

A commentary by the Hon. Sen. Frank Moss

The author is the former U.S. Senator from Utah.

As a Democrat, and having served eighteen years in the United States Senate, I have been concerned with the need to protect, conserve and utilize our planet's marvelous supply of pure water. The absolute *sine qua non* on this globe is *water*. In a speech on the Senate floor, Sen. Bob Kerr of Oklahoma once said that the time would come when a barrel of pure water would be of more value than a barrel of oil. (Imagine that from an oil tycoon like Kerr.) Even then, 20 years ago, Senator Kerr foresaw an expanding population and the continuing degradation and loss of our supply of pure water. The world could be on a collision course to disaster.

Is it possible that any substance as universal as water (H₂O) could be in such short supply as to threaten famine and disease? The sad answer is "yes." A vast supply of this renewable resource is stored in ice caps or is flowing into salty oceans in many places, while enormous areas of our planet are desert, dry and inhospitable to life, human or mammal.

My home state of Utah has turned much of our landscape into beautiful homes and farms by diverting water from our mountains to our barren valleys. We started a hundred years ago. But we still need more fresh water.

My political efforts within my party and in the Senate have pressed for water conservation, diversion and use. The Democrats have a proud record in this effort. But it is not enough! We must raise our eyes and expand our scope.

My advice is: "Make no little plans."

With world population at approximately 5 billion people and with demographic projections of 10 billion people by the turn of the century and;

Plagued already with water shortages, spreading water pollution, desertification of vast areas of our planet—the only home on which homo sapiens can rely; and

With world hunger and overcrowding confronting us in several areas;

We must do something while there is time.

One course of action is to limit procreation. This is being done in some areas, but with limited to no success.

Another way is to improve food production with better seed, fertilizers and pest control. But this, too, makes for only limited relief in selected places.

Perhaps a third way is to abandon humanitarian and scientific efforts to terminate medical efforts to fight disease. Thus, we could invite back the diseases which in past ages swept away our children and whole areas of population. Thus, we might keep our world population to around 3 billion people. Of course, no sane human being should subscribe to this "solution."

The only reasonable and humane planning and action in the next decade is to conquer our desert wastelands, expand our areas of habitation, and expand our food production. This, we know how to do. Immense areas of our planet, now barren and desolate, will become habitable and productive *when we add water*.

Nicholas F. Benton has presented three vast water salvation and diversion projects. Any of these projects would demand our efforts for generations and change the lifestyle of millions of people yet unborn.

What is the cost to build these projects: *enormous!*

What is the cost *not* to build these and other water projects: *ghastly, unthinkable!*

We can and should explore other planets. But more urgently, we must conquer drought, desert, hunger, overcrowding and despair of our fellow human beings *on this planet*.

Our time is running out. We should begin at once.

Benton sets forward an agenda for the rest of this decade and several following decades.

When a person sets forth ideas and plans for water conservation, diversion and use, I give my support. NA-WAPA was one of the proposals on which I held public hearings in the 1960s. But no concrete action was taken. International vision was too limited. Later, however, the Canadians did build part of this overall NAWAPA plan with the James Bay project, impounding and using waters flowing toward salty Hudson's Bay.

International cooperation must come to Benton's gigantic proposal if we are to prolong and make better human life on earth.