

# Convention Miners' Message

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CAVE JUNCTION — Miners and geologists chiseled a message in stone this past weekend.

The message, which came during the 1983 Southern Oregon Mining Convention in Cave Junction, was clear: The expansion of the mining industry in the United States is of paramount importance to the welfare of the country.

Organized and sponsored by the Waldo Mining District, the purpose of the convention was to bring together a diversified group of miners, engineers, minerologists, geologists, representatives from state and federal regulatory agencies and the politicians who make the regulations for three days of "education, communication and fellowship."

Although the convention included equipment displays and sales, mineral, historic displays and plenty of food, fun and music, the thrust of the conference was the serious discussion of the state of the mining industry in the country.

The Waldo Mining District is concerned about the future of mining, the mainstay of American industry and technology.

"For all intents and purposes, there is not one item used in daily living that is not the result of mineral technology," said WMD representative Walt Freeman. "And yet the government has all but regulated the mining industry out of existence."

He pointed out that up to 90 percent of the minerals used in the United States are imported from other countries, the majority of it coming from South Africa.

Former Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Hollis Dole, in attendance at the convention, said it was ridiculous that this situation exists where it's less expensive to import than it is to mine our own very abundant minerals.

"The mining industry (in the U.S.) is in as bad a shape as it's ever been," he said and praised the efforts of groups such as the Waldo Mining District that are working to change existing federal policies regarding the mining industry.

He said that the formation of the new Second Congressional District was particularly good news for Southern Oregon, as it no longer puts the area under the jurisdiction of Congressman Jim Weaver. The new district's representative in congress is Bob Smith.

"Jim Weaver has done more damage to mining in Southern Oregon than anyone in Congress," Dole said. "I'm glad to see him out of the district."

Dole urged that local miners keep in touch with Smith about legislation that could directly or indirectly effect mining in the area.

"Bob Smith has the potential of being a real representative of your interests in Congress," he said. "He supports it."

Dole also said that wilderness withdrawals are very bad for the country, in general and the mining industry in particular.

"The best thing the mining industry has going for it is the availability of land to prospect," he said, noting that wilderness

Keynote speaker of the convention, the current head of the Energy and Minerals Division, Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Dr. Dan Miller, held much the same view on wilderness.

"We are the only nation in the world that allows its citizens to own mineral rights. It's the minerals . . . and all these things that relate to our energy resources . . . that are the real wealth of the country," Miller told the conventioners. "If it had not been for the coal and the iron and the lead and the zinc and the ceramic clay and the silicons and the copper and the rest of it, we would never have the society we have today, we wouldn't have the economy we have today."

Miller feels that some legislators in Washington are too eager to tie up the whole country in wilderness areas.

"I mean every time they find three trees growing together, they call it a wilderness," he joked.

On a more serious note, Miller attributed much of the push for more wilderness on the fact that it is now possible to sue the federal government, a situation, he says, that environmental lobbyists' lawyers have more than taken advantage of.

The law allowing the suits also makes the federal government responsible for any and all legal fees in a given suit, regardless of the outcome of the trial, he said.

"You have a situation then, where 20,000 environmental lawyers' jobs depend on these suits. Whether they win or lose, they still get paid and by the government," Miller explained. "They're making a living and that is the crux of much of these environmental concerns and suits."

Miller told the miners it is crucial the United States further develop its own resources, that our dependence on foreign minerals is deplorable.

"National security is not necessarily a matter of military prowess," he said. "You can cripple a nation without firing a shot by cutting off its lifeline to natural resources. We are in a very precarious situation here and it shouldn't be so."

Miller said that this was not a time to expand on wilderness areas and therefore cut ourselves off from valuable mineral resources, he said it should be a time to encourage exploration into our mineral wealth.

Like Dole, Dr. Miller implored conventioners to let the federal government know their feelings and grievances.

"Some of us in Washington would really like to change the way the federal government operates, but we need for you to tell us where we are going wrong," he concluded. "We need your input. We need the support of the American people."

As much as anything, the three resolutions adopted by the conventioners at the end of the convention sum up the general consciousness of the conference.

By unanimous decision the conventioners decided to support the policies of Secretary of the Interior James Watts, to support the California-Nickel Corporation's Gasquet Mountain project, and to support Eight Dollar Mountain as an area of critical



# Message Clear



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