

Snake River Is Best Bet

Pacific Northwest interests that clash over what form the water resource development in the Snake River takes, are strengthening the position of neighboring Canada, in which several of the Columbia River units have their sources.

The recent victory of the Conservative Premier, John Diefenbaker, was attributed in some degree to the aggressive policy advocated with respect to the United States. British Columbia, which is the province with Columbia River sources, has a power policy, enunciated by its Premier W. A. C. Bennett, which must be viewed realistically on this side of the international boundary.

In addressing the British Columbia Parliament Feb. 27, Bennett gave notice that his province intends to get more than 50 per cent of the hydro benefits at American dams on the Columbia attributable to storage of water in Canada.

Our Snake River has no sources in or even close to the neighboring dominion, but the Kootenai and Columbia proper both originate north of the border and there are lesser feeders in which the Canadians also have a claim.

There are two threats which the British Columbia folk can hold in the water allocation of the big stream. They can divert the Kootenai into the Columbia at Canal Flats, by construction which would not be out of reason in these times. They have also proposed, on a dominion-wide basis, the diversion of the Columbia's flow into the Fraser River system. Either project, if carried out, would make a substantial difference in the volume of water supplying Grand Coulee and developments down stream as far as the confluence of the Snake.

Proposals for storage and power generation on the Snake, Clearwater and other units of the Snake River system have found private vs. public ownership in contention and, of late, an unwillingness on the part of the Federal Power Commission to authorize construction of projects on the Middle Snake for which a four-company combine has plans pretty well advanced. The fish and wildlife interests are active wherever a storage project is proposed. And, meanwhile, the bargaining position of Canada and British Columbia, with respect to our power and water resource of the future, gets stronger.

What we do on Snake River is 100 per cent for the Pacific Northwest and our best interests demand that we resolve our differences and proceed with an integrated development promising the maximum of power, water storage, fisheries protection and the retention of adequate wildlife resources.—Walla Walla Union-Bulletin.