

Politically Speaking

By John Corlett

THE Idaho Wildlife Federation now stands uncompromisingly opposed to dams and dredges.

The federation at its annual meeting Saturday and Sunday formally adopted such an attitude, even though some of the older heads held to an opinion the action might lead to defeating the purposes of the organization.



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It was quite plain that when the convention voted against the proposed Bruce Eddy and Penny Cliffs dams on the Clearwater and Mountain Sheep on the Snake, it was voting against all dams.

All the arguments leading to the adoption of the resolution were against all dams.

Only one man spoke up to urge a softer course and he was disregarded. Dr. W. R. Jacobs of Lewiston asked the group not to oppose dams but only the damage which would accrue to wildlife resources in construction of such dams.

The word went around the convention hall that the real reason the uncompromising action was taken was because federation spokesmen were not given a proper hearing at the Orofino meeting called by the Army Engineers to consider middle Snake dam sites.

It is quite true that the several federation delegates who came to the Orofino hearing to speak in opposition to the Clearwater dams, could have been dealt with in a better fashion. Still they were given the opportunity to enter their opposition.

The net result, however, is that they fortified their opposition to the dams with what they called the "undemocratic" hearing at Orofino and thereby won converts to their cause.

As far as the dams were concerned, only one side was presented at the federation convention. While it may have been the only side the sportsmen wanted to hear, yet as a statewide organization the federation could have shown itself to have been interested as much in the welfare of the state as of the sportsmen.

President Theo. H. Wegener was quite right when he told the convention in preliminary remarks the state is made up of a multitude of segments and that none can live separately.

The several industries have a greater stake in Idaho than the sportsmen. Were it not for industry, including agriculture, there would be no sportsmen.

It has been demonstrated in southern Idaho that dams and fishing go together quite well.

The federation must realize that, barring cheap application of atomic energy for generation of electricity, dams are here to stay.

The Clearwater dams were proposed for flood control as a primary purpose and the record shows there is no questioning of that need.

The federation would have taken on added stature had it agreed to the suggestion of Dr. Jacobs that it urge continued study and continued exploration into the problem of fitting dams and the fish problem together.

As for the proposal to initiate a stringent dredge-control bill, the federation deliberately disregarded a sincere effort of dredge companies to solve the wildlife problem.

The Simplot company presented a colored movie to show that it was expending money and research in its effort to clear the waters of the Payette river, "muddied" from monazite dredging near Cascade.

Here was an industry which snowed it was seeking, without a mandate of law, to reclaim dredged land as much as possible and to clarify the waters in which the dredges worked.

The all-or-nothing attitude of the Idaho Wildlife Federation can lead only to bitter squabbles that may do it more harm than good.

The federation is like a spoiled child who has yet to learn to live with the people surrounding him.