



Robert D. Owsley, project engineer for the Army Corps of Engineers, left, and Mayor A. B. Curtis of Orofino stand above the North Fork of the Clearwater River near the spot where the western end of

Dworshak Dam will burrow into the rock. They are looking upstream toward the huge reservoir area behind the dam. The top of the eastern end of the dam will be located across the canyon.



Orofino Mayor A. B. Curtis, left, and Robert D. Owsley, project engineer for the Army Corps of Engineers, inspect the beginnings of the 1,700-foot diversion tunnel that will carry the North Fork of

the Clearwater River around the Dworshak Dam construction site. The tunnel is 40 feet high and 40 feet wide and is being driven through almost solid rock.

Orofino Awaits The Big Boom

By BILL HALL
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OROFINO — It was gold that brought hordes of men to Clearwater County 100 years ago, producing a boom that spawned a flock of villages and the present city of Lewiston.

But it is concrete—6-million cubic yards of it — that will feed the new boom of the 1960s, swelling the population of western Clearwater County and spilling over into Lewiston.

The concrete will be poured in the construction of the largest single project in Idaho history—the \$210-million Dworshak Dam at Ahsahka, four miles west of Orofino. At the peak of construction, three years from now, it will employ 1,930 men. The families of the workmen are expected to add approximately 3,540 to that, for a total of 5,470 new residents of the area. In addition, other jobs will be created in grocery stores, motels, service stations and other businesses that will expand as the population grows.

Attempts are under way to find new industry, and the dam and connected projects always will involve some employment, but the one big ace up the sleeve of those trying to keep the boom from turning to bust is tourism and recreation.

Owsley said the usual pattern for communities near major projects is that they experience a decline after construction is completed, but rarely does the population drop to the level it held before construction began.

"Orofino will never see 3,000 again," he said. The 1960 census of the city showed 2,471 residents. Curtis estimates approximately 4,000 living within the city limits today, and 6,500 in Orofino and the surrounding unincorporated residential areas. Since the city's share of state funds depends on its population, a special census is tentatively planned for September of next year, and there may be more annexation.

Curtis said preparations are being made to serve the tourists, the sportsmen, the boaters and the campers who are expected to come into the area in greater numbers when the construction workers leave.

The growth already has started. Robert D. Owsley, project engineer for the Army Corps of Engineers, which is in charge of the dam construction, estimates 1,000 to 1,500 workmen and their families are on the scene now. Most have settled at Orofino, but there is little space left here now. Owsley said some workers have found homes at Lewiston and are commuting.

The project is expected to involve 1,965 workers and their families by next year, 3,920 in 1967, 5,470 at the peak in 1968, 4,500 in 1969, 3,050 in 1970 and 1,450 in the final year of 1971.

That produces a dual problem for Orofino Mayor A. B. Curtis and other civic leaders. They must be prepared to serve the temporary residents during the construction period, and, more difficult, prepare for and try to prevent an economic let-down when they leave.

Curtis and Owsley think the decline can be significantly minimized.

19 Recreation Areas

He points out that the reservoir behind the dam will have 19 recreation areas, including boat docks, picnic areas, camping sites, trails and related outdoor facilities.

Curtis has been in contact with Louise Shadduck, director of the State Department of Commerce & Development, for help in locating permanent industries for the region. He said the corps is cooperating in that attempt.

Orofino School Supt. Michael Cassetto is another community leader who is interested in the developing population and the possibility of a decline after the construction workers leave.

Orofino schools would be pressed for space this year even without a massive construction project. Most of the increase has yet to be felt. Cassetto estimates that only about 50 of the 2,015 students enrolled in the school system are connected with the construction of the dam. He has no doubt, however, that there will be considerably more than that before the project is completed.

But Cassetto does not expect any problems from the rapidly growing population that can't be handled.

"We'll just play it by ear," he said. Work on the dam is progressing approximately on schedule. The major project now is the diversion tunnel to carry the North Fork of the Clearwater River around the damsite during construction. The 1,700-foot tunnel has been drilled approximately 135 feet into the southern side of the canyon. It is 40 feet in diameter and is being drilled with the aid of a "Jumbo," a large, mobile frame, using 30 drills at once to cover the entire face of the end of the tunnel. When the drilling is completed, explosives are inserted, the Jumbo is backed away, and another section of tunnel is blasted out. The work is expected to be completed by April. It started in January.

Curtis expects the next request to Congress will be for \$125-million to begin

the major phase of construction, and that should mark the beginning of the heavy increase in construction workers, Corps of Engineers personnel and their families.

They will leave when the work is over, just as the gold miners of the 1880s left the area within a few years. But those early miners were replaced several times over by the ranchers and the lumbermen that were to follow. This time it will be fish hatchery personnel, dam maintenance workers and businessmen specializing in serving the 50,000 tourists a year that the Army Corps estimates will come into the area.

Orofino's population may dip for a few years below the peak it will reach during the height of construction, but it does seem certain that the community, in Owsley's words, will never see 3,000 again, and it is probable it will see 5,000 for the last time within a year.