

VIEWPOINT: THE FILLING OF THE DWORSHAK POOL

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by Mr. Don Thomas on 28 and 29 September 1971)

The North Fork of the Clearwater River has been dammed. A huge, ugly concrete plug has been inserted into the beautiful river canyon to still forever the sound of a living, running river. There is nothing that can be done about the project now, it's virtually completed. If, instead of being in the final stages of construction at this moment in history, it were in the planning stages, it would never get off the table. But it was planned nearly twenty years ago, built on a foundation of greed, broken promises and deception. It will stand forever a monument to a bunch of fools. This is a dam that is probably the most unsavory history of any project ever attempted in the U. S. And we would be willing to bet money, marbles and chalk that once filled and emptied the people of the Northwest will rise in such indignation at the obscenity that has been placed on North Idaho, the drawdowns will be limited and the levels stabilized. In going over our files on Dworshak Dam, we find that in all the testimony by the Corps of Engineers before the appropriation committee, the almost sole justification for the dam was for flood control. According to the head of the Corps of Engineers at the time they were seeking funds for the dam, the Clearwater River is a major producer of flood flows in the Snake River basin. In the past one hundred years we have records of two floods, only one of which did any damage, and that was at the turn of the century and the records are sketchy as to what the damage was that may have occurred at that time.

What are we gaining that's half so precious as what Idaho is losing? Some flood control, perhaps. But at least five other dams have gone into the Snake basin since Dworshak Dam was started. Other dams have gone into the Columbia too, including it's headwater. So this, what was to be it's major justification, can hardly be that any more. We'll get a little power from it but not much. And what will we trade for these so-called benefits? We'll give up the most beautiful scenic areas in the United States, winter range for our declining elk herds. We'll lose thousands of acres of rich timber producing land, we'll quite likely lose the sawmill and the plywood plant in Lewiston, and we'll trade a natural and self-perpetuating steelhead salmon and resident fishery resource for a costly tax supported artificial system of propagation. The interests who promoted the dam have pocketed their goodies by now. The damages the dam will do are just starting. It's another example of the things our people can point to as they label us for all time, the generation of spoilers. And that's Viewpoint at this hour.