I find this an interesting situation, speaking before an audience like this. I appear before a group of people who are blessed with no small amount of technical expertise, who are immersed in the scientific method and the requirements it places on thought processes to be logical. On the other hand, the topic you have given me is "The Politics of Water in Arizona" and any relationship that might exist between logic, scientific principles, and Arizona water politics is tenuous indeed.

Let us consider how the Legislature might act if it was proceeding in a logical manner. First, we would define precisely the problem that we have before us. Second, we would examine possible solutions, considering a range of alternatives, and finally choosing the most appropriate solution. Third, we would, of course, set up the necessary governmental institutions to carry out the policy established under point two.

I will be moderately encouraged if in this session we are able to cope adequately with the first point and take some steps to better define the problem that exists in Arizona. That we have a problem is obvious, and I think goes unchallenged by anyone - in or out of the Legislature. The water table has dropped demonstratably in almost every part of the state. Increased pumping costs, among other factors, have caused the water bills of Tucson's residents to skyrocket in recent months and we have only dire predictions for the foreseeable future. High altitude photography displays the cracks, sometimes miles in length, in the earth's surface caused by subsidence due to the over-pumping of the groundwater reserves. I doubt that there is a single legislator who has not received a complaint from some citizen about the expense of deepening an old well or drilling a new one. The precise dimensions of our water dilemma escape us, though. In my short term in office I have heard predictions ranging anywhere from fifty to three hundred years supply in the Tucson area, predictions all made by apparently reputable hydrologists. In the scientific community we know what happens when experts disagree. The search begins for new data to corroborate one or the other - or none, as the case may be.

So what has happened in Arizona? What has the legislature accomplished in the search for truth that should precede a rational solution? The simple answer is nothing. Although introduced in many previous sessions of our legislature, we have yet to succeed in getting a really minimal piece of legislation - a metering system to measure groundwater withdrawals - through the legislature. The need is great. Let me quote to you from Phase I of the "Arizona State Water Plan":

"While a great deal of data has been presented in this report, careful reading indicates that data availability is still a major obstacle in clearly identifying many of Arizona's specific water problems. Of foremost importance, data wise, is the need for adequate groundwater pumping information. This information is essential in understanding the response of groundwater basins to recharge, natural discharge, and pumpage."

These words were authored by Wes Steiner, Executive Director and State Water Engineer, Arizona Water Commission. I am not often in agreement with Wes about public policy in the water area, but on this need we are in solid agreement. I am convinced that we must have better informed hydrologists, better informed legislators, and a better informed citizenry; and therefore I have again introduced a bill requiring the metering of groundwater withdrawals.

Will this require additional expense to those who pump groundwater? This is the objection we hear most frequently. The answer is that it probably will. This version of the bill takes a somewhat different tactic and merely specifies a measurement accuracy and leaves it up to the Water Commission to determine if the measurement procedure meets that accuracy. This opens the door to using power or fuel consumption records as a means of meeting the requirements of law rather than requiring an actual water meter. Even if it does entail some additional expense to those who pump water, it seems to me to be a justified expense. Personally, I am tired of the argument that we must consign Arizona to an uncertain future water supply because those who are now draining our state cannot afford the small capital expense of a monitoring system. That is the epitome of being penny-wise and pound-foolish. By the way, if you are worried that some
people will have to bear an unjust burden under this law, let me assure you that amend-
ments to all of the water bills have been drafted that would exempt the well used for
domestic purposes only. I feel that we can obtain the information we need without bur-
dening the small consumer whose share of the total pumping is minimal. I might add that
when this law goes into effect, as it someday will, we are going to be surprised at how
many large water users already monitor their flows within the five per cent accuracy
guideline in the proposed statute.

I have been discussing one of several pieces of legislation, and you asked me here
this morning to comment on the politics of water. The politics of water in Arizona do
not really require a great deal of insight to understand - we have a clash as old as
American politics - the clash between the general public and special interest groups
who are out to make sure that their particular interests are put before the public.
Legislative colleagues who represent rural districts make no bones about it in private,
and occasionally in public, that they are out to protect the agricultural interests in their dis-
tricts, and as I am sure you realize, agriculture constitutes the greatest opposition
to any reform of our water law. That the policies, or rather the lack of policy, these
legislators espouse is actually contrary to the best interests of the groups they
strive to protect is a point that is often lost. Agriculture, like many other busi-
nesses, is strong on short-term profit and very weak on long-term planning. However,
in the politics of Arizona the rural politicians do not greatly concern me. I know full
well the pressures of local constituents. Furthermore, most of them are honestly
striving to do what is right for their localities. A far more disturbing group of leg-
islators are those who represent urban constituents, yet consistently vote in a manner
directly opposed to the interests of those constituents. We often talk of the influence
of agriculture, yet the legislators, like the population of this state, are overwhelm-
ingly from the urban area in which agriculture does not comprise a significant part of
the local economy. To quote, again, a statistic I have often used, Arizona with eighty-
five per cent of its population in the Phoenix and Tucson metropolitan areas is in fact
not a rural state, but one of the most urbanized states in the Union.

Why, then, is the Arizona Legislature apparently unable to cope with some obvious
groundwater problems? Part of the reason is the tradition of Arizona as a land where
farming is one of our most important activities. That tradition rests in part on an
image of farming as an enterprise carried on by families struggling to scratch out a
hard-earned existence, that image is one which most Americans, even city-dwellers relate
to and feel good about, but that image soon fades when compared to the reality
of corporate agribusiness. I claim that we must give up that image and regard agricul-
ture for what it is - a highly technical industry exploiting a natural resource that is
in limited supply and a resource that must be wisely used if the rest of our economy
is to survive.

A second reason that we have failed to act is just plain lack of knowledge that a
problem situation exists. This is particularly true for the legislators from Phoenix.
In a valley which has many canals visibly flowing with surface water, it is difficult
to conceive that a great water problem exists. We Tusconans, with our rising water
bills and obvious dependence on groundwater, are much more sensitive to the need for
groundwater reform legislation. Yet the hard fact is that even with limited data at our
disposal, it is clear that Phoenix has a greater problem than Tucson in the sense that
at a level of 902,000 acre-feet a year, Maricopa County's overdraft exceeds Pima
County's by a ratio of over three to one.

This fact is beginning to take hold, and my experience has been that my newer col-
leagues in the legislature from Phoenix are sensitive to and concerned about ground-
water reform. A major problem is that these legislators never get a chance to act
because the Senate Natural Resources Committee is so dominated by agricultural inter-
est that we simply cannot get significant water bills to the floor where all can vote.

The third reason that these urban legislators have failed to act is buried much
deeper in the psyches and political and philosophical outlooks. That is the knee-jerk
conservatism that many Arizona legislators display and that says any change is suspect
and to be avoided at almost any cost. That this attitude inevitably leads to government
by crisis - to action only after the disaster has struck - probably goes without saying,
and I won't bore you with the dreary list of crises that I have seen in my one brief
term in the Senate.

When I began this talk, I mentioned three steps in logical problem solving -
definition, consideration of alternatives, and implementation. I must make one other
point - I have a fear that in Arizona we may skip points one and two and go directly to
point three - and the resulting cost to our citizens could be immense. I refer, of
course, to the Central Arizona Project. It is simply incredible to me that the citizens
of this state should be asked to enter into a project costing multiple billions of
dollars before completion of Phase II of the State Water Plan, which would delineate
the various alternatives that exist.

In a nutshell, then, this is my analysis of water politics in Arizona. Like most
political problems, the ultimate solution is in the hands of the citizen in the polling
place. If you share my concern, what is required is an ongoing program of voter educa-

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tion. Education of legislators is also important, but it is secondary to the fundamental problem of persuading the people of Arizona to send men and women to Phoenix who are not fixed in the ways of the past, who are open to new concepts, and who are willing to oppose those powerful interests that weigh short-term profit more heavily than long-term benefit.

REFERENCES CITED