

## Politically Speaking

By John Corlett

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 flooder" of the Snake river basin and contributes 30 per cent of the run off 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 run off 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 Welleroth of Jerome and N. V. Sharp of Elmer -- 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 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.

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



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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 also that the Clearwater contributes more to the flow of the Snake river than any of Snake's 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.

### Engineers Set Example With Public Hearings

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.

The Bureau of Reclamation does not usually follow this procedure, but did not make public its initial Mountain Sheep findings at the Orofino meeting.

At that meeting, the bureau presented a purely factual description of what its investigation turned up. The hearing was devoted almost exclusively to the Clearwater dams because it was held in the area directly concerned with the structures.

The bureau is to be complimented for joining the Army Engineers in presentation of the factual data.

One thing the hearing did show: both agencies can move with dispatch under an order from Congress. The investigations of the three dams began only last August. The bureau not only provided figures on storage, power, size and costs, but presented a cross section of the Mountain Sheep dam as well as an artist's sketch of how it would appear in the Snake river. E. L. White, planning engineer, said continued refinements will be made in the data as the investigation continues.

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.

In more recent years the Reclamation bureau has tended not only to report its findings out 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.