

VIEWPOINT: DAMS AND OTHER DISASTERS

(Broadcast over Radio Station KRLC, Lewiston, Idaho
by Mr. Don Thomas, on 30 September & 1 October 71)

The Christian Science Monitor is recognized as one of the eight utmost great newspapers in the world. It's one of the most influential and certainly it is one of the most accurate in it's reporting. It's with interest that many people will have noted that it deviated some from it's standard format on Tuesday, September the 23rd to carry a full page on it's second most important news page to review a book to be released next month. The book, Dams and Other Disasters, A Century of the Army Corps of Engineers in Civil Works, by Doctor Arthur E. Morgan. Of his book Dr. Morgan writes in his preface, "I have not made the record, I merely record it."

At a time when the Corps is being made the subject of many articles on it's bungling, this book is certainly one of the most damning. It's subject and it's publication at this time should be a matter of thoughtful reflection on the part of residents of Lewiston, as this same Corps is about to start a highly questionable project of an engineering nature that they have never successfully completed before, and in so doing are about to burden the residents of Lewiston with a massive tax load, not only to mitigate the damage they will do, but also inflict on the citizens of this city a continuing tax load from this time on, and we refer, of course, to the diking project.

Here, for sober reflection, are some excerpts from the book by Doctor Arthur Morgan.

"There have been over the past one hundred years consistent and disastrous failures by the Corps in public work areas. These failures have resulted in an enormous and unnecessary cost to ecology, the taxpayer, and the people whose culture, homes and land has suffered under the control of the Corps. Furthermore, throughout it's career, the Corps has persistently avoided or prevented objective appraisal of projects while at the same time presenting itself to the public as unequalled in it's field. The public has remained ignorant of the quality of it's work. I have made numerous criticisms both of the ethical character and the engineering competence of the Corps of Engineers. I have described those characteristics as not being occasional lapses from a generally high level of character and achievement, but as fundamentally characteristic of the Corps."

The author points out the most atrocious ecological tragedies in the history of America have been perpetuated by the Corps and notes that they were the only authority to prevent pollution in our rivers, yet in seventy years have done absolutely nothing about it. In view of their record for deliberately misleading the public and of their incompetence, it would seem prudent for Lewiston city leaders to stop any further plans of the Corps for diking downtown Lewiston. It's our city, our money, our land, and our future that they want to experiment with. And their record hardly merits such confidence.

That's viewpoint at this hour.