

Will we win, lose or draw? (March 7, 2003)

Although he no longer represents us in the Colorado General Assembly, Park County owes a debt of gratitude to Representative Carl Miller. This personable legislator has not forgotten us, and now he's taking up the cause of protecting water resources in rural communities. What gumption, what backbone he's showing in standing up to metro Denver water users!

Put it however you'd like, the man's got style. And most importantly, he's not afraid to speak his mind. Miller is exactly the medicine a thirsty Front Range needs.

Water mining is a business that won't go away. Front Range water users have admitted, without so much as a hesitation, they intend to exploit water resources elsewhere before tapping into their valuable reserves. That straw is going to dip deeply before it sucks the life out of rural Colorado.

Miller recognizes this and introduced legislation - later killed - which would have compelled water users to use local resources before moving on to other areas. This is not an unreasonable approach for water users, who have essentially dismissed the existence of much of Colorado's land mass. They have repeatedly shown their insensitivity to the needs of others.

We are talking about exploitation here, plain and simple. Last week, *The Flume* carried an article in which Peter Binney, Aurora utilities director, said the real value of Colorado is in the urban centers, and not in rural Colorado.

We beg to differ with him in the strongest of terms, as does Miller.

The Front Range has a lot of problems to address and solve, and they've only managed to turn the spigot one little micron to do so. Controlled growth, conscientious development; these are the thorny issues that get swept under the carpet because they affect the bottom line.

Like other rural communities, Park County has its own bottom line to worry about. In our case, it relates to survival at its most fundamental level.

Miller will "help" other legislators come to terms with the problems of their own making. Sooner or later, a change will come. The question is, at what expense?

It was interesting to read Miller's cautionary note concerning the expansion of Antero Reservoir. As our Board of County Commissioners continues its discussions with the Denver Water Board and the City of Aurora, Miller's insight is important, if not invaluable.

The fact that Miller is going to reintroduce his legislation next year is optimistic. We may not be the victims of land grabs in this day and age, but we certainly have no immunity when it comes to water grabs.

Thank you, Carl Miller, for being the man you are.

- Lora Abcarian