

## Another Paper Clouds Clearwater Issue

Another Pacific Northwest newspaper, the Spokane Spokesman-Review, is attempting to promote construction of two dams on the Clearwater River by comparing them with a high Hells Canyon dam on the Snake River. The comparison, of course, turns out to be unfavorable from the Review point of view to the Hells Canyon project.

"Should the army engineers or the private power firms get authorization to build the two proposed dams at the Bruce Eddy and Penny Cliffs sites on the Clearwater," the Review says in an editorial, "they will be providing the type of upstream storage and flood control that cannot be secured on the middle Snake River in the Hells Canyon area.

"This is an important factor in the full development of the Columbia River and its tributaries. It should be helpful in clearing up some of the planned confusion created by the promoters of a high federal Hells Canyon dam."

The same point of view has been expressed frequently by the Boise Statesman and some other publications which accept without question government estimates of Clearwater storage potentials but close their eyes to the need for storage on the Snake River.

Perhaps it is unavailing to remind that the usable storage listed by the Army Corps of Engineers for the various projects is 1,430,000 acre-feet for Bruce Eddy, 2,300,000 acre-feet for Penny Cliffs and 3,800,000 acre-feet for Hells Canyon. Perhaps it is hopeless to keep repeating the basic questions: What difference does it make to lower Columbia flood victims on which upstream tributary the flood crest is held back in storage? Perhaps it is naive to insist that those who so casually accuse others of creating "planned confusion" should face up to the key problem of flood control, which is, not where the floods originate

alone, but also where they can be held back. Perhaps it is impossible to convince those who reject Hells Canyon as firmly as they endorse Grand Coulee that water storage is needed badly on both the Clearwater and Snake Rivers in the years ahead if the power production and flood control needs of the region are to be filled.

Even if these factors cannot be taken into consideration by the foes of Hells Canyon dam, however, it may prove to be to their advantage to consider a matter of strategy. To wit: It may prove damaging to the cause of the Clearwater projects to attempt to sell them to the public as a satisfactory substitute for Hells Canyon.

It is no secret in this region that the Clearwater projects were conceived originally in the U. S. Senate and in Department of Interior offices in Washington as a possible political substitute for Hells Canyon. This is a matter of record which can be documented as fully as anyone desires.

After conducting rapid surveys of the projects, however, the Corps of Engineers wisely avoided any engineering comparison between the Clearwater and Snake projects and proposed construction of the Clearwater dams on their own merits and without reference to the Hells Canyon controversy.

That is the way it should be, and that is the way the Clearwater question will be considered by the public unless Hells Canyon foes keep insisting upon introducing separate issues into the debate. If that insistence continues, however, the public is likely to conclude that the whole Clearwater program is primarily an effort to take the administration "off the hook" on the Hells Canyon issue. That would be an unfortunate conclusion, but it will be an almost inevitable one if those who condemn "planned confusion" continue to confuse the issues.—B.J.