

Politically Speaking

Writer Prognosticates On Orofino Hearing

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—A fairly complete disclosure of the report the Army Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation will make on their investigations of dam sites on the Middle Snake River and its tributaries will be presented at a public meeting in Orofino next Friday.

The meeting was called by the Army Engineers to obtain reactions from residents of the Clearwater drainage of what the new investigations, begun last August, brought forth.

The Bureau of Reclamation will be on hand with its engineers to explain technically what it found at Mountain Sheep a mile or so upstream from the mouth of the Salmon on the Snake River.

The bureau will describe what kind of a dam it can build at Mountain Sheep with a tunnel diverting water from the Salmon River and what can be expected without the diversion.

It will be recalled the investigation was authorized by the last Congress under an amendment offered by Sen. Henry C. Dworshak. The engineers were given \$140,000 to conduct the investigation for a possible alternate to Hells Canyon Dam.

Initially, the job was to have been done entirely by the engineers, but the bureau, which has investigation funds of its own, entered into an agreement with the Army whereby it was given the task to investigate the Snake River from the mouth of the Salmon River upstream on the Snake to Hells Canyon.

This left the Army Engineers with investigation of the Clearwater River drainage and to take a look at the Salmon River if necessary.

The basic results of those investigations will first be made public at Orofino.

This reporter ventures that the bureau will find Mountain Sheep with an eight-mile diversion tunnel from the Salmon feasible and practical.

standable that diversion of water from the Salmon River will provide more stable storage at Mountain Sheep, develop more power and provide more effective control of water for navigation and power uses downstream. Without the diversion, the problem would be finding all of the storage which the reservoir could hold.

This columnist ventures that those attending the Orofino meeting will learn that the dams proposed by the Army Engineers would provide more storage and more power at less cost than the high Hells Canyon Dam.

Not only that, but they would provide flood control and navigation benefits non-existent at Hells Canyon.

While the four lower Snake River dams at Ice Harbor, Lower Granite, Little Goose and Lower Monumental are all authorized, the true fact is that only sufficient water is available now to make Ice Harbor feasible.

The Clearwater dams would provide sufficient storage to make all four dams feasible.

What many persons fail to realize is that the Snake River above the mouth of the Salmon, drains a semi-arid country. The Clearwater drains an area whose runoff is about eight times that of the Snake River basin above Hells Canyon. In other words the rainfall and precipitation is about that many times heavier than on the Snake River basin above Hells Canyon.

The plain fact is that the total runoff from the 9,600 square miles of the Clearwater drainage is close to that of the runoff from the 71,000 square miles of Idaho land of the Snake River basin above Weiser.

While the Clearwater is running wild, the Snake at the present time has more than 7,000,000 acre feet of storage, with more abuilding at Palisades and Lucky Peak.

While the water of the Snake River above Hells Canyon has been put to multiple use for irrigation, flood control and power, the water of the Clearwater is not even used for flood control and navigation and very little for power.