

Call Number: 00-00-185

Ernest Gruening, No Date, Tom Mornoss is interviewer, ISGR Colloquium [?]

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Date(s) of creation of summary: 2/5/2013, 2/25/2013

Notes: original on 7 inch reels. Master copy on CD.

ISGR Colloquium [?]. Tom Mornoss is interviewing. Senator Gruening is discussing Alaska politics from 1939-1972. Gruening says we are in the presence of a historic event, that is, the Secretary of the Interior Rogers Morton withdrawing 83 million acres of the Alaska domain for parks, wildlife, refugees etc. Gruening considers the action one of the most disastrous acts in Alaskan history. Native Claims Act attempts to do belated justice and economic equality to the Native people of Alaska by providing them with 40 million acres of land and money. Inserted into the legislation was another provision that the Secretary of the Interior could set aside up to 80 million acres of land for other purposes. Gruening believes the provision has nothing to do with Native issues and that Morton is breaking the law by adding an additional 3 million acres. Previous Secretary of the Interior Ickes withdrew a lot of land in the Kenai Peninsula to create the Alaskan Moose Range. Underneath the Kenai Peninsula was a large amount of oil. Secretary Seaton withdrew the 10 million acres of the Alaska Arctic Wildlife range. He did that after hearings of Alaska Senator Bob Bartlett that said the law was undesirable. Despite the findings of the senate, Secretary Seaton withdrew the 10 million acres. Secretary Stewart Udall who was up for confirmation before the Interior committee spoke favorably for public power. Udall criticized President Eisenhower for thinking public power was evil. Run a great Rampart Dam project endorsed by the Corps of Engineers and was about ready to go. The project would have provided large amounts of low cost energy to Alaska. Morton started a campaign against the project because the lake which would be formed behind the Rampart Dam would flood the Yukon flats and disturb the nesting grounds of ducks and geese. Effort to restart the Rampart Dam project, one of the candidates for the Senate Richard Gruel would promote the project. Senator Stevens has announced that he would revive the Rampart project. The nesting grounds must be withdrawn. Secretary Udall and Ira Gabrielson (who was then head of finance for an organization of gun makers) spread the slogan that there would be "one less dot in every California sportsmen's bag." Gruening is ok with that. Minerals will be denied if the 83 million acres are withdrawn. The minerals include: chrome, manganese, antimony, nickel, copper etc. Gruening believes national security is at stake and therefore the 83 million acres should not be withdrawn. Gruening believes the Wrangell Mountains should be another national park. Kennecott Mine would have been closing so the buildings and dorms available would be given to the National Parks Service, perfect for tourism. According to Gruening Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Friends of the Earth don't realize that conservation and development are not incompatible. Both conservation and development are desirable. Gruening believes the economic future of Alaska will be in jeopardy if the 83 million acres are withdrawn.

Questions?

Woman 1 believes the lands set aside will be explored for minerals, she heard from Professor Bob Weeden. Gruening believes Weeden has no authority to make that statement. Gruening believes hearings should be held to hear pros and cons.

Woman 2 wonders if Congress can undo the provision. Gruening says congress has got to pass but he doesn't feel Congress will be concerned with the needs of one state.

Man 2 wonders to what extent the 80 million acre move is just part of a negotiation process which clearly the Interior is moving into with Congress. Gruening believes the people of Alaska should be consulted first.

Gruening begins another subject. 11 months ago President Nixon announced he ended the war in Southeast Asia. Gruening believes Nixon is a liar. Apparently Nixon opposed the stoppage and would have continued bombing Cambodia if Congress hadn't prevented it. Gruening believes a saturation bombing of a peasant people with no anti-aircraft guns or planes is devoid of honor.

Gruening discusses the French battle with Indo-China and how the French came to the United States to discuss assistance to battle with Indo-China. In the 1950's President Eisenhower declined to assist but his Vice President Richard Nixon said he should have sent troops. Urged also by Chairman of Joint Chief of Staff Admiral Radford. General Matthew Ridgeway, Army Chief of Staff (guided by the wisdom of Douglas MacArthur) believed anyone advising to get into a ground war on the continent of Asia should have their head examined.

Gruening says for the first time in American history there has been a system of snooping and spying on American people. For the first time in American History, two attorney generals Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Kleindienst who both urge the right to tap wires on anybody without a court order.

Gruening was in Massachusetts a few months ago and was talking to a minister of an episcopal church in Melrose suburbs of Boston. The minister had asked by a group of students after the Kent State massacre to give them a room in the basement of the church where they could protest the war. Reverend Radkey was approached by the IRS a couple weeks later who said that if he continues the meetings his church will lose its tax exempt status.

For the first time in our history the administration sought to exercise prior restraint on the publication of material in newspapers. They didn't want the Pentagon papers published supplied to the New York Times, Washington Post, and Boston Globe by Daniel Elsgood. Pentagon papers revealed detailed history of inside of Pentagon during the war.

Questions?

Woman 3 asks if President Nixon should be impeached. Gruening believes impeachment is overdue. He believes Nixon should be tried of various offenses, impeached, and then punished.

Gruening says that the only reason Gerald Ford became president was because he never stole anything, a good quality to have but not the only quality to become president. Gruening believes more will be revealed because of financial help given to Nixon.

Woman 4 says the administration has done a job of tearing down social programs, what can be done about these problems? Gruening says Nixon has taken away money from social programs but not from the military. He also discusses the sharing of funds to countries with dictators such as Morocco and Ethiopia. Also, an increase in the amount of military factories in districts of many members of congress has put those members in a difficult spot because taking away those factories will cost community jobs.

A man asks Gruening why not commonwealth status instead of state status. Gruening says a commonwealth would not have two senators and a representative in Washington D.C. He says Alaska is now facing the fact that statehood has not equaled freedom of some restrictions. He brings up secession because of Alaska ruling by distant bureaucrats. Also a great way to celebrate the bi-centennial. Final words: "Let's all keep fighting!"