

## Farm Bureau Calls Congress To Rescind Grazing Fee Increase

A spokesman for the nation's largest general farm organization called upon Congress today to rescind the increases in public land grazing fees announced in November, 1968 by former Secretary of Agriculture Orville L. Freeman and former Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall.

In a statement prepared for presentation at a hearing conducted by the Public Lands Subcommittee of the Senate Interior Committee, Lloyd Sommerville of Grand Junction, Colorado, president of the Colorado

Farm Bureau and member of the board of directors of the American Farm Bureau Federation, said the increased fees "will have a serious and adverse impact on the management and development of the public lands and upon the economy of the nation."

He said the fee increases should be rescinded until the related studies of the Public Land Law Review Commission are available. This Commission, established by Congress to make a comprehensive study of public land policy, is scheduled to

submit its final report by June 30, 1970.

"We have confidence in this Commission and feel that the action of the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture in putting into effect increased grazing fees on public lands was premature," he said.

Sommerville said 47,000 grazing permits are issued to farmers and ranchers by the two agencies administering national forests and public lands. He contended that "competent economists who have examined the grazing fee study data agree that domestic livestock operators on public lands are currently paying the full value of the forage harvested."

He said that if the higher grazing fees are collected they will:

—Liquidate \$343 million of ranchers' capital assets in permits outstanding.

—Bring economic pressure on small, medium-size, and many large ranchers.

—Reduce the capability of ranchers to invest private capital and personal incentive in better range management.

—Reduce employment on ranches and in the rural communities of the public land states.

The Colorado Farm Bureau president told the hearing that, as ranchers adjust to increased costs by withdrawing operations from thousands of acres of land which will be increasingly unprofitable as rates increase, an increasing burden will be placed on public agencies for per-

sonnel and funds to manage lands.

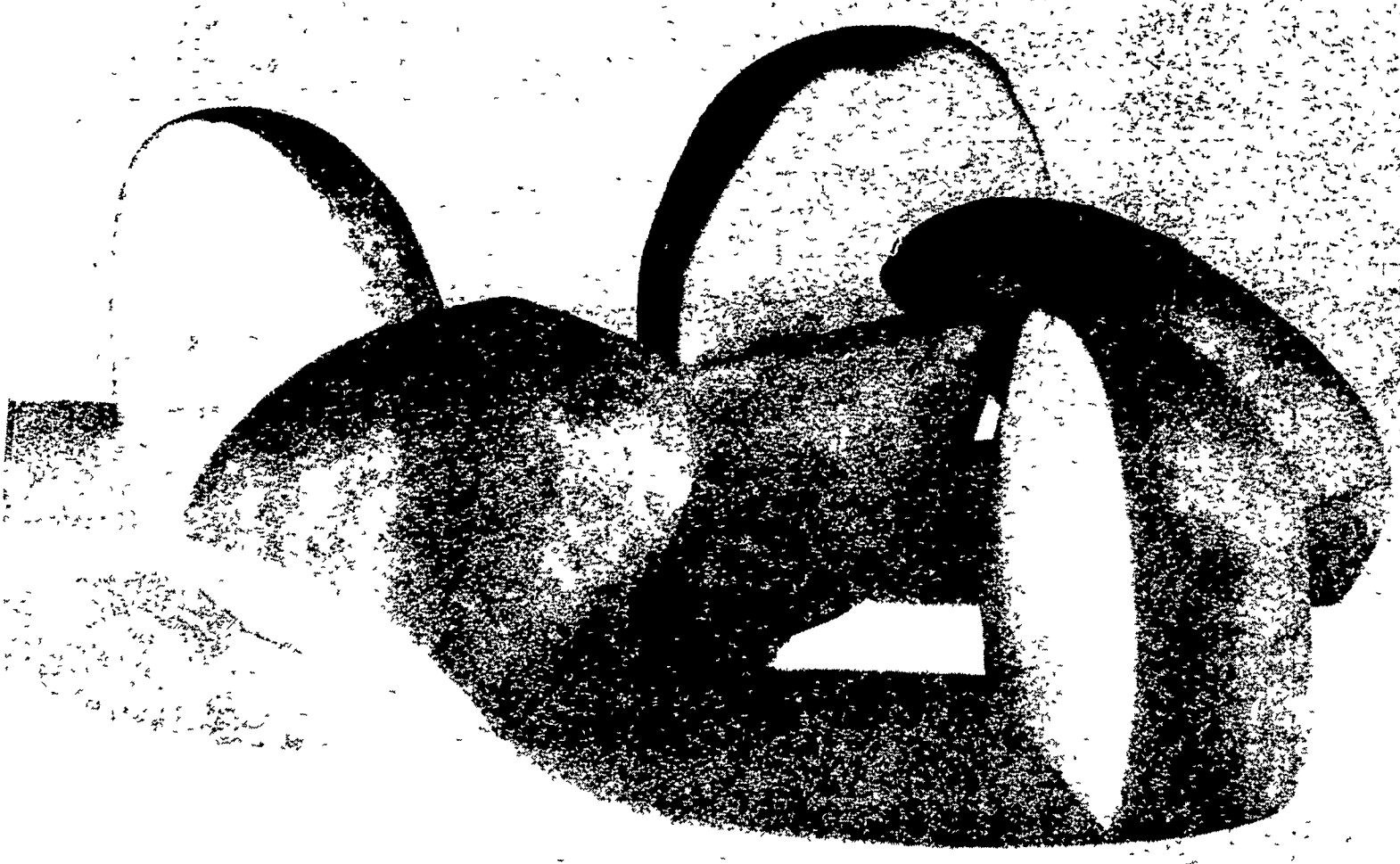
To this will be added increased fire hazard, poorer range for wildlife, and further decline of water resources, he predicted.

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