

Route 1, Box 23  
Santa Fe, N. M.

21 November 1958

The Editor  
The New Mexican  
Santa Fe, N. M.

Dear Sir:

The recent account in The New Mexican of the hearings in Albuquerque on the Wilderness Bill seemed to me to be slanted in favor of its opponents. It is noteworthy that opposition to the bill comes from well-organized, economically interested groups that are concerned with the exploitation of the natural resources of the United States for private gain. These organizations include farmers, live-stock breeders associations and lumbering and mining interests, all of which represent a minority of the people of the western states not to mention the country as a whole. The contention of these organized groups, which was given full press coverage, is that public lands will, by the terms of the bill, be removed from necessary public use of flood control and water-shed protection and that it would repeal the policy of multiple-purpose use of public lands. This is not true. It is an attempt to divert attention from the exploitation of public lands for private gain by ~~granting~~ these interests. Where the general welfare is clearly involved the bill does not further restrict public land use. Contrary to its opponents' claims the bill recognizes ~~the~~ multiple-purpose use of public lands but adds the further purpose of wilderness preservation. Only 2.2% of our lands, including the National Parks, which are already removed from exploitation, areas that are at present part of the National Forest system and lands not available for timber cutting, will be set aside as wilderness areas. No new administrative agency is to be established, the designated areas remaining under the management of the agencies now handling them. Grazing rights will not be interfered with but added protection will be afforded our National Parks into which private interests are constantly pressing for encroachment.

The Wilderness Bill will set aside for the enjoyment of present and future generations of Americans, to be maintained in perpetuity as unspoiled, uncommercialized, unexploited primeval lands, some of the most beautiful and rugged regions of the United States. In these limited refuges wild life will continue to thrive as it has for centuries secure against destruction by greedy and thoughtless men. Here, away from the raucous noises of civilization, the wind in the forest, the splash of mountain streams and the songs of birds will sound far and unconfused. In high meadows alpine flowers will grow in lush abundance untrampled and uncropped by man's herds of sheep or cattle. If the traveler to these remote places must leave his shiny, high-powered automobile to journey on foot or horseback, he will also leave behind the insistent demands of his society. No telephone will disturb his contemplation of a world untouched by men; no woodcutter's saw will whine in his ears; no airplanes will roar overhead; no clanking machinery will obliterate the fine sounds of nature. Here he will be free to respect and revere the beauty and complexity of life, pristine and untrammelled, preserved by the wisdom of men for this purpose.

Yours sincerely,

Elliot Porter