

Energy Insider by William Engdahl

Why they hate James Watt

The Interior Secretary holds a record beyond rhetoric in fostering growth that has drawn the environmentalists' fire.

There are certain people in the administration who are problems—number one is Interior Secretary James Watt. That is why the Global Tomorrow Coalition is making him a prime target.”

With that recent remark, a Club of Rome spokesman who also belongs to the Global Tomorrow group explained a plan by those organizations, along with the oil multinationals, to throw Interior Secretary Watt out of office.

Those gentlemen, who want an end to industrial progress, boast of manipulating other administration officials, but have trouble with Watt.

As Secretary, Watt has initiated the following programs:

- In his first official act, Watt directed Assistant Secretary Caruthers to sign 83 orders revoking withdrawal of about 680,000 acres of federal land from resource-exploitation activities. Declared Caruthers: “The need for these resources is vital to our economy and our national security.” The lands, some of which are believed to have uranium, are now open to mineral development, livestock grazing, timber harvesting, and recreation.

- As one of his first acts in office, he fired over 50 “environmentalists” on the department’s payroll. Representative Ed Markey (D-Mass.) and Katharine Meyer Graham’s *Washington Post* charged Watt with “criminal violations” of the department’s “merit system.”

Watt ignored them.

- On April 10, Watt, in conjunction with Energy Secretary James Edwards, announced a dramatic expansion of off-shore oil and gas leasing on the Outer Continental Shelf. Oil multinationals like Atlantic-Richfield (Arco)—whose chairman, Robert O. Anderson, is probably the largest individual financier of environmentalist organizations in the world, as well as Exxon and others, howled in protest. These firms not only have “preferred positions” in presumably competitive Alaskan oil, but are basically marketing monopolies, not producers, and desire to keep as much oil *in the ground* as possible. Arco and Exxon were joined by howls of protest from the Sierra Club, which recently endorsed the *Global 2000 Report* mass-murder recommendations, and by California’s ectoplasmic governor, Jerry Brown, whose family imports competitive Indonesian oil and gas.

Watt replied: “I would like to see 87 sisters, not just 7.” The oil and gas leasing was finally postponed, apparently after California GOP circles mounted a pressure campaign on President Reagan.

- Watt also recommended, and President Reagan agreed, to “indefinitely freeze” negotiations on the so-called Law of the Sea Treaty. The treaty, negotiated by David Rockefeller’s Trilateral Commission on behalf of the Carter admin-

istration, not only would have prevented exploitation of the enormous mineral resources on the sea floor, but set a dangerous precedent for eliminating national sovereignty on economic policies by imposing a “supranational taxation system” on seabed mining receipts. Watt put a stop to it.

- On May 21, Watt’s office announced that it was accepting applications from companies wishing to explore for oil and gas on more than 100 million acres in Alaska—a massive “onshore” leasing program that elicited new screeches from the oil multinationals and the “environmentalists” funded by the oil multinationals. This program, a reversal of the Carter administration’s policy, was coupled with Watt’s order that the Bureau of Land Management expedite applications for oil and gas drilling on bureau-administered lands. Under Carter, permits lay stacked in piles in regional offices, without processing or intent to process.

These lands are known to contain some of the richest U.S. deposits of oil and gas. Watt has also:

- Centralized control of 33 earth-moving, canal, dam, and waterway projects;

- Assumed control of the cabinet-level Council on Natural Resources and Environment, denounced by environmentalists as a “power grab to put more money into water projects” (Sierra Club).

- Begun leasing of 37 million acres of coal land in southern Appalachia;

- Ended Office of Surface Mining powers to harass and slow strip-mining projects;

- Expedited the reclamation of abandoned coalmine land in West Virginia.