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## Bookkeeping For Rivers

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THE West is still rich in natural resources, and many of its people are eager for a larger population and more industries. Our most difficult problem is to prevent one use of our rivers from destroying other values. Therefore, before our public waters are exploited, it is common sense to make detailed and careful studies to find out which is the most important service of a river.

Throughout the West there are many promotion schemes for new reclamation projects, inland waterway transportation, power development, and flood control where no study or any attention has been paid to the destruction of our wildlife resources. While many business men have insisted that the government balance its budget, yet there is some promotion plan in nearly every district calling for federal funds.

The business men will fight to get these on the basis that if they do not get the projects, some other locality will. This is the spending that is boosting taxes throughout the United States. It is considered shrewd business in many western states where the population may be only one or two million to lift money from the taxpayer's pocket, because they pay about one-half of one per cent for a 20 million dollar project, while the dense population in the East pays about 99½%.

Some of the early reclamation projects of the Department of Interior were highly beneficial. These were started by congressional act of 1902, which provided that the federal government would irrigate publicly-owned land in certain arid regions and sell these to farmers. It wasn't long before the landowners of semi-desert areas started political pressure to get federal funds for private gain.

Today this is the golden scheme where the land speculator pulls the amount of about \$200 per acre out of the taxpayer's pocket so the Reclamation Service can build dams and ditches. When the farmer starts harvesting under a federal mortgage of \$200 an acre, how is he to make a profit? However, in dealing out the funds, the government charges no interest on the money and tells the farmer he can have forty years to pay. The mortgages on some of the first projects were \$90 per acre. Not a single project has paid out. Past records show a farmer usually goes broke on irrigated land, especially with a mortgage of \$100 to \$120 per acre.

The biggest reclamation project now under way is the Grand Coulee Dam in the State of Washington, which is to be over five hundred feet high, and the prospective cost for the farmer to irrigate the land will be somewhere between \$200 and \$400 per acre. The solution of this gamble isn't the only problem. The high dams on these important rivers of the Pacific Coast are destroying the fish resources that belong to the public. The promoters are pushing for seven more dams on the Columbia River and seven on the Willamette River.

Another promotion plan for building dams on these western rivers is for inland waterway transportation. This does not refer to ocean harbors or large rivers where the water is deep enough for ships. It applies to improvement and maintenance of the up-river channels. Federal expenditures to June 30, 1937, for the improvement of inland waterways were approximately \$2,186,000,000.

Inland waterway transportation is about 70 years out of date. The country

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fields and orchards, and the big game of the forests. These recreational attractions bring far greater returns to the citizens than many of the promotion schemes for the use of public waters.

Out on the Pacific Coast, the different states have developed a tremendous business in selling their recreational advantages to visitors who come from all parts of the country. The beauty of the snow-capped mountains, primeval forests, picturesque rivers, motoring along paved highways, packing and camping in the mountains, angling and hunting lure many to enjoy summer vacations. California gets \$200,000,000 or more a year, which visitors gladly pay to the residents. About \$5,000,000 drops into the State Treasury for gasoline and sales taxes.

Oregon receives \$50,000,000 a year from tourists, and the State Highway Commission is spending \$100,000 a year advertising for more travelers since they are reimbursed by a five-cent tax on every gallon of gasoline.

waterway transportation, the cost will be boosted to over \$100,000,000, and if we take the top figure of the amount of freight the promoters claim will be moved up and down the Columbia, the actual cost to the taxpayers will be an average of \$50 per ton.

It is unfortunate that comparatively few people realize the value of our wildlife resources such as the salmon and trout in the rivers, the bird life in the

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