

MR. FINDLEY ON DAMS
PORTLAND—(To the Editor)—

I have received a copy of your issue of December 5, containing an editorial from the Salem Statesman, entitled "Opposing the Valley Project." This refers to the annual meeting of the Oregon Wildlife Federation at Corvallis and states that the sportsmen, without proper investigation, oppose the Willamette Valley Project. It also states that the Army Engineers' plans for this project provide for safeguarding fish life in the Willamette River and its tributaries.

If four high dams are built on the north and south forks of the Santiam, the McKenzie, and the middle fork of the Willamette, the Army Engineers have stated that these cannot be supplied with fish ladders. We have a state law to the effect that dams that block our migratory fish runs cannot be constructed unless authorized by the state fish and game commissions. Both of these commissions have opposed the building of these four dams. The sportsmen also feel that this state law should not be violated.

The Willamette River Basin Commission has informed the public that an extra million dollars will be spent by the Government on hatcheries and will not only save the fisheries from the destructive effects of their proposed dams, but will actually improve both commercial and sport fishing. This is not true, according to the studies made by state and federal fish experts.

The artificial spawning of certain varieties of fish has been very successful. The facts show that other fish, like the spring Chinook salmon, can be spawned, but later they gradually disappear if their natural spawning beds are destroyed. The Baird Hatchery on the headwaters of the Sacramento River in California was established years ago by the United States Bureau of Fisheries. For some time this hatchery handled about 20,000,000 salmon eggs each season, but nevertheless it has been abandoned simply because, in spite of its efforts, the salmon have disappeared. The same thing occurred where Chinook salmon were artificially propagated in the Salmon River in Idaho, and that hatchery was also abandoned. Again, years ago when the Clackamas River, tributary of the Willamette, was blocked with power dams, the Bureau of Fisheries built a hatchery a few miles up in the hope of maintaining the Chinook runs. They stopped all the salmon at River Mill Dam, and they were spawned artificially. Instead of increasing or holding their own, the numbers of fish returning to the river steadily dropped. Where 2,428,000 eggs were taken in 1931, the supply had dropped in 1938 to 300,000. Finally the salmon were permitted to ascend a fish ladder at River Mill, and a new fish ladder recently constructed at Cazadero, because the only hope seemed to lie in allowing them to spawn naturally.

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Journal
Other Side of
Basin Argument
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By William L. Finley

Vice President of the National Wildlife Federation

On the editorial page of The Journal of December 6 was an article by Mr. Claude Buchanan, member of the Willamette River Basin commission, claiming that those who oppose the high dams on the upper Willamette river are zealots, and that those who want the federal government to build these dams are realists.

At the Oregon Wildlife conference at Corvallis, where this problem was discussed, Mr. Buchanan said it was a one-sided controversy that needed clarifying. He says that I am a great naturalist, who leads the fight in opposition to the development of the Willamette valley. He is connected with the Finley clan, the early residents of the Willamette. I have a deep love for the future of Oregon and her citizens. I hope I am not on the wrong trail.

The Other Side

Since this is a flood-control act, the public has to pay the cost. Since the public has the right to consider both sides of this question, I hope Mr. Buchanan, the other members of the Willamette Valley Basin commission, or Mr. R. H. Kipp, employed as its secretary, will publish answers to some of the questions raised at the Corvallis meeting.

The main complaint of Mr. Buchanan seems to be that the Wildlife federation is anxious to conserve the valuable salmon runs of the Willamette, but that these fish are not so important as farms. I feel that both are needed for the future benefit of Oregon. If four high dams are built on the upper Willamette and its tributaries, the army engineers stated that these could not be supplied with fish ladders. We have a state law to the effect that dams that block our migratory fish runs cannot be constructed unless authorized by the state fish and game commissions. Both of these commissions have opposed the building of these four dams. Is it fair for the Willamette Valley Basin commission to try to get this state law violated?

The Costlier Way

The army engineers were hired to study the Willamette Valley project, and congress published their report. It stated that flood control on the Willamette could be handled equally by levees or by bank-protection works, at a cost of \$33,000,000, or by a series of dams and reservoirs at the headwaters, at a cost of \$62,075,000. Since this nation is already loaded with debt, why shove our nation more into the red by doubling the debt for this flood-control project?

If the answer is that the dams can be used for other purposes, such as power development, irrigation and transportation, the report of the army engineers stated that, if the government pays for the construction of the proposed dams, "local interests be required to bear the cost of land and damages, including the cost of railroad relocations and the facilities for the propagation of fish and related works, and be required to maintain and operate the reservoirs on completion." At the estimated cost of \$62,075,000 for this project, the engineers stated that the government is to pay \$43,430,000, and the local interests are to pay \$18,645,000. Will the property owners in the Willamette valley agree with the orders of the United States army engineers, or will they insist that all costs for damages and construction be met by the taxpayers?

From a national standpoint, should we disregard the statement of the national resources committee, appointed by President Roosevelt? "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." In other words, if the landowners in the Willamette valley want these federal funds as a Christmas gift, should not millions of others in Oregon and other states be remembered in the same way by Santa Claus? This, of course, would bankrupt the nation.

Drowning Out Towns

One matter that needs more consideration is that the proposed four high dams will drown out towns like Sweet Home and Oakridge and destroy valuable farm lands in four valleys. A statement made by the promoters of this project is that it will be for the greatest good for the greatest number. A petition opposing this high dam on the south fork of the Santiam was signed by 48 Sweet Home business men and 186 property owners. One of the leading residents of Sweet Home said, "The Willamette pressure groups are using the same high-handed methods that Germany uses on smaller nations." The question that needs more study is, Why should some valuable farms be destroyed to benefit others?