

## Bruces Eddy: The Future Now Is Here

Idaho generally and north central Idaho particularly took a great leap forward yesterday when Congress authorized (except for final formalities today) Bruces Eddy dam on the North Fork of the Clearwater River.

It was a remarkable victory for Sen. Frank Church and Rep. Gracie Pfost particularly, because this project was the only one salvaged by the Senate from a considerable list of major river development projects rejected by the House of Representatives.

For this region, the authorization of Bruces Eddy (along with Asotin dam on the Snake River six miles south of Lewiston and two southern Idaho projects) has immediate and long-range implications of major importance.

When the House finally adopted last night the report of Senate and House conferees who had been negotiating all day to try to salvage some kind of omnibus bill, the authorization of Bruces Eddy was assured. The Senate still has to act upon the bill, and President Kennedy still must sign it, but these are mere details. Still awaiting approval in both branches of Congress is a separate appropriations bill which will provide \$2-million to start construction of Bruces Eddy promptly. The odds now are overwhelming that this bill will be zipped through quickly today as Congress hastens to dispose of this last major legislation delaying adjournment.

The authorization of Bruces Eddy will have an immediate impact because preliminary planning work already has been completed and the project is ready for the construction stage. The late Sen. Henry Dworshak, R-Idaho, created a precedent in Congress when he obtained substantial and numerous appropriations to plan Bruces Eddy before it was authorized. The argument for this unusual procedure was a good one. Wildlife interests which opposed the dam, claiming that it would damage steelhead fishing and "destroy the Clearwater elk herd," pleaded for time to conduct detailed studies of the effects of the project upon wildlife. Dworshak and other supporters of the project agreed to this approach. They argued in turn that engineering studies also should be proceeding simultaneously so that Congress could consider all the facts in one package when the time came to propose authorization. Congress accepted the logic of this argument and appropriated planning money, as well as wildlife research money, in advance of authorization.

The studies were made on both fronts.

The engineering studies confirmed that Bruces Eddy was a magnificent damsite and one of the few large storage sites remaining in the United States which could be developed economically to provide maximum, multi-purpose use of the region's floodwaters.

The wildlife study reports generally purported to show just about what the objectors had claimed they would show—but most laymen were not convinced. The wildlife interests failed to document their extreme claims of potential elk damage—but still declined to withdraw them. They made a substantial case for their claims of damage to steelhead—but generally refused to concede that Bruces Eddy planners were working earnestly and well to minimize and compensate for such losses. At the wildlife leadership level, at least, resistance continued and the hoped-for compromises never developed. So the advocates of Bruces Eddy finally decided to make their bid for authorization.

It was a most interesting struggle. Sponsors of the project deliberately by-

passed the House, which has become the burying ground of many a worthy rivers development project because of the sensitivity of many House members to the complaints of the lobbyists. With strong support from the Kennedy administration and the Senate leadership, the project sailed easily through the Senate in a big omnibus bill which quickly was denounced in the House by foes of public power projects, spokesmen for the coal industry, wildlife organization leaders and assorted other lobbyists. The struggle was intricate and bitter. Finally, with Church standing by in the Senate ready to launch a filibuster to save Bruces Eddy, House conferees conceded yesterday on this one project alone, and Senate conferees accepted the elimination of all the others opposed by the House.

The expected appropriation today of \$2-million to start construction of Bruces Eddy will provide a much-needed stimulus for the economy of this region. The slump in the lumber industry in Clearwater County and its neighboring counties is serious indeed. Depression conditions prevail in many areas. The start of construction on Bruces Eddy will give this region a major economic shot in the arm.

However, the effects will not be felt tomorrow or next week. Delays will be inevitable in getting started on such early-stage work as building access roads and logging of the vast pool area to provide a clear-cut reservoir site. Meanwhile, Clearwater County particularly and its neighbors to a lesser degree will begin to grapple with the problems of a rapid population influx and some major changes in economic and social patterns.

These changes will call for careful, calm, clear-headed planning. Community leaders in Orofino, especially, who long have worked for the Bruces Eddy project, have ample understanding of the vast changes which now lie ahead. The residents of that community and surrounding ones should make a deliberate effort—and quickly—to begin fitting themselves for the new roles they must fill if teamwork is to avoid chaos in the transitional years ahead.

During the eight years which will be required to construct Bruces Eddy, (assuming Congress provides money regularly to keep the project on schedule), great changes will be occurring throughout this region. The creation of the largest lake in north central Idaho, for example, will revolutionize recreational activities.

The Lewiston-Clarkston area will have an opportunity to learn much from Clearwater County's experiences. The steady construction of Lower Snake River dams, which will put Lewiston behind dikes before 1970, will create tremendous changes in the life of this community, too. Community planning, only recently re-emphasized, will be the key to orderly progress all along the Clearwater River during this era of change. Clearwater County will be leading as it is learning. The good neighbors throughout the region will have to develop the skills of neighborliness to an even higher degree.

But these are welcome challenges. The authorization of this great dam, which will alter the pattern of life in this region, represents a tremendous triumph for the region and for all of Idaho. The people of the area have been well represented, locally and in the Congress, in this campaign for Bruces Eddy dam. It is an occasion for gratitude and rejoicing—but with remembrance that the challenge of the future now lies just ahead.—B. J.