

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD MAY 3, 1977

Legislative History

Congressional Record May 3, 1977

Following is the May 3, 1977 Congressional Record. The text below is compiled from the Office of Surface Mining's COALEX data base, not an original printed document, and the reader is advised that coding or typographical errors could be present.

123 CONG.REC. E2690

May 3, 1977

May 3, 1977

SPEECH OF HON. RON MARLENEE OF MONTANA

E2690 IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES Thursday, April 28, 1977

E2690 The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2) to provide for the cooperation between the Secretary of the Interior and the States with respect to the regulation of surface coal mining operations, and the acquisition and reclamation of abandoned mines, and for other purposes.

E2690 Mr. MARLENEE. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to the amendment.

E2690 Let me say, Mr. Chairman, that we have safeguards built into this bill to take care of the problem the gentleman from Kansas refers to.

E2690 The bill states that the Secretary may have the discretion and that the funds may be allotted at the discretion of the Secretary for the implementation of an approved State reclamation program, pursuant to section 404. That is a safeguard.

E2690 I would ask: Is it bad to clean up the old gold mines that are such a hazard, or to clean up the old uranium mines? I think not.

E2690 Further, is it bad to protect the health and safety of the people? Is it bad to protect the environment from continued degradation and to conserve our land and water resources?

E2690 That is what we could use the funds for. I do not think that is bad in those areas, in view of the fact that they are going to turn the lands in Wyoming and Montana upside down through strip mining in order to get this coal.

E2690 Mr. Chairman, the people of Montana are very protective of their environment and the

quality of life we have there. What the gentleman from Kansas proposes to do is divert all of the funds from the coal that will be mined in Montana to reclaim only the abandoned coal mined areas in the East. I think we in Montana will be willing to help reclaim those lands, because we recognize the importance of our land.

E2690 But we must object to what could be an almost total embargo on those funds. In the Western States we have contributed to the mineral wealth of this Nation. In Montana alone we have approximately 26,000 acres of mined lands of which very few are from coal mining. Yet, these lands, whether mined for copper, uranium or gold, are polluting the streams, and creating the same hazards as are coal lands in the East and Midwest.

E2690 Gentlemen, my State, along with Wyoming, will soon produce an unproportionate share of the coal needed to solve the Nation's energy problems. We will have to bear the dislocations of that mining. It will take money to solve the problems as development of coal is increased.

E2690 In addition, we fought this problem in both the subcommittee and full committee. My colleague, Mr. SKUBITZ, wonders out loud what happened in subcommittee after he succeeded in having the 50-percent provision for allocation to the States removed. What happened is that the members of the subcommittee recognized the merits of returning up to 50 percent to the individual States. I know because I worked directly with many of them after voting against his committee proposal.

E2690 Mr. Chairman, we need to defeat this amendment, because it would be most inequitable to States like Montana and Wyoming which will be producing much of the coal. This fund needs to have balance between the States so that all areas can support the worthy concept of reclamation and all States can move forward with reclaiming the lands that have been damaged by whatever kind of mining.

E2690 We have all made mistakes in the past. We need not make another here today by struggling to gain disproportionate advantages for our separate States.

E2690 I can assure the Members that we in Montana wish to preserve the beauty and productivity of our State for our citizens and for the many visitors who will come there in the future. If this amendment passes, Montana will lack the funds to get on with the job.

E2690 I urge the defeat of the amendment.