

The Willamette Valley Project

Shorewood, Ore., News

SEVEN DAMS FOR FLOOD CONTROL AND THE COSTS

By WILLIAM L. FINLEY, Sc. D.

When the Army Engineers were allotted \$300,000 to study and report the situation along the Willamette River in Oregon, it was in accordance with the Flood Control Act of 1936, wherein if the federal government appropriated funds to carry out a project the state or local interests should also contribute a proportion of the expense.

Colonel Thomas M. Robins, Division Engineer, in his report, Document No. 544, published by the House of Representatives, stated that complete protection of the area subject to overflow was not warranted and could not be provided for. However, partial protection of important areas could be obtained EITHER by a system of levees or bank protection works along the Willamette River, or by a series of dams and reservoirs at the headwaters. He also said that if the cost of dams and reservoirs had to be carried by flood control, it would be more economical for this partial protection of land to be handled by the building of levees. Next, he brought up the question of the building of dams and reservoirs that could be used for other purposes and not solely for flood control.

The question proposed was a matter of costs and results, for flood control only by a levee system \$33,000,000; for flood control by dams and reservoirs \$62,075,000.

The report of the Army Engineer suggested that if the dams and reservoirs were constructed to control floods on the Willamette, these structures could be used for other purposes such as the development of power, irrigation, etc. On the other hand, Major General J. L. Schley, Chief of Engineers of the War Department, and Brigadier General M. C. Tyler, Senior Member of the Corps of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, stated that according to the 1936 Flood Control Act if the government pays for construction, that "local interest be required to bear the costs of lands and damages as provided in that Act, including the costs of railroad relocations and facilities for the propagation of fish and related works, and be required to maintain and operate the reservoirs on completion."

In the two reports of the Engineers mentioned above, it is stated in five different paragraphs that according to the estimated cost of \$62,075,000 for this Willamette Valley Project, the government is to pay \$43,430,000 and the local interests are to pay \$18,645,000.

The National Resources Committee appointed by President Roosevelt, of which Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, is Chairman, had experts make a study of flood control and other problems. This Committee stated, "If projects deserve federal contributions, they certainly also deserve local contributions, and unless local interests are prepared to make appropriate contributions on their own behalf, the federal government normally should not participate in the improvements they seek. The fact that a state or city wishes to save its own money cannot properly increase any federal obligation to help it. The fact that a state or city claims to be unable to contribute anything toward a waterway project it seeks, might well lead to postponement of the undertaking until its economic status has improved."

What have the local promoters of the Willamette valley Project done in high-jacking the government to foot the whole bill? Anticipating this very eventuality, the National Resources Committee took the stand that we should not "permit pressure groups and special local interests to obtain unfair advantages at the expense of the federal taxpayers."

Years ago one of the main boost-

ers of the Willamette Valley Project said: "The President should balance the budget. But since he is a New Dealer and is going to keep spending, we must grab all we can for our own state." This is the mania that has spread all over the country. Political pressure in the states rules congressmen, and no federal officials or experts can prevent congress from skinning federal taxpayers.

The next step of the manipulators was to get the Flood Control Act of 1936, revamped into another Flood Control Act of 1938. Relating to the Willamette Valley Project, this relieved the local interests from helping to finance flood control for their benefit. The government is now to pay all costs. Should the taxpayers try to balance the budget, or should the pressure groups in all parts of the country be permitted to lift millions of dollars from the taxpayers' pockets and run the nation more in the red?

Why Not Go Ahead?

Journal May 3-1940
Question So Many Times Asked Is Here Asked Again Concerning the Project Authorized for Sewage Disposal, and the No-Action Thereon.

PORTLAND, April 27.—To the Editor of The Journal—The communication of Mr. W. L. Finley in The Journal of April 26 was read with approval and interest. It is indeed true that our once beautiful river has been turned into a filthy, open sewer and that health officers have been advised to keep our children away for fear of disease and death. I believe it would be a sound investment to have our river cleaned and again made a source of healthful enjoyment for our children. The tourist alone would pay a sizable amount of the money invested. The federal government has offered to help finance this worthwhile project. Why not make use of this offer and go forward at this time, as our citizens have already given their approval?

Catherine Ryan.