

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Citizens afraid to oppose land deals

Editor:

Twenty years ago the ranchers and miners of Nevada would have been the leaders in opposing these massive land purchases by the federal government. Today most are silent and some are supporting this latest plan of Sen. Harry Reid and the environmentalists.

My first home, 84 years ago, was on the family ranch at Fort Halleck. Irene and I have ranched along the Rubies all our married lives. My wife grew up on ranches north of Elko.

Why have most ranchers gone silent? Four reasons — The first is fear. The Forest Service, BLM, and Department of Wildlife have such a chokehold on ranchers that if they speak out against government policies they are branded and squeezed even harder. To prove my point on blackmail and fear, I just got a letter from Robert V. Abbey, BLM State Director. It threatens me and all other ranchers if we do not support the BLM in stopping the water bill before the Nevada Legislature.

The second is that they may already be on the take from government and they do not want to look like hypocrites. Third, they do not want to oppose their rancher friends who are on the take from the government.

Fourth, they may be thinking about getting some of that easy money, and it would not seem right to oppose on principle and then when the price gets high enough, take it. It is hard for a person to stand on principle when the government is squeezing on one hand and offering more than market price on the other.

The IL owners' land may be worth \$7 million and they are asking for a total of \$100 million. The Clover Valley land should be worth less than \$1 million and the proposed sale price is \$3,302,000. (By the way, that \$103 million is ours and could be used to pay some of our country's debts.) I expect that if the government did not offer more than market price there would be few if any sellers. Therefore, the major blame should be aimed at the politicians and bureaucrats that have established this green socialist system, and the green socialist organizations that provided the ideas and big-city political support.

The rural people and businesses will be hurt first, but the cities will be destroyed next. First the small burgs like Elko. Once the mines and ranches are gone, the Elko businesses will be dependent on the bureaucrats, gambling, and a little tourism. When I asked why Elko businessmen are not

actively opposing the government buying the land I learned that they have a different fear from that of ranchers and miners. They fear that the government agencies, the government agents, and the government agents' families will stop buying from them. I suppose that is the same fear the professionals have.

The government bureaucrats have grown from a handful 50 years ago to hundreds today. In the 1950s there were only about five Forest Service employees in the county, now there are over a hundred.

The duty of the county commission is clear. They must follow the Constitution. They took an oath to do so. The Constitution established the specific land the federal government can own at Article 1, Section 8, Clause 17. The Constitution, if followed, prohibits the proposed purchases.

This letter is to all those who have been thinking only of their own self-interest. Please consider the freedom of our country and get involved in stopping this complete government takeover. The next place you can make a difference is at the county hearing: 6 p.m., May 5 (Monday) at the convention center.

Jack H. Walther
Lamoille