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November 4, 1953

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The Honorable David Ben Gurion
The Prime Minister
State of Israel

Dear Sir:

The undersigned engineers have been requested by your staff to comment upon the recently proposed "Unified Development of the Water Resources of the Jordan Valley Region." This program appears in a 1953 report prepared under the authorization of the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East by Charles T. Main, Inc., of Boston, Massachusetts.

This report has been reviewed by us and the following general comments thereon are submitted:

1. Since the original studies made by the undersigned many years ago, the desirability of integrated regional water development in the area in question has been repeatedly stressed. The logic of maximum beneficial uses of waters now going to waste in the region has always been obvious.

2. The present Report, at least in principle, pursues this same general regional objective. To that extent and with that purpose we are, of course, in complete agreement. We are at a loss to understand, therefore, why, in a true regional program, the use of the Litani River in Lebanon has been completely omitted either in analysis or in program.

The Litani represents one of the most valuable water resources in the region. After power development and some local irrigation, use, some hundreds of million cubic meters annually would be permanently wasted to the sea. This river has long been studied by us, beginning

David Ben Gurion

November 4, 1953

with its earliest review by the late J. B. Hays. It is inconceivable that the assets of the Litani River should be completely ignored in any authoritative program for the joint development of the resources of Lebanon, Syria, Israel and Jordan. No engineering or economic barriers of any significance stand in the way of integrating the Litani into an appropriate regional plan of development.

3. Although the Report is intended to be regional in character and perspective, it includes an arbitrary restriction of the uses of the water to within the boundaries of the Jordan River watershed. We can find no justification for the adoption of a principle that the nation to which water is allocated should be forced to use such allocation primarily on its inferior lands, simply because these latter fall within a watershed boundary.

The practical significance of such a limiting principle is that Israel would waste valuable waters to irrigate unfavorable areas, while it would be prevented from using these same waters on much richer soils which fall beyond the watershed limits. Such a principle, if adopted, would destroy the remarkable and vital rich potential of a large part of the Negev area.

We have consistently recommended the development of the Negev area with such amounts of Jordan River water to which Israel may be legitimately entitled. The reasons for such a sound use in the Negev are clear, as follows:

- (a) Some 2 million dunams of fertile soil are available for food supply.
- (b) Great acreages for settlement are at hand.
- (c) Local underground waters, intermittent wadi flows, and

November 4, 1953

saline sources could be developed to great advantage if the Jordan River water were used, as it should be, for amplifying and regularizing the various admixtures.

(d) No significant engineering or fiscal difficulties obstruct the development of the Negev.

Neither water conservation nor international precedent dictates that participating countries should be deprived of their prerogative of using their waters of allocation in such a way as to assure the maximum advantages to their citizens.

It is not inappropriate to point out that, if such a principle were enforced in the interstate uses in our own country, we should have promoted uneconomical water development in a vacuum.

4. The works now under construction in Israel, of canalizing the waters of the Jordan for transmission to Lake Tiberias, are not only not in conflict with the proposals in the Report, but fit into them admirably. They conflict in no way with the above or any other scheme for using Lake Tiberias as a main reservoir for the distribution of irrigation water for the Jordan Valley.

5. If and when a completely integrated program for regional water development materializes in this area, we have little doubt but that it will include the principles and the details which we list above.

Very truly yours,
(signed)
H. G. Bashore

J. L. Savage

Abel Wolman
Board of Consultants on Water Development
for Israel

cc: The Honorable Abba Eban
Ambassador of Israel to the United States and Permanent Representative
of Israel to the United Nations