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EDITORIAL

Reversion to the Primitive

William L. Finley, well-known biologist of Oregon, delivered before the Pacific Coast Port Authorities at its meeting last week a talk on "Our Rivers and Harbors," during which he attacked water developments for transportation, building of dams for flood control and power development and the use of waters for irrigation.

Quoting well-marked propaganda against waterways for transportation purposes, the biologist made many statements which called forth a vigorous reply from Colonel John C. H. Lee, Division Engineer of the Army Engineers of the Pacific Northwest. Colonel Lee emphasized that the use of waterways had proved an economy, providing lower transportation costs than any other form of transportation, and undertook to defend the program which has been a sharp battle scene during recent years.

Oregon industry faces a new enemy in respect to use of its water and land resources. Opposition to such developments have been voiced frequently in the past but at no time until recently have the leading forces of wild life conservation openly arrayed themselves in bold disregard of the vast economic advantages accruing to the people of this state and the nation through a proper and a modern use of water and land. Such an attitude suggests that fanatical thought can develop from an intense partisanship on any of the so-called hobbies or recreational aspects of human life. It also suggests that if the people desiring work, productive farms, factories and the sustaining comforts of modern civilization are to go ahead in a substantial way they will have to take cognizance of this new force that is being aligned against them.

Every country of the world having the potential of water transportation is using it. In every part of the United States except the Columbia River basin there has been substantial progress made in navigating inland waterways. All people from time immemorial down to the present recognized the necessity in human progress for the lowest cost and most economical transportation in moving the necessities of life.

The principle which has governed from the dawn of history until the present time and which has enlisted the progressive minds of all people continues today. Anyone not blinded by selfish interests knows that even with all the modern improvements for land transportation,

water carriers are more economical under any fair combination of conditions. Everyone knows the great developments of an industrial and an agricultural character which have clustered around waterways having opportunity to use this low-cost transportation. Everyone who is not hopelessly befogged by selfish interests and who is not hopelessly misled by fanatical theories knows the basic value of water transportation. In this huge country where distances are a tremendous handicap in reaching market and where the cost of land transportation is steadily mounting, all students know that the success of the people who produce will be tremendously aided and advanced by utilizing any economies in transportation which nature has opened to them. This principle will prevail in the Columbia basin despite all opposition, and those who grab at misleading propaganda in opposition to the program will inevitably be over-ridden.

Through this apparent altruism of conserving in untouched and undeveloped form nature's vast resources, opposition to the construction of dams for the control of flood waters and the generation of hydroelectric energy is becoming more intense. Wild life enthusiasts are prone to argue that commercial and sport fishing is of more value to the people than the generation of power in the streams. Wildly exaggerated figures have been presented of the commercial importance of the fishing industry and of the great commercial return through maintaining fish life for sporting requirements. The whole trend of the salmon industry on the Columbia River was for long years downward, due to the simple patent fact that more salmon are being caught than were propagated and matured. Changing the propagating system stopped the alarming decrease of several years ago and since then through a heroic struggle for the artificial propagation on one hand and the commercial take of salmon on the other, the take has been approximately stabilized at a relatively low level. These influences prevailed before dams were constructed in the Columbia River and continue today.

When irrigation began in the Yakima Valley the natural spawning ground in that basin was heavily impaired and this was rated one of the largest Chinook reproduction valleys of the Columbia system. While the great thriving population of the Yakima Valley is undertaking to

adopt reasonable and economic protection methods, the natural trend through the use of waters in irrigation is against ever restoring to its primitive state salmon propagation of the Yakima Valley. Thoughtful people in checking this development have placed a \$50,000,000 soil production per year, made possible through irrigation, against the effect that has been brought about on salmon propagation, and no man believing in the real success of humanity has risen to challenge the results.

Every region of the world having available hydroelectric energy within reasonable distance of industrial centers has been and is continuing to develop the same for the use of man. The Columbia River is the greatest hydroelectric basin of the North American continent, a heritage of such magnitude that it can barely be appreciated by the people here. This energy properly harnessed and applied to the industrial use of man, sustaining employment in the factories using electricity, will be the greatest in employment of any productive possibility found in the whole of the Pacific Northwest. The annual values would run into the hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars, and the workers would sustain a population in this region that is much greater than that which all of the existing resources sustains today.

It will probably be necessary to organize farmers, industrial workers and the whole people who believe in employment and production to defend the right of our own people and the nation at large, in the modern and profitable use of our water resources. To stop the march of time now would disregard the progress of all of the people of an advanced character, would revert to a primitive conception of nature for man's benefit, and would be appalling. Such a program would likely result within a few years of more modern and progressive people demanding that the primitive devotees surrender these vast resources to those who have a modern conception of life. It was this logic which the whites used in taking America from the Indians. The same logic will prevail again if any people blessed by nature with vast resources prove so stupid and backward that they will not permit the world to profit from them.

Wild life conservation has merit. Primitive things are warranted where they do not interfere with human progress. Protection of wild life within the limits of man's essential needs has popular support. Perversion of such a doctrine to the point where it cripples and restricts man's work will never be permitted.