

# The House Acts On Dworshak Dam

A recent flurry of loose conversation about the status of Dworshak dam on the North Fork of the Clearwater River was rudely interrupted Tuesday by the U.S. House of Representatives.

A \$4,276,116,400 public works appropriations bill zipped through the House and went to the Senate. The bill included a \$6-million appropriation for the next stage of construction on Dworshak dam — the full amount sought for the next fiscal year by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Last-ditch opposition to the dam, particularly among some organized wildlife interests, has revived recently in the wake of several public statements about the project by the president of Potlatch Forests, Inc., Benton R. Cancell.

Some of the long-term opponents of the project apparently were not listening very carefully to what Cancell said. That, perhaps, is a separate topic. They should have been listening enough, however, to realize what he did *not* say. He clearly did *not* say that PFI is opposing the dam's construction.

The company obviously is working hard in behalf of its interests which will be affected by the dam. A variety of legislation has been suggested, some of which may win approval by Congress and some of which may not. PFI naturally is pressing for the best agreements it can make with the Corps of Engineers under present legislation, carefully examining log passage facilities proposed by the Corps and exploring the opportunities for mill facilities in the dam area, for example. The company looked wistfully for a time at suggestions that it might receive federal forest lands instead of cash compensation to pay for its own lands inundated by the dam. Such proposals, however, have been considered often by Congress — and never adopted.

Despite concentrated efforts to bargain with federal agencies and with Congress for the best terms possible, there never was any indication that PFI or other Pacific Northwest lumber interests would seek to stop construction of the dam. That is the point which some of the long-term opponents of the project seem to have missed.

In Idaho and across the country, foes of the dam greeted Cancell's statements with hope and joy. If organized wildlife interests could join forces with the lumber industry, they suggested, Dworshak dam might yet be killed, despite its authorization by Congress and the substantial progress on its construction. Columns

were written. Speeches were dusted off. One organization even went on record asking Reps. Compton I. White and Ralph Harding, Idaho Democrats, to "investigate" the familiar charges of damage-to-wildlife which were investigated and re-investigated year after year before the dam was authorized. (How Harding got into this First District act instead of Sen. Frank Church and Len B. Jordan was not clarified.)

Perhaps Cancell did stimulate these hopes among the dam's opponents by some of his statements. He recalled, for example, that his company years ago adopted a policy of "neutrality" toward the project — although he was not exactly sure why.

In this connection, it is perhaps pertinent to recall that the dam first was proposed as a private power project. Pacific Northwest Power Co. applied to build the dam under a "partnership" arrangement. The brilliant and persuasive chairman of the Pacific Northwest board of directors, Kinsey M. Robinson, devoted his remarkable talents to lining up support for the project — or at least trying to neutralize any opposition. Somewhat ironically, the considerable success of his effort became a major asset of the Corps of Engineers when the "partnership" approach was abandoned and the project was designated for federal sponsorship.

At any rate, the unlikely alliance between wildlife organizations and the forest products industry, which some foes of the dam hopefully anticipated, has not developed. At least, it has not developed to any extent discernible thus far in that remarkably sensitive barometer of political pressures, the House of Representatives.

Like most major river development projects, Dworshak dam has always had most of its opposition in the House. The Senate voted repeatedly to authorize the dam before House concurrence could be obtained. If there were any major inclination in Congress for a reversal of position, it would be detected first in the House, not the Senate.

The big appropriations for Dworshak dam are yet to come in future sessions of Congress, of course. Certainly there will be hard bargaining over conditions and specifications in connection with these appropriations. But the House has demonstrated pretty decisively that Dworshak dam is going to be built. The remaining battles will be over details — including some very important and interesting details, to be sure, but still details. — B. J.