears wandering into camps. They see humans and they run for cover. We're protecting an animal that doesn't want to be protected. They're not lovable animals." Scrafford is

arguing that the bear has to be hunted so it can survive. But there may not be enough animals to do that in the Yellowstone area, even if it were politically possible.

Frank Craighead, a critic of Park Service policy, says dependable data is not available. He says the Park Service research isn't enough. "You need another viewpoint on the problem."

Given the lack of any data that everyone can accept, it is hard to arrive at consensus on the grizzlies' status. Wyoming Senator Alan Simpson, for example, believes the Yellowstone bear population continues to decline. But Senator Malcolm Wallop says there may be as many grizzlies as the habitat can support.

Ranchers may win the Colstrip fight yet

Back in 1976, a group of Montana Great Plains ranchers, organized as the Northern Plains Resource Council, lost a bitter fight over the siting of two large power plants at Colstrip. Now, with the first plant finished and the second two years from completion, it is not clear who really won that struggle eight years ago.

NPRC, which at the time was led by rancher Wally McRae, suffered its defeat at the hands of the Montana Board of Natural Resources. That citizen group disregarded the staff of the Department of Natural Resources and the state Public Service Commission, and voted 4-3 to permit construction of the two 700-megawatt plants by Montana Power Company and four out-of-state utilities. MPC owns 30 percent, or 210 megawatts, of each plant.

In 1979, the utilities started construction; in 1983, with Colstrip 3 essentially complete, MPC asked the Public Service Commission for a \$96.4 million rate hike to meet general cost increases and to pay for its share of Colstrip 3.

All through spring 1984, the commission held hearings on the request, including 26 satellite hearings throughout the state. The issue attracted great attention because the \$96.4 million would raise rates 56 percent, with expectations that rates would double in 1986 when Colstrip 4 came on line.

In August, the commission issued its decision: instead of \$96.4 million, it granted a tiny \$4 million increase. It ruled that the firm had built a plant Montana consumers do not need. So the consumers have no obligation to pay for it.

The decision could force MPC shareholders to cut dividends so the firm can pay the interest charges on Colstrip 3 and, by extension, on Colstrip 4 starting in 1986.

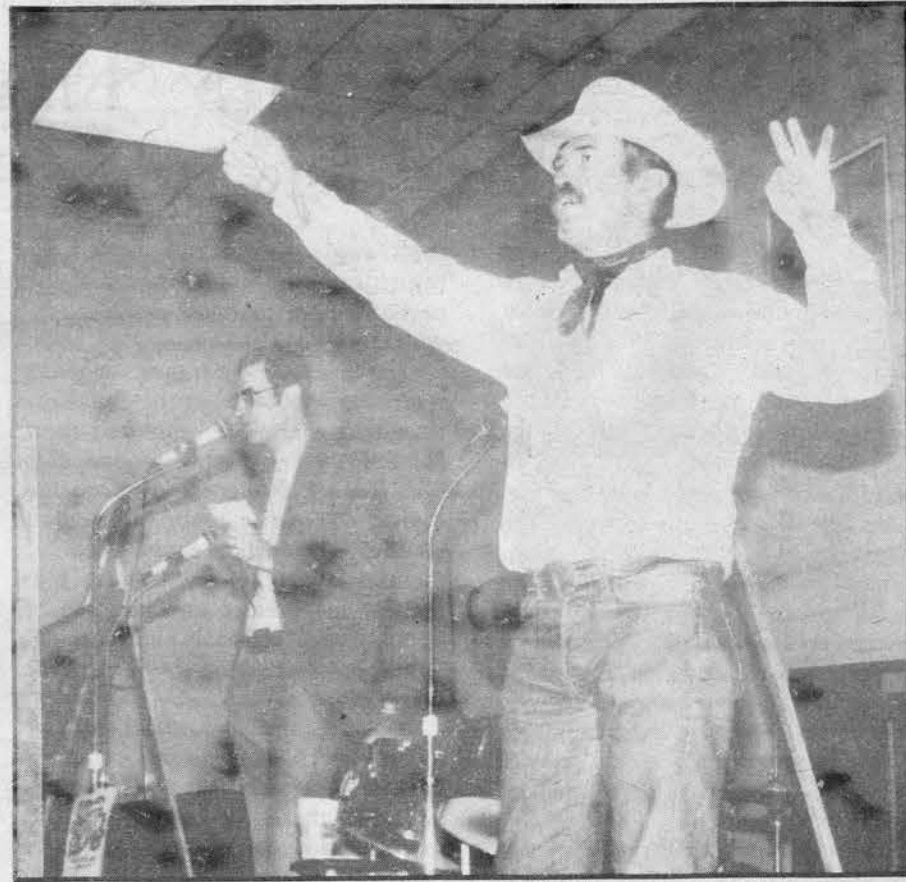
The decision led to a shootout between a populist Western state and the money people on Wall Street. In the wake of the decision, Moody's downgraded MPC's bonds and commercial paper to where they are considered to have speculative aspects. Wall Street analysts also gave the Montana PSC a basement rating of one on a scale of one to five.

Wall Street also predicted the decision would cost consumers money. They said MPC would have to pay higher rates to borrow money. According to them, higher interest and general uncertainty would raise rates even higher than the doubling once expected from Colstrip 3 and 4.

The analysts were cautiously echoed by Governor Ted Schwinden (D). He wondered if short-term savings to Montana businesses and consumers might not be cancelled out by loss of new energy intensive firms, frightened away from Montana by doubts about the state's ability to keep the lights on.

The power company itself has hurled charges of "confiscation" against the PSC and gone to the Montana Supreme Court for relief. It argues that the PSC has no authority to decide if Colstrip 3 is needed. That decision, it says, was made in 1976 by the Natural Resources Board.

Although MPC emphasizes this technical point, it also argues that Colstrip 3 was a wise investment; that despite a decline in load growth rates over the past five years, the plant is needed now and will be needed in the future. In the meantime, it speaks of selling its 210 Colstrip 3 megawatts to out-of-state utilities, raising the threat



Wally McRae

that Montana will not have power later in the decade. MPC also cites its present rates (about 4 cents a kilowatt-hour), which are well below the national average. It implies that Montanans should not balk at 6 cents a kilowatt-hour to insure a stable future source of electricity.

MPC's position is based on traditional utility philosophy: that utilities must stay ahead of consumer demand by building new plants to meet inevitable growth. To MPC, the only thing that threw off its plans was the closing of Anaconda's copper mine at Butte, with the loss of 3,000 jobs and 212 megawatts out of a total load of about 1,200 megawatts. Even so, the firm says, growth has continued, and will continue.

But opponents, including the NPRC and the Montana Environmental Information Center, see the utility attempting to charge consumers for its blunder. NPRC's McRae, testifying before the PSC this spring, said opponents in 1976 predicted electric load growth would be half of what MPC expected. They also predicted back then that "the thousands of megawatts of electricity scheduled to come on line in the late 1970s and early 1980s in the Pacific Northwest would produce a significant glut of power in the region," McRae told the PSC.

Jim Lazar, an NPRC consultant from Olympia, Washington, further developed the regional picture. He said that by 1979, coincident with

MPC starting the plant, studies showed that the Northwest utilities had overstated demand by 3,300 megawatts. Since power plant construction in the Northwest was based on those forecasts, it meant surplus power would be available in the 1980s at distress prices.

Nevertheless, he said, MPC went ahead with Colstrip 3 and 4. As a result, he charged, MPC is now selling power at distress rates, luring new industries such as a Stauffer Chemical plant away from its former utility by offering low rates.

Lazar also said that MPC has enormous amounts of power available in its power lines. According to him, MPC's transmission losses are over 13 percent and its distribution losses 20 percent. Cutting losses to the regional average of 5 to 10 percent, he said, would give MPC an extra 80 megawatts. But such improvements, he told the PSC, were unlikely. "The company, in a surplus situation, has little incentive to minimize losses."

An MPC spokesman differed with Lazar. He said Stauffer had chosen to come on the MPC system, and pay the same rates as other industrial customers, because it expected Colstrip 3 and 4 to keep MPC's rates relatively low over the long run. And, he said, high power losses are almost inevitable when serving an enormous sparsely-populated state like Montana.

--Ed Marston

Utility 'death spiral' hits Montana

At present, all attention is focused on the Supreme Court, where the ultimate rate decision lies. But the testimony before the PSC indicates that whatever happens there, MPC will be reluctant to build new power plants.

If the Supreme Court sides with the PSC, its shareholders will think many times before investing in power plants. And if it does get the rate increase, there may be markedly less need for electricity.

Testimony at the hearings indicated that the 56 percent hike would lead to a drop in use of 22 percent, making Colstrip 4's power even less needed. Moreover, MPC would experience yet

another drop in demand when the cost of Colstrip 4 and the effects of the earlier decreased use led to the next rate jump.

This is the "death spiral" critics of traditional utility philosophy emphasized a few years ago, when large rate increases were hitting the nation. Montana is in something of a time warp -- it is only now confronting economic forces which earlier hit other states. And MPC is responding the way those other utilities did. In the wake of the PSC decision, it announced that it will not proceed with the 350-megawatt Salem plant proposed for the Bozeman area, or with several hydroelectric projects.

HOTLINE

Coalition wins

The Arizona Wilderness bill that was signed into law by President Reagan on August 28 included the Arizona strip legislation proposed to Congress by an unusual coalition of environmentalists, cattle growers and industry representatives (HCN, 4/2/84). Joan Bedrosian of the Bureau of Land Management in Washington, D.C. said the lands included in the bill north of Grand Canyon were essentially the same as those supported by the coalition. Besides the 394,000 acres of BLM and Forest Service land in the Arizona Strip part of the wilderness bill, the bill also created the 6670-acre Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness Area on BLM lands near Tucson, and 649,000 acres of other wilderness areas on Forest Service lands throughout the state. Congress had passed Arizona's wilderness bill without a single dissenting vote.

Pipeline cancelled

Shell Pipeline Corporation has cancelled its proposed Valle Grande pipeline from Cortez to Rangely, Colorado. The pipeline would have moved carbon dioxide from Shell's McElmo Dome CO2 field in the southwestern corner of the state 227 miles north to a Rangely oil field. Shell's announcement ends the BLM's work on an Environmental Impact Statement for the project, which would have crossed 140 miles of scattered public lands. Lack of a market in the Rangely area caused Shell to back out, says Cindy McKee of the Grand Junction, Colorado Bureau of Land Management office. Exxon, however, is planning a pipeline to deliver CO2 to the Rangely area from its planned Shute Creek processing plant near the Riley Ridge gas fields of southwestern Wyoming. CO2 is used to enhance oil recovery.

Mondale endorsed



The Sierra Club has endorsed Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro for president and vice-president. In a letter to readers in the September/October *Sierra* magazine, the club's Board of Directors praised Mondale as a strong supporter of the environment. The League of Conservation Voters, they pointed out, has given him an 80 percent pro-environmental record. In sharp contrast, President Reagan's first-term actions contained a "blatant... record of opposition to the environmental interests of the people of the United States." As well as urging its 350,000 members and others to vote for the Democratic ticket, the club is also producing a brochure comparing Reagan and Mondale on environmental issues. The presidential endorsement is the first in the club's 92-year history.

John Barlow rides his 'life poem'

by Tom Wolf

They say Wyoming exhibits no *noblesse oblige*. No noblesse -- no nobility, no art and no culture worthy of the name. No *oblige* -- no sense of duty towards the land.

They say only a benign federal government and a watchful Sierra Club keep the conservative Wyoming ranchers from finishing the job their parents started: overgrazing and stripmining, scraping and raping a harsh land, giving it back what it dishes out.

Against these skeptics stands one of the roughs they fear: John Perry Barlow. Hands on hips, wearing a silk scarf and silver cowboy hat, he is full-bearded and defiant. A Republican rancher from Sublette County, which is possibly Wyoming's most conservative stomping ground, Barlow defends Wyoming's cultural and biological diversity and its *noblesse oblige* by living it.

Trivial pursuits: How many former members of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) do you know? How many of them come from Mormon, Republican families? And, if you are still in the game, how many of those oppose the MX in Wyoming, head up a state environmental group, write lyrics for the Grateful Dead, maintain friendships with the state's major Republican politicians, raise a family, and run a thousand head of cattle on an ancestral ranch?

What forces created the seeming contradiction that is John Perry Barlow? In part, it was the Wyoming ranch and his baronial father and grandfather, who, when they weren't accumulating land and cattle, played prominent roles in Wyoming politics. They were active in the state legislature and in interstate bodies like the Colorado River Company Commission which divided the waters between the upper and lower basin states and made possible Glen Canyon Dam.

But Barlow also comes out of the East. True to their kind everywhere, the Wyoming aristocrats send their sons and daughters East to school. Mounted on a motorcycle, Barlow rode right through the Ivy League during the troubled times of the late Sixties: studying the literature of the Beats, especially Kerouac's *On the Road*, trying his hand at acting, giving roadshow readings of his poetry on the literary circuit, heading up the student government at Wesleyan, and storming Washington during the Days of Rage over the bombing of Cambodia.

Barlow looks back and calls it now "The Life Poem." In its Continental phase, the Life Poem sent the motorcycle rolling through the London School of Economics, the University of Paris, and finally deep into the heart of communist Eastern Europe, where his *heaven-on-earth* ended abruptly, out of gas, reached the end of the road. If you saw the movie "Reds" you will understand. Barlow arrived in Czechoslovakia the same day the Russians invaded.

From that deadend, the road led West. Against the ominous "You Can't Go Home Again" message of his literary training, Barlow pointed

the Life Poem toward the Wind River Range. He arrived back home about 15 years ago to find that life had gone on while he was being the Prodigal Son. His parents had grown old, his father was dying, and the Bar Cross Ranch was bleeding to death, a mortgage plunged in its heart straight to the hilt.

So Barlow stopped playing at life, as he tells it, and went to work. The reluctant draftee -- called "communist" by his neighbors during the Vietnam era when he refused to fight for fatherland and honor -- became a warrior of a different sort. He turned his cunning and imagination not just to making the ranch survive, but also to developing values he felt worthy of the land, worthy of his vision of Wyoming.

The rescuing of the mortally wounded Bar Cross was immense, but in a way almost trivial compared to the task of reconciling his triple culture: landed, Republican values, 1960s radicalism, and environmentalism. At the heart of the amalgamation -- what makes Barlow more interesting than others who shared his Sixties trip -- is the ranch, double and triple mortgaged though it may be.

The Bar Cross is outside of Pinedale, near the head of the New Fork River about halfway between industrial Rock Springs and touristy, trendy Jackson. A few miles above the ranch stands the major monument, aside from the mortgages, left to him by earlier generations. It is the New Fork Dam built by Barlow's grandfather, the northernmost impoundment on the Colorado River system. The dam puts his territorial water rights to work, irrigating hayfields that feed 1,000 head of Bar Cross cattle through the nation's coldest winters.

From the livingroom of the ranch house, a spectacular picture window frames knife-sharp views of hayfields heavy with sandhill cranes and their young, and on up to the Wind River Range, home of the Jim Bridger Wilderness, where controversies rage over acid rain, logging, mineral development and cattle grazing. The usual saying is that you can't understand a man unless you walk in his shoes. But in Barlow's case, it may be more accurate to say you can't understand the man unless you look out of his window and see the mix of agricultural productivity, beauty, and wildness.

The cattle ranch and its surroundings are compelling year around. But in human terms, the Bar Cross is most interesting now, during haying season. From the four corners of the earth the crew comes, flotsam and jetsam, drawn not by the hard work and low pay, but by Barlow, who runs the operation with the sureness of a born performer, a fisher of men, a proponent of style.

Talking through the night, working the long days on antiquated equipment held together, like most of the ranch, by baling wire and imagination, you join the show alongside bewildered young Kennedys, the odd member of the Grateful Dead, their groupies, old Hippies, older Beatniks, Trappist monks, Buddhist monks, foreigners, and the inevitable old friends gathering under

the aegis of hard work and highmindedness, taking a break perhaps from too close a friendship with drugs and alcohol.

More people have quit drinking, temporarily at least, at the Bar Cross than have started or continued there. Himself broken of his fondness for Wild Turkey, Father Barlow preaches, saying "It's nice to be able to do simple arithmetic again, not to mention the relief my friends must feel in my greater unwillingness to detail their personal shortcomings. Sober, my visions are less grand, but that's okay by me."

But the ranch and its denizens are not a self-contained world. Barlow's part of Wyoming is sparsely settled, and that makes neighboring all the more precious. Barlow has not let his Sixties and environmental ethics separate him and his family from the community. He is part of the Sublette County Historical Society, he played lead in Pinedale's annual Green River Rendezvous, he stars in local dramatic productions and even in a few Hollywood movies, like "Endangered Species," where his Mormon good looks do him no harm: blonde hair, blue eyes, full beard, total conviction in the service of total uncertainty.

The point of the public involvement, he says, goes beyond neighboring to a desire "to make your life publicly observable, a performance."

This need to perform, and his skill at it, is what makes Barlow striking whether he is writing lyrics for the Dead or railing on television against acid rain. Always clad in a leather vest, silk scarf, silver hat, and wickedly pointed cowboy boots, he reminds you of Buffalo Bill, younger but still part of a Wild West Show, never failing to grab all the attention in the room, especially when pungently and scornfully attacking subjects like the MX (against), environmental elitists (against), coal slurry pipelines (for), peaceful uses of atomic energy (for), special management areas in the Wyoming Wilderness Bill (for), or acid rain in the Wind River Range (violently against).

Barlow's environmentalism is not orthodox; it is leavened both by his Sixties' Zen consciousness and by his landed upbringing. But despite the gauntlets he drops or hurls toward conventional environmentalism, and toward conventional Wyoming anti-environmentalism, it is not clear that he can achieve the integration he seeks through political action.

One test of that integration was his election this spring as new Board President of the Wyoming Outdoor Council, a position thoroughly suited to his taste for seeming contradictions. Traditionally, WOC has been dominated by female liberal Democrats in a conservative Republican state. "That gave environmentalism a bad name," says Barlow. "We should not be partisan."

Barlow's job, as he sees it, is to steer WOC on a road that will serve a Wyoming agenda while protecting Wyoming environmental values. One of his changes is in style. "We negotiate. We don't confront, and we don't sensationalize. We act like we

have a stake here, like we are here to stay. And we are. We just don't have any money. It's harder to raise money when you are trying to be reasonable, when you admit you lack perfect certitude. Politics in Wyoming may be theater, but theatricality makes for ineffective politics."

After you deal with the man's style, Barlow's lack of certitude is most striking. An admission of uncertainty, he says, places "you at odds with the Pentagon and with the higher reaches of the Sierra Club, both of which know where certain evil lurks."

More to the point for WOC, uncertainty places Barlow and his group at odds with environmentalists like Andy Wiessner, staffer for Congressman John Seiberling, the Ohio Democrat who is a key figure in wilderness legislation. Wiessner is praised and damned in Wyoming for holding up the Wyoming Wilderness Bill and putting the kabosh on Barlow's pet plan, the designation of resource conservation areas, land that is protected but which allows some Forest Service management for special uses.

"We want the old Forest Service of wise use, so we are Bull Moose pragmatists like Gifford Pinchot and Theodore Roosevelt," says Barlow. "We want the Forest Service out of its cubicles and back in the woods on horseback."

Bull Moose Barlow and a few Republican friends like Wyoming Congressman Dick Cheney and Senator Al Simpson rage against Wiessner and his colleagues in the national environmental groups. Barlow's true-blue Wyomingites feel that anyone sitting in Washington, D.C., far from the real action in Wyoming, arbitrarily puts public lands aside for play -- not for work, not for use and not for production.

According to Barlow, people like Wiessner have given up on a future where nature and work harmonize. They "work" in one remote, concrete-lined place, a so-called "center of power." They want to play in another place, a green one, Barlow's own center, the Wind River Range.

Barlow sees such folk as apocalyptic pessimists, cerebral aesthetes who feel that the world of work pollutes the forest. Certain of their convictions and righteousness, they are intolerant of the middle ground Barlow and friends are proposing. "The Bull Moose don't want forest management by legislation," says Barlow, "but we do want to include constituents like snowmobilers and small-scale loggers. These types seem to offend the aesthetics and sense of class of the Washington-based environmentalists."

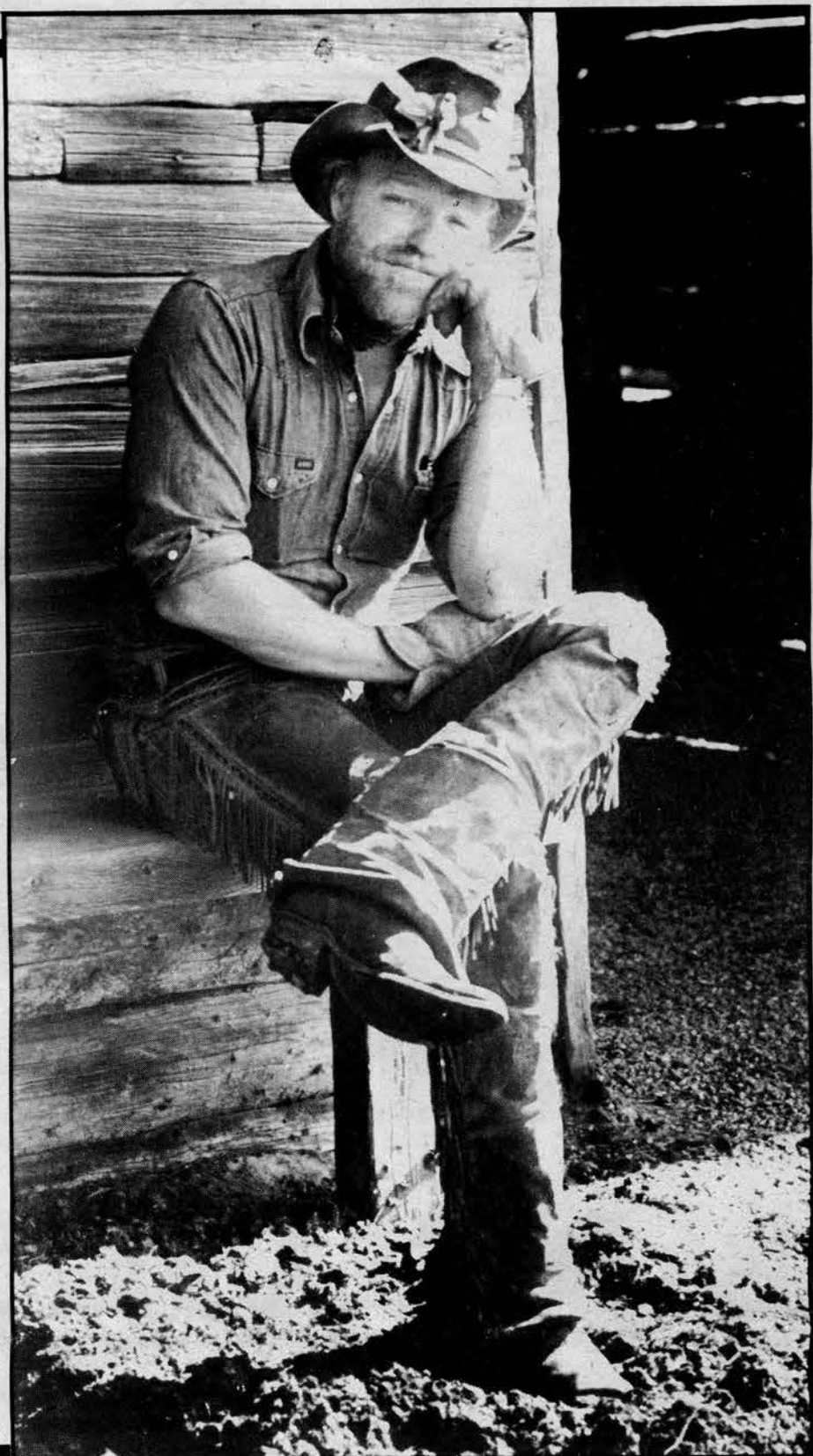
To Barlow, the pattern that fits their compartmentalized lives is at odds with his integrated life. Their playground is his Forest Service grazing allotment. They fish and float on his irrigation water behind the New Fork Dam. Their black and white, good and evil division of the public lands, their precision and certainty, run against Barlow's sense of an uncertain life made up of shadings.

But Barlow at times has his own sense of certitude, especially when

through Wyoming

A High Country News
profile,
the second in a series

John Barlow



talking of the future. He believes that the choice now for the public lands is either industrial tourism (in the style of the National Parks), or a ranching economy that alters the land less than hordes of backpackers and Winnebagos but that is still compatible with the many other uses of public lands.

Of course, there are other interpretations, as Barlow's own penchant for asking questions would affirm. One is that Barlow is simply the most sophisticated and farseeing member of a dying, landed aristocracy -- an aristocracy based on a land use that is no longer economic.

In the face of America's declining taste for beef and other tangible products of the West, and its expanding taste to personally experience the mountains and grasslands, there is no place for the life Barlow's grandfather and father built. No longer can a few people with relatively small private landholdings and a few thousand cattle reign over the vast public lands of the West. And from that it follows that Barlow's quest for a merger of his ancestral way of life with the dominant forces of the 1980s is bound to fail.

If numbers and economics alone determine the struggle, Barlow and his fellow ranchers will lose. But the ranchers' voices, and votes, are often amplified. Ranchers, aided by the mass media, have marketed sentimentality about disappearing lifestyles far better than they have marketed beef. But that hype, in the case of ranchers like Barlow, reflects a truth: that some ranchers possess a genuine sense of connectedness with the land, a shield against the bad case

of Twentieth Century blues and loneliness that afflicts our urban culture.

You would believe this if you talked to the Bar Cross haying crews. Even though everyone lives somewhere, they will tell you, not everyone feels connected there. Not everyone lives and hopes to die in the house of his birth.

And today, in what may be the final playing out of a tragic Life Poem, Barlow is about to join mobile, uprooted America. He has been forced to reduce the Bar Cross to a commodity -- to set aside its spiritual and cultural values and put it on the market for its cash value.

As a result, a very different, very unhip but very unselfdoubting world is these days invading the ranch. Cavalcades of Texan investors, busloads of bulky, awkward gawkers searching for tax shelters parade through Elaine Barlow's house, drool over Melody, the tough and beautiful forewoman, snicker at the quaintness of it all, and guffaw at the odd assortment of critters still hanging on.

"If they want to lose money," Barlow says, "this is the place." But he knows it is not the ranch they are after. It is the water, the territorial water rights, the last of the legacy, the only ranching asset convertible into the industrial currency valued downstream in Rock Springs, worth almost anything worlds away in southern California.

Although Barlow has staved off this disaster for some 15 years, it is now upon him, like the final curse

upon the head of Job. He is not alone. Throughout the West, ranchers are biting the dust in droves. So this Job has plenty of company in his afflictions. And like his fellow sufferers, his only hope is to sell before foreclosure. Then he comes away a prince. Otherwise, a pauper.

Now the question becomes one of general cultural and social interest. Can a sense of values like Barlow's, values drawn from the land, sustain itself when it loses the landed connection? Can it survive the sale of the ranch? Most historical experience says no. The move from country to the city is almost always fatal to the old sense of values.

In this case, of course, some of "his" land will survive the sale or foreclosure and remain public. But can a once propertied rancher relate to "public" lands when they no longer contain his range allotment? Can you trade in those pointy-toed leather boots with the strange stitchery for Nike backpack boots? Can Barlow as a "normal" person, shorn of his property, find his way with the Wyoming Outdoor Council through Wyoming politics?

More prosaically, what do "retired" ranchers like John and Elaine Barlow do for a living? They say they still don't know. This summer, their creditors moved in closer for the kill, but delayed the death stroke.

"It's like being Brazil," says Barlow. "We owe them so much money it is hard to tell who owns whom. We can buy a little time by selling off bits and pieces, but eventually we expect the sheriff with

the foreclosure papers. Meantime, we've got hay to put up."

"Meantime," adds Elaine, "we have our two-year-old daughter Leah to look after and another baby due this fall right at the end of haying. Kids change things. They make you stop and think, don't they?" Like many ex-radicals, the Barlows are finding hope in their own children rather than in a generation of younger brothers and sisters who seem more interested in managing stock portfolios than livestock.

If anyone has all the tools to make a difference in Wyoming environmental politics, it is probably Bull Moose Barlow. Yet his friends and enemies ask the same questions about his future: Does Barlow have substance as well as style? Will Wyomingites believe him if he says that style is substance? Will they listen to someone who belongs to so many different worlds? Is Wyoming ready for the world according to John Perry Barlow?

If the Barlows hit the road, they will, predictably, go in style. The newest and most servicable vehicle at the Bar Cross, not counting a team of Clydesdales that draws the haying sled in winter, is a 1969 Cadillac dubbed the White Whale, in deference to the leviathan which appears at the end of the Book of Job and again in *Moby Dick*. A bumper sticker on the White Whale says it all, the credo of American Zen, Barlow-style:

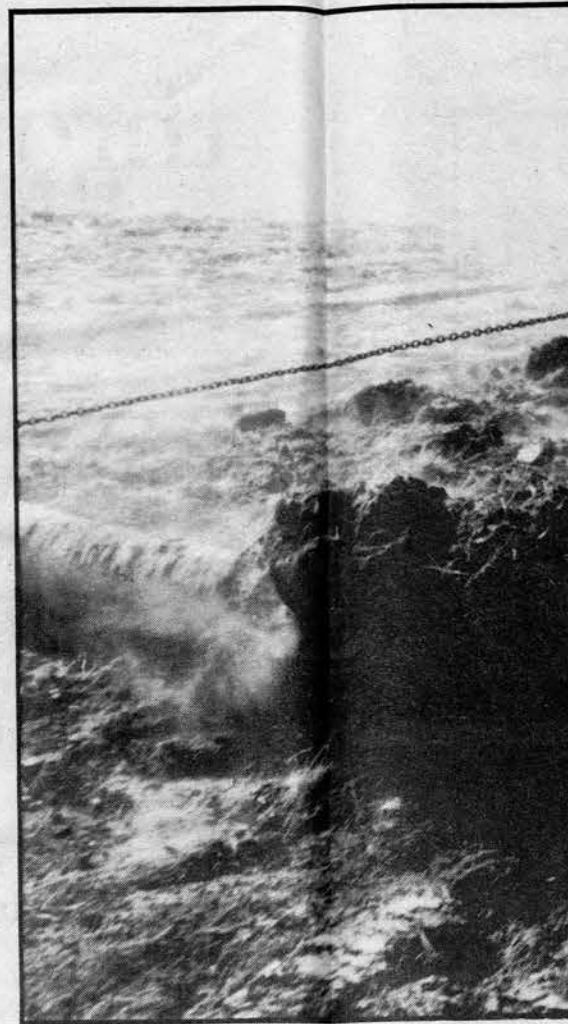
"It's still not weird enough for me."

Tom Wolf is a freelance writer who lives in Fort Collins, Colorado.



SODBUSTING MONTANA

Sodbusting photos from John Greytak's land, Montana



“If they'd never torn a damn acre of ground up in this country, they'd be better off,” said Andy Sharkey. “This is stock country -- ain't no farming country.”

Sharkey, 73, was commenting on the land around Winnett on the Montana plains last fall after they had laid to rest his neighbor, Wayne Bratten, who died at 71. Earlier that year, Bratten had sold the 30,000-acre cattle ranch he had built up from the family homestead. For years he had maintained the ranch as green pasture and rangeland. Suddenly, in late spring 1983, most of its 50 square miles were plowed and seeded to winter wheat.

Bratten hadn't sold the ranch to sodbusters. But the young cattlemen who bought the ranch couldn't cut it, as so many cattlemen can't cut it today. So it ended up in the hands of First Continental Corporation -- the business handle of Billings grain dealer John Greytak, the state's biggest sodbuster.

The business logic behind sodbusting is impeccable. Grass turned over doubles or triples in assessed valuation, as the acres are transformed -- at least on paper -- from grazing for cattle to farms producing grain. Back in 1916, artist Charles M. Russell, watching a similar transformation, observed: “It's all grass-side down now. The boosters say it's a better place, but it looks like hell to me.”

Sodbusting is an emotionally charged issue these days on the Northern Plains, and some of that emotion is finding its way into legislation in the High Plains states. Among the first to act were the Weld County, Colorado, commissioners, who passed an anti-sodbusting ordinance in 1982.

In November 1983, voters in Petroleum County, Montana -- the scene of the plowouts at Bratten's old ranch and 20,000 acres at another -- passed a similar conservation ordinance. It prohibits breaking more than 200 acres of grassland in one year without filing a plan with the



story by

Patrick Dawson

photos by

Terrence C. Moore

conservation district. It also outlaws the plowing of certain thin topsoils.

On July 1 of this year, another conservation measure went into effect in South Dakota, but Greytak had already finished plowing up 10,000 acres there in Stanley County.

The efforts to control sodbusting have gone beyond the local level. U.S. Senator William Armstrong's (R-CO) sodbusting bill would withhold federal credit and crop payments from farmers who plow up fragile, erodible soils.

Given the scattered local efforts and the thus far unsuccessful national effort to control plowdowns, traditional family farmers and ranchers can only watch as fleets of huge four-wheel-drive tractors work around the clock, ripping out sections of sagebrush and native grasses, turning up the dirt, and scattering the grouse and antelope to search for new habitat.

Reaction to the control efforts differs. Some call it interference with private property rights. Some say it's not strong enough. And some say it's too late, that the damage has been done.

Meanwhile, the plowing goes on in counties which are still wide open. It goes on because of the money. Big money, if everything goes right. Or even if it doesn't. A large operator can't go wrong. The profits in land values and production are there if the crops flourish. The crop insurance and government subsidies (Payment In Kind - PIK) are there if crops fail or are held out. As gravy, there are the tax shelters.

The armadas of tractors dragging chisel plows through fragile grasslands are mobilized in the service of distant investors, including insurance companies. The investors come together in syndicates organized by men like Greytak to take advantage of the mix of crop subsidies and tax shelters.

The situation would be less emotional if the effects of the sodbusting stopped at fence lines. But they don't. Longtime rural residents who find that sodbusters are now their

neighbors are saddled with new concerns. The population, already small in the High Plains communities, is likely to drop because sodbusters are often absentee landowners who sometimes absorb several family operations at once.

Financially, sodbusting may give the area some tax relief; it usually raises a county's tax base thanks to the higher valued acreage turned over by the sodbusters. But many locals worry about the longer term -- what happens when the fragile, plowed soil runs out of staying power and starts blowing? Another worry is that plowed waterways and unseasonal runoff from plowed slopes will damage neighboring fields and water supplies with silt.

Over that hangs the fear of severe drought followed by a Big Blow -- when plowed fields dry up, turn to dust, and Montana -- as in the Dirty Thirties -- sees its topsoil blown to Chicago.

There are small operators who plow up grass for the immediate financial reward or to boost land value so they can offer more collateral to the banker and stay in business another year. But most of the problem seems to be with operators who can plow up 25,000 acres of grassland in a few weeks. People like John Greytak, who says he will continue breaking new

ground as long as there's money in it.

If Armstrong's bill passes, it should slow big plowouts. But a lot of land has already been plowed, and it won't take long to plow a lot more before a bill becomes law, or tax codes are overhauled.

A few months before he died, big Wayne Bratten looked out from the town of Winnett toward the bare, tan, plowed hills that once were his ranch and said: "Forty years of good conservation plowed up in two weeks. It makes me heartsick."

Patrick Dawson is a native Montanan and veteran journalist who is now a freelance writer based in Billings.



Parks...

[Continued from page 1]

aided by the Park Service, which "typically opposed appropriations for recreation programs in the National Forest." So, she wrote, the forests went their resource development way and the parks went their preservation-recreation-people way.

PEOPLE AND PARKS

Today, of course, everyone is aware that preservation, recreation and people are more easily hyphenated on paper than merged in the parks. And the most discussed topic was the resolution of those conflicts. Speakers talked about four major threats to parks.

Outside threats. Threats from off-site activities were chronicled most thoroughly by journalist Robert Cahn and Destry Jarvis of the National Parks and Conservation Association. Jarvis described proposed geothermal drilling near Yellowstone and other parks; mining near many parks and in some; water diversions around the Everglades, which was called the most threatened national park; a proposed nuclear waste dump adjacent to Canyonlands; air pollution and acid rain in parks; housing and resort development on their perimeters.

Jarvis' view was the gloomiest at the conference. Unless Americans join to vigorously combat these resource and political threats, he believes the park system will be largely lost in his lifetime.

Political threats. The threats from without and within are based on politics. Both Jarvis and Cahn called the Reagan administration a major threat to the parks. NPS Director Russell Dickenson told the conference that park units were in excellent shape, with morale and professionalism never higher. But Cahn and Jarvis disagreed, charging that "politicization," beginning with Nixon, has culminated with Reagan.

They said morale has never been lower, park outreach to surrounding communities is now 'verboden' and park interpretation is in a shambles. Cahn sharply criticized the low state of resource protection and said there are less than 100 professional resource managers in the 335 park units. Yellowstone, he said, has recently "gotten millions to fix its plumbing" and such but "only pennies to research and manage the resources."

People use. Many of the conference participants described the on-site impacts arising from use -- overcrowding in both front and backcountry, user conflicts, crime, poaching and collecting.

Cultural invasion. Some perceived a final threat underlying the other three -- a social threat posed by modern life. Runtz, the historian and seasonal ranger at Yosemite, said Americans must change their lifestyle so that parks can be protected as well as used. He decried the entry of an outside ethic into the parks, exemplified for him by cars and TVs blaring in trailers parked in Yosemite Valley.

Indian historian Vine Deloria put our materialistic bent this way: "Will there ever be enough? Are we ever going to be satisfied?"

Berkeley's Sally Fairfax attacked these ideas, finding in them the expression of what she saw as a false dichotomy between sacred lands -- the parklands -- and the profane lands where everyone lives and the culture exists. Parks are for people, she said, and for the culture belonging to those people.

Grizzly bears will not adapt to man

Much of what we heard at the parks conference became real Saturday night when Doug Peacock showed film he had taken of grizzly bears. The film came from the later years of a 10-year-period Peacock spent living as close as possible to grizzlies in the Glacier and Yellowstone regions. Only when the grizzlies went into hibernation did Peacock leave for winter timeouts in Arizona.

The film showed bears playing and browsing, mothers with cubs, young and old males. It wasn't remote, hit-and-run film. Peacock almost lived among the bears, and his film shows grizzlies sensing and interacting with him, responding to his curiosity and invasion of their turf with curiosity of their own, or with threat or flight.

The intimate film was matched by Peacock's talk -- he spoke with personal authority and passion. Grizzlies, he told us, are "co-dominant" with people. They don't like our presence and will not accept attempts to manage them. He believes they will either survive on their own terms, or they won't survive.

Peacock suspects all attempts to manage grizzlies, and he is caustic and enlightening about grizzly bear politics. He experienced the politics and management first hand. Because he is not a biologist, his presence in bear country was opposed by the land management agencies. He handled it in an un-grizzly like way: while in bear country, he hid from the managers.

Mixed amidst the fascinating history, biology and personal experiences he related of grizzlies, Peacock put a question: Is the land where grizzlies live -- most of it park or "reserved" land -- for bears or

In his article in the conference tabloid, historian William E. Brown saw the parks differently. "Parks and other preserved lands in the West are reliquaries where the old myths find sanctuary. They are the places left to us for escape from a progressively deteriorating and almost wholly urban daily life environment."

He saw parks not as retreats for elitists, but as places for a shared human heritage: "They are the last links with the world before. They are spiritual havens. These parklands, in all their diversity of types and sizes, keep alive the kinds of human experience that once occupied all of human experience."

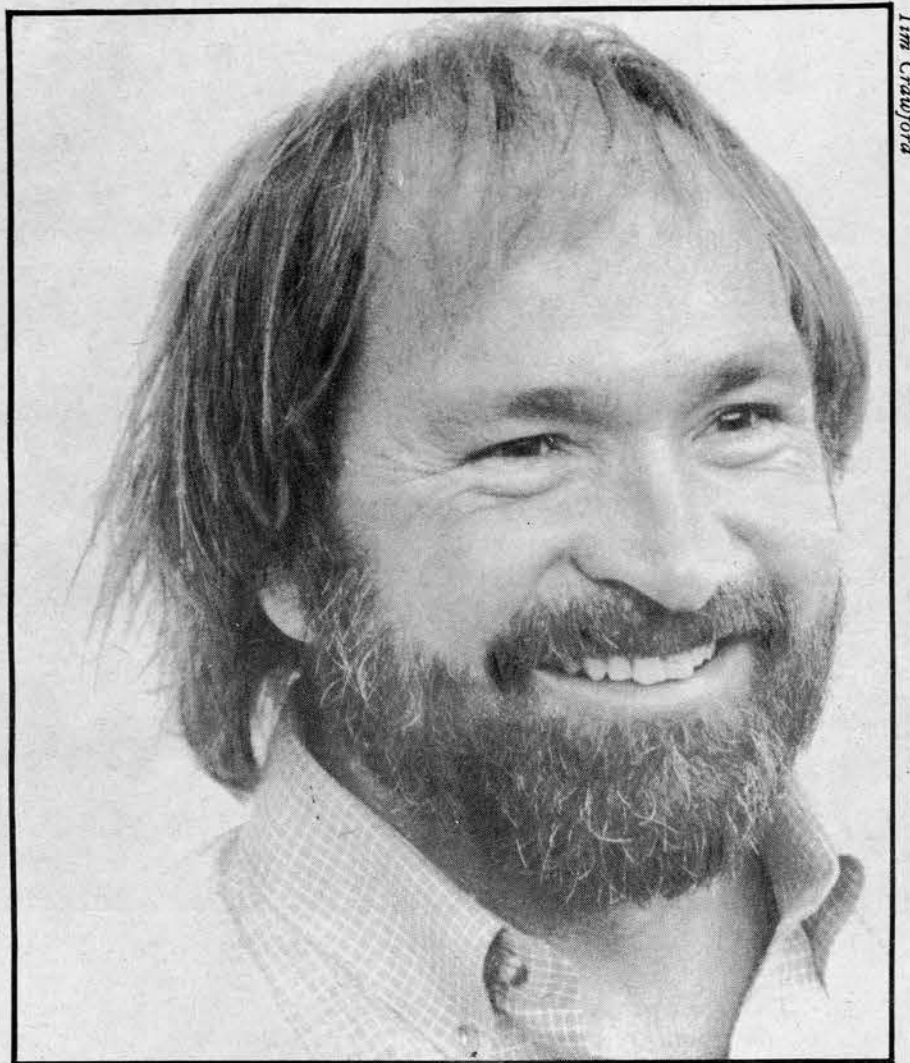
THE FUTURE OF PARKS

Huey Johnson was talking to all conservationists when he told the conference: "It is our job to deliver the future." He and others suggested what that means for our parks.

"Carrying capacity" was invoked as the most effective tool to confront problems of use and preservation. Cahn and others said that park users accept visitor quotas, reservations, and use restrictions if they are clearly linked to a park's ability to accommodate visitors. The problem, Cahn said, is that the National Park Service has no scientific or financial commitment to determine limits and no political commitment to act on them.

Many at the conference suggested that overuse could be controlled through higher user fees, both to regulate use and to help pay for it. But a few at the conference were nervous about such increases.

Johnson went after both the Park Service and the state park



Doug Peacock

people? According to Peacock, people can sometimes be in bear country. But if the unbending, co-dominant bears are to remain, people can be there only on very limited and strict terms, terms far more strict than those by which we now manage national forests and parks.

Peacock does not think we will

bend, and he is therefore pessimistic about their survival south of Canada. He is particularly gloomy about their survival in Yellowstone.

Peacock's talk was the only conference event to draw many local people.

--Pat Ford

systems, asking that it become a more spirited and competent profession. Right now, he said, the profession is "in tatters," with too many political hacks in positions of leadership. He called for a systems approach instead of specialization, a commitment to the public trust instead of to bureaucracy.

He repeatedly said, "The people are ahead of us." There is strong public support for parks and for environmental quality, he said, but park professionals are too spineless to mobilize it.

Others saw the future lying in a shift away from single purpose purchase of park lands toward a "second generation of national parks" modelled on English parks. Cecily Corcoran Kihn, a Park Service planner, talked about preserving "distinctive landscapes where cultural and human activities are as important as natural values."

She wrote in the tabloid that land is often too expensive or too tenaciously owned to buy and commit solely to parks. Instead, she said, continued private ownership -- under private, local and state control -- should be adopted to preserve distinctive rural landscapes. Such experiments already exist in Cape Cod, the Pine Barrens of New Jersey and New York state's Adirondack Preserve. She suggested Jackson Hole, Wyoming, the Cache Valley in Utah, and the Palouse in Idaho as Western candidates.

Historian William Brown offered a "homeland ethic" based on his work with the Inupiat people in what is now Gates of the Arctic National Park. The Inupiat, he said, have a "deep wisdom and resourcefulness" based on a threatened but still vital "direct homeland link" with the land.

For the Inupiat, this traditional link is now legally embodied in the subsistence provisions of the Alaska Lands Act. We can't forge a similar link through subsistence living in the Western wildlands, but Brown suggested these could and should be sacred lands, "adopted homelands" for the city dwellers who use them. With enough faith and effort, Brown said, Americans could reattach to the Western lands the homeland culture of traditional peoples, creating a morality for use and preservation.

Brown's "homeland ethic" struck a chord at the conference. Steve Costa's phrase was a "western commons." The common lands are what link generations, he said, in our culture and in the cultures of most American minorities. Many speakers urged greater efforts to build support for parks among minorities.

Barry Sadler of Canada called the Western parks "the devotionals of American culture" and urged that the ethic found in them be applied to all land.

The words and film of Doug Peacock (see related article) echoed these thoughts, as did Terri Martin's slide show on the southwest rural parklands. Accompanied by quiet images of rock and water were words Brown may have heard from the Inupiat:

"In the canyonlands, the lines between me and rocks and rivers are not so rigid... I am an individual and yet part of something much larger... A place of reverence, a sense of eternity."

□

Pat Ford is the former head of the Idaho Conservation League. This article was paid for by the High Country News Research Fund.

Right-wing politics helped destroy the Institute of the American West

The American West is rich in geographic landmarks -- rivers, mountains, canyons and deserts. But because these landmarks also serve as barriers to human settlement and communication, the West has been poor in intellectual landmarks -- in organized approaches to the issues which affect the region.

For the past ten years, some of that slack has been taken up by summer conferences put on by the Institute of the American West. Starting in 1975 with a Hollywood-oriented conference designed to attract attention to Sun Valley, Idaho, the conferences have evolved until now they attract scholars from all over America. The issues explored at these annual conferences have included the future of agriculture in the Rockies, Indian self-rule, the Western colonies in revolt, the arid and awesome Western landscape, women in the West, and, this year, parks. (See related story.)

Now the Institute of the American West against its will has come to illustrate, rather than just discuss, another major national issue. The conservative Reagan administration coupled with a more inward looking mood in Sun Valley have combined to destroy the conferences.

They have been destroyed despite

-- some say because of -- their success. The conferences themselves, with 150 to 400 scholars in attendance each summer, were only the tip of that success. The meetings were preceeded by publication of a widely circulated tabloid preview, and followed by the products of the conference: a book or books, radio programs, TV documentaries, and heavy press coverage which spread their impact beyond those attending.

Despite its ambitious outreach efforts, the Institute is a financially tight operation. The \$300,000 per year cost of the Institute, its conferences and spinoffs has been supported over the years by a variety of sources, including the Sun Valley Resort, Levi Strauss, Inc., which sponsored six of the first seven conferences, private donors, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The person who took the original Hollywood-oriented conference and created a national intellectual event in an Idaho ski town was Richard Hart, 38, a prolific writer, a student of the Zuni Indians in New Mexico, and a very able organizer and thinker. With the help of a five-person National Council of Advisors headed by Alvin Josephy, Jr., a former *Time* editor and

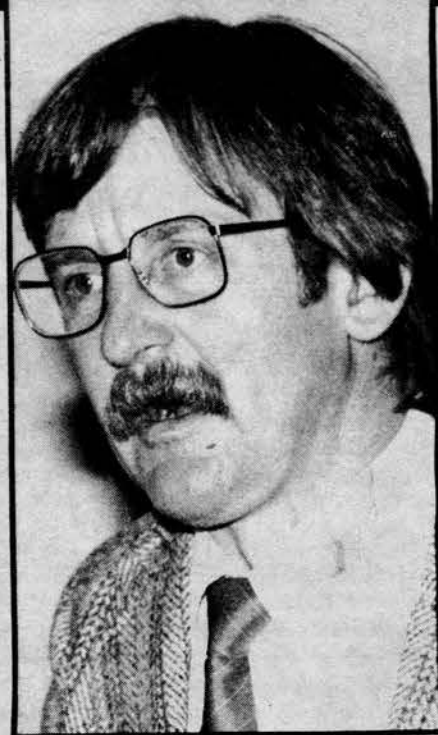
scholar, Hart put together six of the last seven conferences.

Technically, the Institute is part of the Sun Valley Center for the Arts and Humanities, a local nonprofit organization with a five acre campus and a board of directors made up of both permanent residents and businessmen with ski homes in Sun Valley. Under Hart, the Institute was housed at the Center, but operated independently in all but name. In fact, given Hart's ability to raise several hundred thousand dollars a year and to attract national figures, the Institute tended to overshadow the Center.

Hart says, "There was jealousy over the money I was raising; the other programs didn't run in the black. The competitiveness combined with other factors to lead Hart to resign in late 1983, effective September 1, 1984. Hart's departure means the end of the conferences.

The dispute never descended to name calling, and Hart has pledged to remain helpful to the center, suggesting that the Institute direct its efforts away from broad regional themes and toward folk arts. Despite the cooperation, however, it has not been an amiable parting:

"I resigned because I realized the program I developed was not going to



John Hart

be supported by the board. They reneged on a promise of \$35,000 in seed money. And they wouldn't commit to office space." More seriously, "They took away my final authority over the conference topic... I don't think they liked the kinds of topics we did -- minorities, Indians..."

When the irreconcilable nature of the split became clear, Hart asked the board to spin the Institute off from the Center so he could continue to put on conferences. "But most members of the board are wealthy businessmen. They view the Institute as an asset" and wouldn't let it go.

Greer Markle, the director of the [Continued on page 12]

Someday, Idaho will appreciate Virgil McCroskey's gift

Two state parks systems were looked at in some detail at the Sun Valley conference, and California's came away with high praise -- good administrators are backed by strong public support.

But host state Idaho took some hard knocks. Robin Winks, who has visited 312 of the 335 National Park units, came through some Idaho state parks on his way to the conference. Their condition, their obvious neglect, left him angry. Idaho, he said, has no pride in its parks.

Monte Later, a member of the appointed Idaho State Parks Board, which directs what Winks called the "worst" parks he has ever seen, responded that Winks had not seen the jewel of the system -- Harriman State Park. But he also admitted that Winks was essentially right. And he politely laid the blame on Idaho's state legislature, which resisted creation of the Parks Department to begin with and has cut its budget drastically over the last four years.

Later said Idahoans support individual parks (his board found this out when it closed some), but there is no feeling for the system as a whole. Others said the Idaho parks lack professionalism and leadership within the department itself. In fact, in early September after the conference, the Idaho parks director resigned under pressure.

Against that dismal background, historians Mary Reed and Keith Peterson told one of the most heroic stories heard at the conference. It concerned the achievement of Virgil McCroskey. McCroskey grew up in eastern Washington in the Palouse

Country which extends into Idaho. He was a pharmacist in Walla Walla and Colfax, but retired early to devote himself to travel and the outdoors.

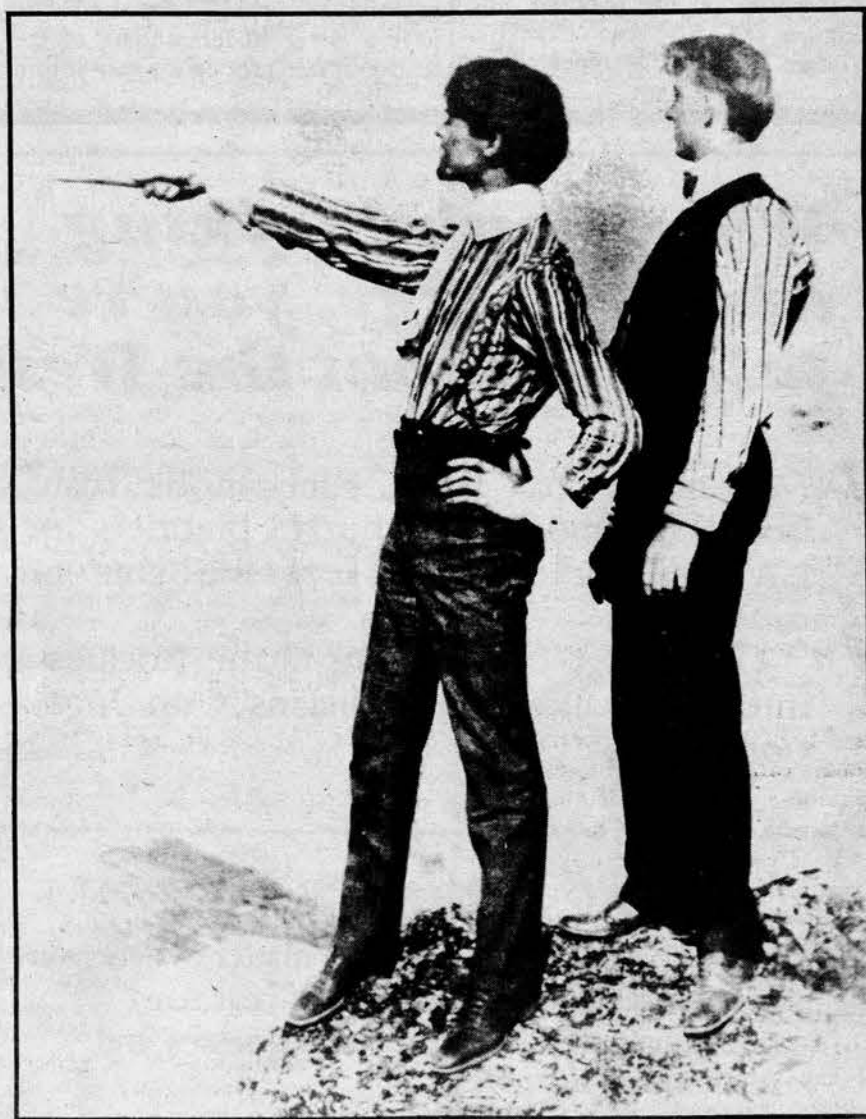
In 1945, when McCroskey was 69, he gave Steptoe Butte State Park to Washington -- 40 acres at the top, 80 acres at the base, and a right-of-way for a scenic roadway to this eastern Washington prominence. He had pieced together the property over many years out of his own modest resources.

His land accumulation in Idaho began in 1939 when he made small purchases on a forested ridge just into Idaho -- another small break in the gentle Palouse topography. The ridge was being logged and he wanted to see some of it preserved. By 1950 he had bought 2,000 acres and he offered it to the state. A bill accepting his land as a state park was presented to the Idaho Legislature in 1951.

The legislature, reflecting values still alive in the state today, rejected the gift.

In 1953 (biennial sessions then) McCroskey was back with 2,800 acres and an offer of \$500 yearly for 15 years to cover management expenses. The bill was defeated by two votes in the Idaho Senate.

In 1955, he offered 4,400 acres, 25 miles of roadway right-of-way, and a personal promise to maintain the park for 15 years. He was 77 at the time. This time he had the support of a new governor and an array of citizen groups. The bill passed by three votes and Mary Minerva McCroskey State Park and Skyline Drive belonged to the state of Idaho.



Virgil and Milton McCroskey on top of Steptoe Butte, 1890s

McCroskey kept his promise to the year, working on the ridge almost daily until he died at age 92 in 1970. But his will extended that promise. He left his \$45,000 estate to Idaho for maintenance at the

park. It is the third largest park in Idaho's system, yet there is no marker commemorating McCroskey. There is not even a marker identifying it as a state park.

--Pat Ford

Institute...

[Continued from page 11]

Sun Valley Center, agrees with part of Hart's analysis of the conflict, but adds an additional perspective. Markle says a question for his board was: "Did we want to put that much money into meetings that are not that directly relevant to local concerns?" The conferences were held in Sun Valley, but were not of Sun Valley; they attracted scholars from all over the nation, but didn't bring in local people.

Markle says that while some on the board are politically conservative, and may have objected to some conference topics, there are "also more local people, more adventurous than in the past." The new board members are eager to direct the Center toward local concerns, such as the Northern Rockies Folk Festival, rather than toward a prestigious national conference.

Markle also said, "The conservative political climate in Idaho was a factor." National Endowment for the Humanities money was important to the conference (\$50,000 this year for the parks conference), and "there were intimations that they are less willing to support public forums. The conferences have been fair, balanced, but the topics have been controversial."

So while a locally oriented board was pushing out Hart from one direction, the Reagan administration and Idaho's very conservative Senator Steve Symms were pushing from another. The other direction was the Reagan administration's hostility to the use of National Endowment for the Humanities grants to sponsor explorations of public policy matters.

At the top of the pyramid in Washington, D.C., the head of NEH, Dr. William Bennett, has repeatedly

spoken out against what he sees as excursions into public policy that have nothing to do with the humanities. He has been moving the NEH toward encouraging improved teaching, an appreciation of great books, the return of Latin as a foreign language to the schools, and so on. But Washington does not have the final word on how all of NEH's \$160 million budget is spent. Each state has a humanities council which parcels out the block grants received from NEH.

In Idaho, grants are administered by the Association for the Humanities in Idaho (AHI). Among its 1983 grants was \$11,000 to help sponsor Russian Awareness Week put on in October by the history department and student union at Boise State University.

Russian Awareness Week had the poor luck to be scheduled a month after the U.S.S.R. shot down the Korean Airlines jetliner. The result was an outcry against both the program and against the AHI. U.S. Senator Symms (R) said: "For most Americans, the week of August 31 -- when the Soviets murdered 269 passengers, including a member of Congress, on that unarmed Korean airliner -- was the real 'Russian Awareness Week.'" Symms was joined by others, including the American Legion in Idaho and State House speaker T.W. Stivers (R) of Twin Falls.

Symms may also have been angered by the fact that the late Frank Church, the incumbent Symms defeated in 1980 to become senator, was a keynote speaker at the conference. In any case, Symms went beyond rhetoric, and demanded an audit of Russian Awareness Week and of the entire NEH grants program.

Symms was not alone. Congressman Denny Smith was angry over the same issue in Oregon, where two similar programs had been partially funded by the Oregon humanities council. Smith said, "If you want to have a better understanding of the Russians, then pick up a paper or turn

on the news. The Soviet government is shooting down innocent airliners, fomenting revolution and denying freedom to people throughout the world. We don't need to spend tax dollars to understand that."

The political pressure brought results. NEH head Bennett told Symms he would investigate the Idaho conference. The investigator was Jason Hall, an NEH official from Washington, D.C., who came to Boise to attend Church's talk and went to public school classrooms to hear lectures that were part of the program. Hall praised Church's talk as "intelligent" but said it was not relevant to the humanities.

In addition to the visit, Symms and Smith succeeded in getting the General Accounting Office to audit the Idaho and Oregon humanities councils in particular, and procedures by all state councils in general. The audit will be out in November.

Tom Rybus, who directs AHI out of Boise, says that the political and public pressure has had some effect. "We provided money for Russian Awareness week and went through something of an ordeal. But I think the only result is to make us even more careful of public policies issues."

Rybus said the AHI board hadn't meant to discourage the Institute from continuing its conferences. "I think people at the Institute have misconstrued what AHI is up to. I've advised the Institute not to do public policy issues. But not because we wouldn't fund them. But because of their personnel changes. It's hard to do public policy issues. If you're doing archaeology, you don't have to worry about balance and fairness. But if you're doing Indian self rule, you have to convince us there will be a humanities perspective, and also that all points of view are represented." With Hart leaving, Rybus said, he wasn't sure the Institute could handle the public policy issues with sufficient expertise to pass muster in a politically explosive climate.

It is easy to blame the Institute's problems on conservative Idaho. But the Institute flourished, with strong local support, in Idaho for a decade, and Hart says the problem goes beyond the state. "The change is a result of a shift in the national climate." There is an increased tendency to suppress the dissemination of knowledge, and as a result he says democracy is in peril.

But Hart says he isn't giving up. He intends to remain in the Sun Valley area, continuing his Zuni research, and working on the next conference. If all goes well, it will be under the auspices of a new organization -- the Institute of the North American West. It is being organized by Matt Cullen, who was formerly with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Cullen says the new group will look at issues which cross boundaries. "Water, salmon, timber and other issues that don't pay any attention to national boundaries." Presumably, the new group will be funded with private rather than with public funds.

Hart said the conference he hopes to put on next year is tentatively titled "Resettling the West." It will deal with the impact of successive waves of immigration starting with the big game hunters who came over the Bering Strait 40,000 years ago. "It will cover agriculturists, the Chaco culture, the Athabascans in the late 15th century, the Spaniards, the Americans and today's wave of immigration."

"Putting it in that long perspective is a good way to show the importance of what's happening to natural resources and landscape." Planning for the conference, he said, had begun while he was still with the Institute of the American West, and will continue under the new group.

--Ed Marston

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BULLETIN BOARD



CRACKING DOWN ON POACHERS

Colorado's Division of Wildlife is getting tough on poachers. This past summer, the last of three men in an illegal game hunting ring was fined \$20,000 and sentenced to a year in jail in Michigan, his home state. The man must also pay \$4,800 in restitution for the illegal killing of a buffalo in Utah and an antelope in Colorado. On top of that, the man will be on probation for five years and be required to work eight hours a week as a volunteer at a wildlife preservation facility. His partners in crime also received stiff penalties for violating the Lacey Act, which prohibits the interstate transportation of illegal plants and animals. Violators may be charged with a felony which provides for a maximum of five years in prison and a \$20,000 fine.

TETON HANDBOOK

A new handbook on Grand Teton National Park delves into the park's human history, natural history and recreational activities and services. Send \$2.75 for each copy (or \$96 for 100 copies) to Grand Teton Natural History Association, Moose, WY 83012. Ask for Grand Teton, No. 122, stock number 024-005-00859-4.



FOE

NO FRIEND OF REAGAN

Friends of the Earth is no friend of Ronald Reagan. The environmental organization has printed 40,000 copies of a special report enclosed in the September issue of their newsmagazine, *Not Man Apart*. The 16-page insert, "The Reagan Presidency," blasts away at Reagan's record on the economy, human services, foreign policy, and of course, the environment. Copies of this case against the Reagan administration can be obtained by writing Reagan Reprints, Friends of the Earth, 1045 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94111. Single copies are \$1, two to five copies 75¢ each and six copies or more are 50¢ each. Make checks payable to Friends of the Earth.

MONTANA ENERGY STATS

The fifth edition of *Montana Historical Energy Statistics* has been published by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. It is a compilation of data from various federal, state and private sources on the production, consumption and sale of energy -- electricity, coal, gas, and petroleum -- in Montana for the past 20 to 30 years. This issue also contains current fossil fuel reserve estimates and records of well-head fuel prices and gasahol sales. It is available in all state government document depository libraries and most public libraries in Montana.

FOREST TRANSPORTATION SYMPOSIUM

A Forest Transportation Symposium for user and interest groups to learn the latest developments in national forest transportation systems is being sponsored by the Forest Service, state natural resource agencies, industry, and conservation groups. Participants will have the opportunity to express their concerns, review the impacts of roads on resources, deal with road economics, and review emerging technology related to timber harvest and roads. Alternatives to resolve conflicts between users and resource needs will also be discussed. The symposium will be held December 11-13 at the Hilton Hotel in Casper, Wyoming. For a registration packet, write to USDA-Forest Service, P.O. Box 25127, Lakewood, Co 80225.

OREGON RETREAT

The Oregon Environmental Council invites members and other interested folks to their upcoming annual retreat in the Cascade Mountains. The retreat, at Camp Tamarack near Sisters, Oregon, will feature group discussions, workshops and presentations covering the wide range of environmental issues facing Oregon. The council hopes to draft a legislative package for the 1985 state legislative session and set their goals for next year. The agenda for the retreat also includes time for hiking, birding and/or swimming and boating on nearby Dark Lake. Registration is \$25 plus optional meal and lodging fees. Contact the Oregon Environmental Council, 2637 S.W. Water Ave., Portland, OR 97201 or call 503/222-1963.

SYNFUELS SYMPOSIUM

SynFuels' 4th worldwide Symposium will be held November 7-9 in Washington, D.C. Sponsored by the weekly publication *SynFuels*, the conference features industrialists from eight countries who will talk about coal gasification, synthetic gasoline, oil shale, chemicals, and heavy oil and tar sands. For \$755 you can spend three days learning about "this emerging global energy industry," and if you stay at the Shoreham Hotel where the conference is held, you get a break on room rates too -- only \$99/single per night. Contact Peggy Collins, SynFuels, 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020 (1/800/223-6180).

ACID RAIN ECONOMICS

The Acid Rain Information Clearinghouse is sponsoring a conference this winter in Washington, D.C. on the economics of the acid rain phenomenon. The "Acid Rain: Economic Assessment" gathering will be divided into three sessions: confronting uncertainties and assumptions, economic approaches and acid rain, and the economists' contribution to decision-making in the absence of scientific certainty. For more information and registration for the December 4-6 conference, write to Acid Rain Information Clearinghouse, Center for Environmental Information, Inc., 33 South Washington Street, Rochester, New York, 14608.

WEAKER ALLEGED LINK

A new publication from the Edison Electric Institute reassures us about acid rain. "With expanded knowledge," the author says, "It is now understood that the alleged link between the sulfur dioxide from fossil fuel combustion and the loss of fish in Adirondack lakes or damage to Vermont forests is far weaker than had been recognized only a short time ago." The booklet, "Understanding Acid Rain," also tells us that there is no confirmed evidence of damage to soils, crops, forests, lakes, or human health attributable to acid rain. To obtain copies, contact the Order and Billing Department, Edison Electric Institute, 1111 19th Street N.W., Washington DC 20036.

URBAN WILDLIFE GUIDE

The National Institute for Urban Wildlife has published a guide to help urban and suburban citizens welcome wildlife. *A Guide to Urban Wildlife Management* suggests ways to enhance wildlife benefits through habitat improvements. Copies are \$3 from the Wildlife Management Institute, 10921 Trotting Ridge Way, Columbia, Maryland 21044.

NEBRASKAN TRAILS

The Nebraska Trails Foundation would like some help. The group is exploring the acquisition of an abandoned railroad right-of-way between Lincoln and Omaha for the development of a multi-use parkway/trail. Committees have been formed to focus on funding, public relations and the technical aspects of the trail. If you'd like to participate, contact Linda Schrock, chairperson of the Bluestem Sierra Club at 402/475-4046.

AUDUBON FILM SERIES

For those who want an alternative to "Revenge of the Nerds" there's the Audubon Wildlife Film Series this fall in Billings, Montana. Each film explores a special aspect of nature, and filmmakers will be present to share their experiences. The first on October 4 is Jan Van Den Ende's "The Dunes in Holland;" on November 5, it's Grant Foster with "New Zealand: Wilderness from the Sea;" and on December 5, Kent Durden will show "Animal Antics." Scheduled for January 29 is "The Black Hills" by Allen King. For details about films, tickets and location write Helen Carlson, 519 Highland Park Drive, Billings, MT 59102.

AN OLD STORY

The Endangered Species Act may be 10,000 years too late. A brief report in *Science* (9/7/84) states that humans have been helping to extinguish other species since our emergence. The other agent of extinction has been climate changes. The relative importance of the two factors is discussed in *Quaternary Extinctions* by P.S. Martin and R.G. Klein, editors, to be published later this year by the University of Arizona Press.

SCIENCE ETHICS

The National Science Foundation is looking for insight into the ethical problems and value conflicts associated with modern science, engineering and technology. The foundation's Ethics and Values in Science and Technology program awards money for academic and professional research and individual professional development towards better understanding and improved practices among scientists and engineers, humanities scholars, science policymakers and members of affected groups. November 1 is the closing date for submitting preliminary proposals. Contact Rachelle Hollander, EVIST - NSF, Washington, D.C. 20550 (202/357-7552).

PLANS FOR THE FLATHEAD

The Forest Service has released a draft supplement to the 1980 Flathead Wild and Scenic River Management Plan. The 1984 supplement documents the results of a two-year study designed to answer some of the questions raised by the original 1980 plan. In the study, by the University of Idaho Department of Wildland Recreation, over 5000 river users filled out questionnaires about themselves and their uses of the northwestern Montana river. Forest Service analysis of the study resulted in a range of proposed management actions for different parts of the Flathead and its three forks. The supplement describes these actions and proposed monitoring procedures, and a summary of the 130-page supplement is also available. The comment period on the draft supplement lasts until November 1. To submit comments or obtain copies of the supplement or its summary, contact District Ranger, Hungry Horse Ranger District, Hungry Horse, MT 59919 (406/387-5243).

WILD HORSE ADOPTION

The Bureau of Land Management says the western ranges of Colorado are in danger of being overgrazed and overpopulated by wild horses. To save the horses from starvation and the rangeland from permanent damage, the BLM is rounding up 100 wild mustangs to be offered for adoption. Forty will be available in Meeker, and 60 will be brought to Denver in September. Adopters pay \$145 and must provide care for the animals during a 12-month period before they may apply for and receive ownership. Information and applications are available from BLM Northeast Resource Area, Denver Federal Center, Building 41, Denver, CO 80225 (303/236-4399) or the White River Resource Area, P.O. Box 928, Meeker, CO 81641 (303/878-3601).

GUNNISON GORGE PLAN

The Bureau of Land Management has a new draft Recreation Management Plan for the Gunnison Gorge area of southwestern Colorado. The area in the plan includes the 20,000 acre Gunnison Gorge Wilderness Study Area -- the inner gorge downstream from the Black Canyon National Monument to the confluence of the Gunnison and the North Fork. The management plan also includes an additional 10,000 acres on the adjoining rims of the canyon. Chip Marlow of the Montrose BLM office says that the plan attempts to concentrate most off-road vehicle use in one area around Flattop Mountain near Montrose, and no ORV use will be allowed outside the outer rim of the generally two-rimmed gorge. The plan also sets regulations for outfitters leading rafting trips through the 14-mile fragile ecosystem in the narrow canyon bottom. But the plan sets no limitation on the number of river permits that can be issued. Marlow says there is no formal comment period, but that the agency wants comments as soon as possible so they can consider them in preparing a final plan. Marlow says they are especially interested in comment on limiting river outfitter permits. Contact Jon Sering, Bureau of Land Management, 336 S. 10th, Montrose, CO 81401.

MONTANA ENERGY PROGRAMS

Energy monitoring of electrically heated homes in western Montana and grants and loans for innovative renewable energy projects throughout the state are two programs of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. Homes in the first project will be monitored for energy consumption and air quality for one year. In return, the Montana agency will give the homeowners \$200 and a complete home energy audit. In the second program, grants will go to research or demonstrations of energy conservation techniques or solar, wind, geothermal, microhydro and biomass energy uses. The program is not for private systems, but for "innovative approaches or designs that provide significant public benefits." Low-interest loans are available to Montana businesses interested in commercialization of any of the above list of renewable energy sources except energy conservation. The grants and loans are funded through the state's coal severance tax. This year's grant applications are due November 1; the next loan application deadlines are January 1 and March 3, 1985. Contact the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation at 32 South Ewing, Helena, MT 59601 (406/444-6696).

NEW NEWSLETTER

The Environmental Policy Institute has produced the first edition of its newsletter, *EPI Perspectives*. To be published Monthly, *EPI Perspectives* will report on energy and the environment from political, economic and scientific angles. EPI is a non-profit, public interest organization engaged in research, public education, litigation and lobbying in the areas of energy and the environment. *EPI Perspectives* is available for \$25 from the Environmental Policy Institute, 218 D Street, SE., Washington, D.C. 20003.



FOR THE BIRDS

The Fish and Wildlife Service has a report that may make you a favorite with our feathered friends. "Relative Attractiveness of Different Foods at Wild Bird Feeders" tells what seed mixtures draw the most sought-after species to a backyard birdfeeder. Send a check or money order for \$2.75 to the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (Specify the report by title and by stock number 024-010-00587-4).

LETTERS

FORESTER RESPONDS TO HCN's VICIOUS DIATRIBE

Dear HCN,

Your March 19 editorial, "Can the Forest Service be Reformed," stated, "We'll reserve space for all of this in the next couple of issues, but we don't expect to have much to put in it." You further state "the Forest Service has a far more sacred trust than other agencies. It is the steward of the nation's most highly regarded lands." This letter is in response to your first statement. I thoroughly agree with the second statement. The rest of your editorial is a vicious diatribe, apparently because the Forest Service doesn't always decide on issues the way you would like. In responding to the allegation of malfeasance, I would like to point out a few of the many actions the Forest Service has taken nationally and regionally in managing the National Forests.

The Forest Service nationally:

Provides more visitor days of recreation than any other organization in the United States or the world; provides a wider spectrum of recreation than any other organization; provides habitat for more wildlife and in cooperation with State fish and game agencies, more hunting opportunities than ever before in our lifetime; initiated the Wilderness system by its own administration action and has more congressionally designated wilderness than any other land management agency; has the most environmentally sound wildland forest management program in the world; has generally corrected the overgrazing problems which were prevalent throughout the first half century of the National Forests; taught tens of thousands of underprivileged Job Corps youths how to read, write, work, and live better.

Within the regional area of *High Country News*, the Forest Service has:

Determined that no geothermal leases on the Targhee National Forest will be issued until there is absolute certainty that there will be no adverse effect on grizzly bear habitat or geothermal features in Yellowstone National Park; fought for and secured adequate stream flow releases on streams affected by the Central Utah water development project; developed methods for reclaiming and rehabilitating strip and open pit mined areas such as on the Salmon, Caribou, and Custer National Forests; reduced the annual allowable timber cut in the Forest Service's Intermountain Region during the last decade by about one half in consideration of watershed wilderness, wildlife, and recreation values; acquired over 600 small subdivision lots which has preserved the western ranching character of the Sawtooth Valley in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area; planned and managed the Middle Fork of the Salmon River as probably the best managed wild river in the nation; contested and invalidated dozens of mining claims along the Main Salmon River so the public now has a place to camp overnight when floating the Salmon Wild River; prevented subdivision of private land in the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area which would have ended up with hundreds of fixed trailer houses; largely solved the problems of livestock overgrazing on National Forests of Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Idaho, and Nevada in cooperation with the livestock industry.

Improved tens of thousands of acres of big game winter range through prescribed burning; recom-

mended more wilderness under RARE II than is probably going to be congressionally designated in Utah, Idaho, and Nevada; installed dozens of fish screens in the Sawtooth Valley to prevent the loss of thousands of young salmon through irrigation diversions; won a lawsuit brought by the Boise Cascade Company which sought to require the Forest Service to spray for spruce budworm when the Forest Service thought it unnecessary; closed thousands of miles of logging roads for wildlife and watershed protection.

Acquired 25,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land in the Lake Tahoe area through extremely complex negotiations; to prevent further watershed and fisheries damage, has rerouted the old mining stream called Dump Creek which was causing massive erosion into the Salmon River; administered the environmentally best oil exploration and development activities in the nation; and acquired dozens of private inholdings in wilderness areas as well as other key recreation properties.

These are but a few examples of the kind you were asking for "where the agency took chances and fought for its own concept of the public good." But where were you when we needed help on these actions? I sought help regionally and nationally from environmental groups. I got it nationally from the National Wildlife Federation, the Wildlife Management Institute, the Audubon Society, and the American Forestry Association. Other national environmental groups offered little or no help. State environmental groups were more helpful on some issues, particularly in Utah.

You state in the editorial, "We would like someone to express the agency's mission. We would like to know what it believes in." I find it hard to believe that an editor of a significant regional environmental publication is not completely familiar with the statement of Forest Service mission and goals, as well as the 1980 Resources Planning Act Program. I am enclosing a copy of the Forest Service mission statement. The RPA establishes programs and goals for the Forest Service. That program is now being updated to determine what share of the Nation's timber, range, outdoor recreation, wilderness, wildlife, water and other renewable resources should be produced in the future. You and everyone else concerned with National Forest needs to take part in the development of this updated program.

You state, "all it was left with was the appearance of independence: a Chief Forester who comes up through the ranks instead of the political appointees that the BLM and other land management agencies have." This is a mixed blessing. The Chief can hang onto some basic environmental safeguards which the BLM cannot, but he cannot prevail on budget decisions. The budget allocations by activities are beyond the Chief's control. Neither the Democrats or Republicans have been inclined to accept the Forest Service recommendation for better recreation, wildlife, and watershed funding the past dozen years. The office of Management and Budget and the Council of Economic Advisors have been calling the shots. Economic rather than environmental activities have been given priority and funding. The Carter Administration supported wilderness designation, but was ineffective in getting a really

balanced program as described in the 1975 and 1980 RPA. The Reagan Administration has been even more dismal and has taken the available (and diminishing) allocations to support greater timber harvesting activities. This is a complete subversion of the 1980 RPA program and the expressed public desire.

The editorial states "During the same ten years, we have seen the Forest Service suck people out of the field -- and put them in ever more bloated Forest Supervisor and Regional Offices to shuffle paper." Environmental organizations and zealous individuals are almost totally to blame for the increased staffing of Forest Supervisor and Regional Offices. Every decision made by the Forest Service has to have a written record which can withstand administrative appeal and court challenge. The administrative appeal process is so easy that anyone who disagrees with a Forest Service action can write a letter in a half hour which can create a month to a year's work for the Forest Service. Once an appeal has been filed, the burden falls on the Forest Service to prove their decision is correct beyond all doubt. The appellant needs no proof for his appeal. Recently, a representative of a national environmental organization in Jackson was quoted in the newspaper as saying that he intended to appeal every timber sale on the Bridger-Teton National Forest. That kind of action will cost all of us many thousands of dollars and take money away from worthwhile on-the-ground activities of the Forest Service. The Forest Service would like nothing better than to take people out of the office and put them back in the field.

The Forest Service needs the help of environmentalists. Several areas come to my mind where environmentalists can help and also further their own interests. Every District Ranger and Forest Supervisor can add to this list if you would ask them. Some of the areas where the Forest Service needs your help are: Get your comments and recommendations in on the 1985 RPA. I am fearful that the Reagan Administration will adopt a program which is heavily oriented to timber and slight the watershed, wildlife, and recreation activities; participate in Forest planning on your local National Forest. The Forest Service wants your input and does carefully consider all suggestions.

Lean on your Congressman to get more adequate funding for recreation, wildlife, and watershed. The Forest Service gets about one tenth as much per visitor day to administer recreation as the National Park Service. There is practically no capital investment money in the proposed budget. The trails are eroding and the campgrounds are deteriorating; lean on your Congressman to restore Land and Water Conservation Funding to the Forest Service so key recreation and wilderness lands can be acquired. This program has almost come to a stop because of funding.

Work with the Forest Service in the early stages of various projects. Get your recommendations in early and they will be considered. Then do not appeal every time the Forest Service makes a decision you do not like. Every dollar spent on an appeal is a dollar that doesn't get on the ground.

Volunteer and encourage others to do volunteer work for the Forest Service. That is the only way that any progress is being made now on trail

rehabilitation and recreation. The Forest Service has suffered a 20 percent reduction in employment over the past three years.

Start talking with your local ranger and Forest Supervisor. Communication is a two-way street, and I will bet you find him anxious to have a constructive dialogue.

I hope this letter has provided some better understanding of the Forest Service and its activities. The Forest Service needs and wants help from the environmental community. The public interest will be better served by working together.

Vern Hamre
Retired Regional Forester
Intermountain Region
1970-1980
Gallatin Gateway, MT

TWO CORRECTIONS

Dear HCN,

There are two corrections that need to be made to the article on the Little Big Horn River entitled "Critics Hit Wyoming's 'Best' Water Project" that appeared in the *High Country News* on September 17, 1984.

1. The first sentence states in part "...last spring when the state decided to build its own pipeline, tunnel and reservoir close to Montana's border." The state of Wyoming has not made a decision to build any project on the Little Big Horn. The legislation that was passed in 1984 merely authorizes the governor to obtain options from persons who hold water rights on the Little Big Horn River; this authority has not yet been exercised. I've enclosed a copy of the statute that sets forth this procedure.

2. The second sentence in the first paragraph states in part "...when consulting engineer William Clevenger (sic) reported that of all the State's projects, the proposed \$75 million Big Horn was the most feasible and least expensive." Mr. Clevenger's report only analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of the two projects that have been proposed by the private developers in the Little Big Horn. The report makes no comparison of the Little Big Horn to other water projects in the state of Wyoming. The Little Big Horn project is proceeding under the auspices of the Wyoming Attorney General's office and is not included as a water project under the direction of the Wyoming Water Development Commission. No one has ever characterized the Little Big Horn as the "best" or most feasible water development project in the state of Wyoming.

Lawrence J. Wolfe
Senior Assistant
Attorney General
Cheyenne, Wyoming

BARBS

Macho parkie.

A Yellowstone Park Service forest technician has no sympathy with campers who deplore the clearcutting of the park's Bridge Bay Campground. "We have to protect these people whether they like it or not." Just cutting down the dead trees would be "the coward's way out," according to the technician, Jim Sweaney, quoted in *Not Man Apart* for September, 1984.

afield

Wedded to dolomite

It's been a long time, two memory-eroding years, since I've set foot on a hunk of dry, pitted dolomite. What have I been after?

I'm climbing a little dolomite outcrop in the dusk to get a better look at the valley I'm at the bottom of. (In the West you learn that apparently small prominences can open up surprising vistas). An easy-to-climb rock face, the air shifting and settling through limber-pine needles; the bowl of space, miraculously still at the head of this valley: these are common elements of the western landscape. I have, and will again puzzle my way up this little cliff without being rapt by them. Tonight, for some reason, I stumble on their real position in my life: they are embedded right at the heart of it.

I realize with surprise that pretty much all my constructive acts are based on, and dedicated to, the person I become at the moment when foot is fast to dolomite, senses are awake and active, and mind, in response to space

and stillness, moves freely, unobstructed.

Some things to observe about river dipping, or rather dipping in a boulder-strewn mountain torrent: use hands on rocks, lean sideways into the current. Brace feet against solid boulders, test them first, make one move at a time. Watch out for the deceptively calm upwelling pools; they can have powerful buffeting currents.

Then, when you are out there, look at the sculptural presence of water. That two-foot thick sluice of water hauling over the boulder appears solid, transparent. Stick your hand in trout-wise and feel what velocity does to magnify weight. Turn it against the current and control thick chutes, sheet arcs, French curves. Notice the space created behind, under the fountain, air spaces surrounded by a solid. Water is not drippy here, but a dense moving thing, heavy as crystal.

Yet occasionally broken and aerated -- in a pool, you feel the rising



fizzing effervescence and also the pummelings of the strong currents condensing and rearranging muscles and flesh. This has to be good for you. Listen for the bass drumming in the water, the African beat, and for the muffled "crock" of boulders shifting. I've listened and been able to isolate five kinds of sound from a river like that at close range. Experienced listeners will surely find that a crude attempt.

Looking upstream at 3:00 P.M.: water solid white with 28 big black boulders. Downstream, whorls cast shadows on shallow sandy bottoms. Deep colors, yellows and greens, no blue.

Hannah Hinchman is a graphic artist who worked for High Country News for several years in Lander, Wyoming.

LETTERS

NOT SO DUMB

Dear HCN,

Many thanks for the interview of Barry Lopez by Dan Whipple. Previously I had had the dismaying view that the famous environmentalists were only slightly better than their opponents, because both defined everything in terms of usefulness to man, whether for fun, profit, or science.

What a relief that someone is making a well-stated case for something, and against reducing everything to numbers! Just a month ago I received a reply from the editor of *Sierra* magazine to my letter asking the magazine to question publicly the wisdom of its gods of Recreation and Biology. I had given an example of ecology students set to trapping rodents in the mountains and identifying them by cutting off their toes in code. He said, in part, "We do not feel it is part of our editorial charge to point out the 'drawbacks' of biologists."

Thank God someone points out the worth of "worthless" lands. As a case in point, I live on what the real estate company describes as mostly a "vacant lot." The Sierra Club and Nature Conservancy aren't the least bit interested in its preservation. It's too small, too close to the highway, zoned commercial. The biologists would find a great variety of plants and small animals here, but none that aren't elsewhere. When it's sold out from under me, I'll move to the suburbs of the country -- farther away from the growth of Boulder and the weekly din of recreationists' traffic to Estes Park.

Before Whipple's article, I had read Jim Baker's article, and quickly composed a letter to you: "To me it reflects the thinking of those who have so long dealt with bureaucrats that they have become them. HCN recently published that staffers of some governmental body thought a day's fishing somewhere was worth X dollars, which the nasty department head reduced to Y dollars. Mr.

Baker's solution would end disputes by having the recreationist pay Z dollars."

Then I see that you aren't so dumb after all. Thanks for the good work.

Stuart Ambler
Longmont, Colorado

THREATENED IS BETTER

Dear HCN,

It has been suggested by some occasionally that the grizzly bear should be listed as an endangered species. One of the more recent was in the September 3 *High Country News* article by Lawrence Wright.

In 1974, the Fund for Animals, Inc. petitioned to have the grizzly listed as endangered. All information available was reviewed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and it was determined, with concurrence by the states, that data was sufficient to warrant classifying the grizzly in the contiguous 48 states as a threatened species. It was determined that this population was not in danger of extinction in its present range.

But just as important, the threatened status provides management flexibility that is not available under an endangered classification. At the same time, the threatened classification does not diminish the level of protection that the Act provides for the grizzly.

There is a need to actively manage some portions of grizzly habitat for both grizzlies and humans. Human-bear conflict incidents are hazardous to the bears as well as to people. Under the threatened classification, problem grizzlies can be captured and relocated. In the extreme cases where a grizzly has injured or killed a human, there is flexibility under the threatened classification to take other measures -- including termination of the offending bear. Support for the grizzly would diminish rapidly if those means to control problem bears were prohibited.

The threatened category also allows wildlife biologists the opportunity to more closely observe and gather data on the bears, their habitat, ecology and behavior.

Mr. Wright and others who may believe as he does on this point may want to consider the advantages, to people and to grizzlies, of the threatened classification.

Sam Marler
Public Affairs Officer
U.S. Fish and Wildlife
Denver, CO

DON'T PUT A PRICE TAG ON PUBLIC LANDS

Dear HCN,

I wish to take strong exception to the article by Jim Baker in the September 3rd issue of *High Country News*, entitled: "What Environmentalists Want: A Chance to Pay a Fair Share" or some such.

What Mr. Baker proposes is a continuation of the long-standing and accelerating trend of turning free goods into scarce commodities. Such free goods included, once upon a time, clean water, clean air, unblemished views, and wild lands. For many or most of the world's people these are now difficult or impossible to come by; this is certainly true of dwellers in our larger cities who cannot afford the price of resorts or vacations.

It is abominable to me to think that access to public lands, a quintessential birthright of citizens in this country, should be given a price tag. I do not know what nominal price Mr. Baker would place on the right of access to the outdoors, but I do not doubt that as time passed it would increase, conceivably to the point where access to the wilds would be a luxury for most people. To espouse this suggestion is to confirm the prejudice of many that environmentalism is a doctrine of elitism. It is one more step in removing the public lands from the public.

As is true of many other services provided by government, such as the postal service and public health service, the maintenance of public lands is a function worthy of being subsidized; the benefits outweigh costs. The payoff in mental health and sense of freedom for the society as a whole exceed whatever slight costs

may accrue from the public use of public lands for recreation.

I would also like to note that it is inaccurate to place such low impact recreational activities as hiking, riding, etc. in the same class as extractive resource intensive activities such as mining, timbering, and water projects. The people who walk, ride, or camp out on the land do so for the sake of the activity itself; miners, loggers, and dam-builders engage in their activities for a profit, external to the nature of the land and impoverishing it in ways that transcend the impact of a trail or a campfire ring.

Uses of the public lands in ways that respect the character of those lands and inculcate a love of them ought to be encouraged, not taxed, whereas it is appropriate to tax those activities that truly exploit the land and damage it in the process. We as a society do not well comprehend the idea of leisure, of things done for their own sake rather than for something else. The freedom to encounter nature without paying a price of admission is a condition necessary to overcome the malaise of a hyper-industrial society still inept at coping with leisure.

I certainly believe, as I'm sure does Mr. Baker, that stewardship of the land is necessary by all citizens and that total lack of restraint in any aspect of land use is ultimately destructive. However, I do not see how turning the freedom to roam into a commodity will help in this regard. Indeed it can only hurt, since people cannot learn to care for that which they do not know, and user fees such as Mr. Baker proposes are another disincentive to citizens to exercise their rights to what belongs (in a limited sense, at least) to them. As one such citizen, I feel that I have amply paid my user fees already in taxes to the federal government for agencies such as the Forest Service and the BLM, subsidizing extractive grazing and other land abuses.

Jonathan M. Teague
Albuquerque, New Mexico

16-High Country News -- October 1, 1984

OFF THE WALL

Bloody nonsense

Montana Power Company blames its recent financial problems on a stingy Public Service Commission. But the real problem lies with the utility's own lack of corporate identity. Top officials don't understand what the MPC is.

MPC President Paul Schmechel dramatized that identity gap when he recently told the Butte Exchange Club that denial of a \$90 million rate increase "has opened a gaping wound in our corporate circulatory system." He also said the denial caused a "hemorrhage" to the system.

Those remarks would be OK if Schmechel was heading up a hospital. But they don't make sense for a utility. Utilities don't bleed. They don't develop gaping wounds. He should have said something like, "The PSC has shunted our cash flow to ground. They've strapped us into a financial electric chair. They've dynamited our fiscal grip."

Then he could have characterized the PSC commissioners as "having their wires crossed; as operating on perilously low voltage; as having burned out their windings; as being more interested in zapping the utility than in making sure the state's powerlines continue to sing the song of megawatts on their way to homes and farms."

Schmechel should also have appealed to Montana's various constituencies. Sixties radicals would have backed his cause if he charged that the PSC was endangering "power to the people."

Montana's intellectuals would have responded to quotes from Henry Adams' *Education*, in which he points out that the ceaselessly spinning dynamo is the new centerpiece of our civilization.

And the younger generation would have rallied around MPC once they realized that it takes electricity to stage a Michael Jackson concert.

Secret treehugger

President Ronald Reagan has had it up to here with the media painting him as being against the environment. He is also upset with reporters who say he is shielded from direct contact with the press and public.

As a result, he recently snuck away from Nancy and his aides to place a collect call to *High Country News* from a pay telephone near the White House.

"I wanted to tell you that I've just flown back from the Western White House, and I couldn't help but notice that there are still lots of trees in the Rocky Mountains. At first it made me angry -- I'd told John (Crowell, the man in charge of the Forest Service) that I wanted them all out of there by the end of my first term. But then I realized those trees down there prove I'm not against the environment. So I thought I'd call and tell you that."

We thanked the president, but then went on to ask why he'd appointed Anne Burford to yet another post in his administration. "I thought you'd ask that. Frankly, I'm something of a secret treehugger myself. And I've been reading that the Sierra Club and the rest of you Greenies have been losing members ever since Jim (Watt, former Secretary of Interior) resigned. Naturally, I can't join Sierra or anything. I'm not about to become a card-carrying enviro. But I thought appointing Anne to a nothing-burger post would stir the pot and get you some new members."

We thanked the President for that gesture, of course, but went on to ask why he is opposing acid

rain controls. "How can you ask that after the Canadian elections? Did you see how conservative they went? That's because of their economic difficulties. And once their trees and lakes are gone, they'll be in even worse shape and will turn even further right. In fact, by the time their last trees wither and die, they may be ready to become the 51st state."

"Of course," he said, anticipating our next question, "it might drive them to left wing radicalism. But that's OK, too. We're getting lots of practice south of the border right now, and we'll be ready for the Canadian lefties by the time they're ready for us. Plus, they won't have any trees to hide behind the way they do in Central America."

We could understand, of course, that foreign policy has got to come before the environment. But we couldn't understand why he was opposing renewal of clean air, clean water, and other environmental laws.

"What you really don't understand is the need for political balance. I give you guys a little something -- the appointment of Anne Burford to an inflammatory post. And I give Detroit and those guys a little something -- the destruction of the Clean Air Act, the building of the Central Arizona Project, the MX in Wyoming, stuff like that."

"The trouble is, you guys don't appreciate. You don't understand political realities. You always want more, more, more. So the heck with you. I'm not appointing her to any more posts. Go get your own members."

With that the President either hung up or was pulled away from the telephone by his aides.

--Ed Marston

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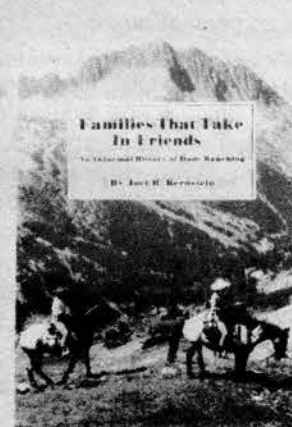
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