

# Clearwater River Flood Control Regarded As A 'Needed Element'

EDITOR'S NOTE: John Corlett, well-known Idaho political writer, presents his views in the following article. Like other writers of signed articles, Mr. Corlett presents his own opinions and not necessarily those of the Tribune.

By JOHN CORLETT

BOISE—For many months this column has at various times pointed out that flood control and navigation benefits at the proposed High Hells Canyon Dam on the Snake River were negligible and more readily available on the untamed Clearwater River.

Last Friday at Orofino, the residents of that area learned that

the Clearwater is the "worst flood-er" of the Snake River basin and contributes 30 per cent of the runoff of the entire Snake River and its tributaries.

These residents learned from the Army Engineers that the Clearwater and the Salmon Rivers, both uncontrolled, contribute two-thirds of the runoff of the Snake. They learned that the need for flood control on the Clearwater is a positive, needed element.

It was significant that the communities adjacent to the sites of the two dams proposed by the engineers for flood control at Bruce's Eddy and Penny Cliffs were unanimous in their approval of the dams.

It was more significant that the two top spokesmen for the irrigation interests of Southern Idaho—Charles Welteroth of Jerome and N. V. Sharp of Filer—gave their unqualified approval to the dams.

The Bureau of Reclamation came out with a preliminary report on Mountain Sheep, but there was no pro and con discussion on the dam. The hearing, called by the Army Engineers, was to consider the two Clearwater dams.

It is understandable why the Army Engineers never gave too much attention to the Salmon River because of the migratory fish problem, but it isn't quite clear why the Clearwater River was shunned until this late date in river development.

The city of Lewiston sits in virtually the center of the great Columbia River basin. For at least 30 years, the city has dreamed of the day that slack water navigation will bring comparatively large boats and barges to the "seaport of Lewiston."

Congress came in with an assist in 1945 by authorizing the four slack water dams on the lower Snake, but all efforts to obtain appropriations for the initial dam—Ice Harbor—have failed.

Despite the many reasons given for such failure, the basic one simply is because the dam has an almost adverse benefit to cost ratio—1.1 to 1.

When congressmen, especially those from other parts of the country, take a look at a dam proposal, the first thing they want to know is the benefit to cost ratio.

In any event, while Lewiston has been waiting for the slack water dams, the development of the Clearwater River has been allowed to be forgotten.

Here is an area without a major dam of any kind; without even private power development on a tumbling river that has probably more hydroelectric potential than the Snake River above Hells Canyon.

LEWISTON MORNING TRIBUNE  
23 November 1953  
Monday

Cont'd On Next Page

Just why this development has been allowed to languish is beyond the knowledge of this reporter.

The newest plan of the Army Engineers, acting on instructions of Congress under a resolution pushed through by Sen. Henry C. Dworshak, to construct two dams on the Clearwater, should give a boost to the area.

Unlike former proposals, these dams have no local opposition and it appears that opposition from sportsmen's groups will be successfully met.

Not only would the Clearwater dams provide necessary flood control and give the area needed kilowatts of power, the storage would doubtless improve the cost ratio of Ice Harbor dam by making its navigation and power facilities more efficient.

In fact, even one of the dams will do that. And even one dam would make the other three slack water dams at Lower Monumental, Little Goose and Lower Granite more feasible than they are.

The entire so-called comprehensive plan of development of the Columbia River basin as presented by the Army Engineers in House Document 531 is based primarily on control of floods, principally the Columbia River at Portland, damaged most recently by the flood of 1948.

The newest proposal of the Army Engineers simply puts into the main control plan dams on the Clearwater River which, in the words of Col. F. S. Tandy, chief of the Corps' district office at Walla Walla, Wash., "contributes the greatest amount of water to Columbia River flows of all streams entering that river which are wholly within the boundaries of the United States."

Tandy noted to that the Clearwater contributes more to the flow of the Snake River than any of the Snake's other tributaries.

More to the point, Tandy reported that the two Clearwater River dams would have in 1948 reduced the Columbia River flood at Portland by about 1.9 feet.

The Army Engineers have always held public hearings on their proposals. If opposition to a proposal exceeds approval, the Corps either abandons the project or proposes an alternative one which would wipe out such opposition.

This is a process which might well be followed by the Bureau of Reclamation.

The record transcribed at the hearings by the Army Engineers always goes to Congress with that agency's report on projects. From this record, Congress can determine the attitude of local people to the proposals.

The Bureau of Reclamation simply reports its findings without hearings. In more recent years the bureau has tended not only to report its findings but to propagandize them in an effort to obtain authorization from Congress.

Formerly the bureau let the projects speak for themselves. The Army Engineers always have followed that pattern. Congress requests investigations. The engineers report their findings and the hearings on the individual projects become a part of the record. These reports also speak for themselves with as many facts as are available.

Any other facts and pertinent data usually are brought out at congressional hearings on the projects.

The latest word is that Dr. Paul A. Raver, head of the Bonneville Power Administration, is on his way out—and soon.

More heat has been put on Interior Secretary Douglas McKay to oust Raver, a Fair Dealer, who was one of the most successful "empire builders" in the Roosevelt and Truman administrations. Such "empire builders" expand their own departments as a means of furthering their own jobs and their own power. Raver's propaganda department was one of the best in the Department of Interior.

It still has not been made exactly clear why McKay kept Raver in his post. The job is free from Civil Service.

This reporter at this writing has not yet found out who will replace Raver. Candidates mentioned since the Eisenhower administration took over include Dr. Pearl of Washington State College and Gov. Len Jordan of Idaho.