

Area Groups Back Clearwater Dams, Snub Ice Harbor Motion

OROFINO—Chambers of Commerce in the Clearwater River area agreed Wednesday night to solidly support the construction of power and storage dams on the Clearwater River system at an Army Engineers public hearing here next month.

Representatives of Chambers at Orofino, Grangeville, Kooskia, Kamiah, Elk River, Pierce, Moscow, Ahsahka and Lewiston met here to formulate a united opinion to be presented to the Army Corps of Engineers when it lays its dam building proposals before the people of the area Nov. 20.

The Engineers called the hearing to find out whether plans for two dams on the North Fork and two on the Middle Fork of the Clearwater would meet any local opposition.

No opposition was expressed at Wednesday night's meeting, the second held this month by a liaison committee of the areas chambers of commerce.

But the delegates turned down a resolution offered by the Lewiston Chamber of Commerce affirming united support for early construction of Ice Harbor Dam on the Snake River below Lewiston.

Lewiston Idea Expressed

John Shepard, chairman of the Lewiston Chamber of Commerce Waterways Committee, told the group that "we in Lewiston will be very receptive to any program that will help any district in this part of the Columbia Basin."

"We in Lewiston feel very optimistic over the proposed Clearwater projects," he said, but he added that "for 60 years Lewiston has been carrying the ball for the whole region" in seeking construction of Ice Harbor Dam, and he said that "a movement is afoot now to try to bypass Ice Harbor and build John Day Dam instead."

Shepard said it was important that the region be unified in support of Ice Harbor as well as of the Clearwater River dams. Otherwise, he added, Ice Harbor might be sidetracked in favor of John Day Dam in Oregon.

"Ice Harbor is no competitor of storage dams here," he said. "They would complement each other."

His resolution urged the Corps of Engineers and Idaho congressional delegates "to work for immediate appropriations for construction of Ice Harbor Dam and the other three dams (on the Lower Snake) in succession in order that our Inland Empire citizens may enjoy the full benefits of our river system below Lewiston, Idaho."

(The other three dams, Little Goose, Lower Granite and Lower Monumental, also authorized, would be integrated with Ice Harbor and would provide river navigation between Lewiston and the Pacific Ocean.)

Ask Solid Support

Robert Robson of Grangeville asked Shepard to what use the resolution would be put if it were passed. Would it be presented at the Nov. 20 hearing?

Shepard replied that it would not, that it would be forwarded to members of Congress to indicate solid support throughout the region for Ice Harbor.

George Klein, Grangeville,

said he was afraid "Lewiston is trying to tie Ice Harbor onto the Clearwater Dams," and he said this would confuse the issue.

Shepard replied that there was no intent at Lewiston to tie Ice Harbor to the other dams. "We only want to make it clear that we don't intend to relax our efforts on behalf of Ice Harbor."

Called 'Premature'

Robson then told Shepard he thought the motion "a little premature," and suggested that it be taken back to separate chambers of commerce for study.

Several delegates said that they were not fully informed on Ice Harbor dam, and Shepard replied that "I can't see what the chambers of commerce in this area have been talking about if they haven't made up their minds on this dam."

Ray McNichols of Orofino offered an amendment to the Lewiston resolution, expressing the feeling of the group that there be no tie-in between Ice Harbor and the Clearwater dams, but his amendment was not voted on.

Vernon Butler of Orofino said "we have considered that our dams (on the Clearwater) would be constructed soon. We feel that the injection of Ice Harbor now is out of order and confusing. These communities are not particularly interested in Ice Harbor, but these dams on the Clearwater hit us right between the eyes. They are at our back door. They have a whale of a lot to do with our towns and with Lewiston, too. We should try to be in a position Nov. 20 to make clear that we want the Clearwater dams. Any discussion of Ice Harbor would be out of order at this meeting."

Asks 'Reciprocal Action'

Shepard replied that "we have spent thousands of dollars and man hours trying to get development of the lower Snake for everybody. I am very disappointed that these people haven't learned enough about the benefits of Ice Harbor Dam to take action on this resolution. I sincerely hope that this will not in any way affect Lewiston's attitude toward the Clearwater projects. We would like a little reciprocal action here."

Wade Wilson, president of the Kamiah Chamber of Commerce, said he thought "the Lewiston chamber has been weak in not getting out to the small towns. We have never been approached by a representative of the Lewiston chamber to state the Lewiston position and ask for our support. I think Kamiah would be glad to adopt this resolution."

William Marineau of Moscow said that "we came here with the understanding that the Clearwater dams would be discussed. We didn't know we'd run into Ice Harbor. If this resolution were sent to our chamber I feel certain that it would pass. Our chamber of commerce has never been asked to support any dams except these in the Clearwater basin."

McNichols asked the group: "How will they get John Day? With unity. They stick together down there and they go out and get it. Idaho gets nothing because we are in mortal combat with each other on our own projects."

Motion Passed

McNichols then offered a motion in support of the Clearwater River dams: "that we favor the development, firstly, of the Middle Snake and especially of the North Fork and Middle Fork of the Clearwater River for construction of storage purpose dams, and further resolve that one or more dams be built on the North Fork and on the Middle Fork; that the Penny Cliffs Dam and the Selway Falls Dams would be very practical for construction, and that we feel the suggested sites at Bruce's Eddy and White Pine on the North Fork are logical and practical sites for the construction of dams."

The motion was passed, after some discussion, without dissent.

The engineers' proposals include construction of the high White Pine Dam on the North Fork a short distance downstream from the mouth of the Little North Fork; a run of the river dam at Bruce's Eddy near Ahsahka, where the North Fork enters the main stem of the Clearwater; two dams on the Middle Fork, preferably at Selway Falls and Penny Cliffs.

All the dams would provide power at the sites and storage for release during low water seasons in order to firm power at downstream dams.