

The Arizona Daily Star

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July 20, 1931

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
120 East 19th St.,
New York City.

Dear Miss Tarbell:

I am delighted to have an opportunity to give you our position on the Hoover Dam and the Colorado River development. The country has heard so little of Arizona's side and so much of California's that it is a real privilege to have an opportunity to present Arizona's side of the case.

The Hoover Dam proposal originated originally as a flood control measure for the benefit of the Imperial valley. The heavy silt deposits of the Colorado River have constantly been building up the bed of the river to such an extent that in case of an exceptionally high flood, the river might break through the dykes and inundate the Imperial valley. As you know, a great part of the Imperial valley is below sea level, and below the level of the river.

When California began work on this proposition in 1920, hydro-electric power was having a great boom. Los Angeles at that time was also beginning to look for future municipal water supply sources. California, and particularly Los Angeles, saw what she thought was a splendid opportunity at the Black Canyon dam site on the Colorado River. She saw that if it were possible to get Congress to build a dam at this site it would give the Imperial valley adequate flood protection, plenty of water for the municipal water supply of Los Angeles, and a generating capacity for electricity that might pay for the cost of construction.

California went to work on this idea and she has, by skillful propaganda, ample money resources and great determination, succeeded so far in her plans. She succeeded in getting six of the seven states on the Colorado River to agree to a division of the water. She has not succeeded in getting Arizona to agree to her figures of an equitable water division. The other states had nothing in particular to bargain about. They had nothing to lose. While Arizona has her greatest natural resource at stake. For that reason Arizona has consistently opposed California's plans. Even though the Boulder dam will be built, the Supreme Court expressly stated that Arizona still had her right unprejudiced to an equitable division of the waters of the river.

Arizona, through her Attorney General and the Colorado River Commission, brought suit contesting the constitutionality of the Swing-Johnson bill. She lost this suit, so that the dam will be built, despite its great unfairness to Arizona and despite the fact that it may develop into being an economic monstrosity.

Arizona considers the Colorado River her biggest undeveloped asset. More than anything else she looks to it as a future source of revenue when

the mines of the state have been exhausted. Principally for that reason she has not been in favor of any hasty development. The Colorado River flows some 350 miles within the limits of the state. Arizona contributes more water to the river than any other state. Consequently, she feels that she is entitled to more of the water and more of the other potentialities of the river than any other state. She would much prefer to see the river developed by private enterprise because she can tax private enterprise. She believes that the river should be developed from the top down through a series of dams, just as she has developed the Salt River with the Roosevelt dam, the Mormon Flat dam below it, the Horse Mesa dam on below and finally the Stewart Mountain dam. The Salt River water thus generates power in four different places with the same water before it runs out, and irrigates the great Salt River valley around Phoenix. Arizona would like a similar development to be made on the Colorado river from the Utah line on down.

Arizona therefore is opposed to the Hoover dam because it dams the river at the lowest possible point. Half of the dam is in Arizona and half in Nevada, while the lake it creates behind the dam will back the water up the river so far that almost all of the dam sites lying wholly within Arizona will be completely flooded. In this way Arizona loses valuable potential resources.

The will of Congress prevailed in passing the Swing-Johnson bill despite the fact that the Arizona delegates in Congress repeatedly offered and introduced bills providing for a \$15,000,000 development to protect the Imperial valley from floods. All of these proposals were rudely shunted aside. Now that the Supreme Court has declared that Congress has the power to build the dam, and that Arizona has no case until she can prove actual injury, we have to accept the inevitable. The Hoover dam will be built now - nothing can stop it - but the Supreme Court expressly declared that the distribution of the waters was still unsettled, and this, with some other important points, means that California has a long way to go before she begins to get water for the Los Angeles basin and for the Imperial valley as well.

Before California can take water out of the Colorado river into the Los Angeles basin, the Metropolitan Water District of Los Angeles will have to build a diversion dam at Parker. Before she can build this dam, she will have to negotiate with Arizona because one end of that dam will have to be in Arizona. The Metropolitan Water District is not a Federal government agency, therefore this dam cannot be built without Arizona's consent. Before Arizona will consent to this, California will have to agree to a more equitable division of the water, or compensation in the way of revenue.

The Swing-Johnson bill providing for the Hoover dam also provides for what is called the "All-American" canal. At the present time, irrigation water for the Imperial valley from the Colorado River (due to the contour of the land) is tapped below Yuma in old Mexico, and flows through part of old Mexico before it enters the Imperial valley. At the time this canal was constructed the Imperial valley irrigation district had to make a contract with Mexico whereby Mexico was entitled to a certain share of this water. Such a concession is abhorrent to some of our professional patriots. They say that an "All-American" canal, a canal wholly within the United States, must be built even though it is not economically feasible. To that end, the Swing-Johnson bill provides for a \$35,000,000 appropriation to build an All-American canal tapping the Colorado just north of Yuma, crossing the sand dunes into the Imperial valley. This project is truly an economic monstrosity.

It will be 238 feet ^{deep} in places. While the bill cleverly provides for the repayment of this money from the land which will benefit by it, only a war-time scale of agricultural prices would enable the land to make this repayment. At the present time the Imperial valley irrigation district cannot pay the interest on its present outstanding bonds. Now it proposes to saddle an additional \$35,000,000 debt on itself. ~~The~~ The upshot of it will be that the irrigation district will plead that it cannot pay the charges and Congress of course eventually will forgive the debt. There is too much land under cultivation in the Imperial valley at the present time. Winter vegetables have been over-developed to such an extent in this area that they no longer enjoy the price preference they used to have. Now it is proposed, at the very time when farmers are faced with a glutted market, that \$35,000,000 of government money be spent on a totally unnecessary agricultural development which will give still more competition for the farmers. Thus the All-American canal is the worst kind of an economic monstrosity and is absolutely inexcusable and totally unnecessary. Fortunately, before it can be built another diversion dam will have to be built on the Colorado above Laguna, north of Yuma, and half of this dam will be in Arizona. The irrigation district will have to negotiate with Arizona before it can be built.

Before the Hoover dam is completed there are good possibilities that it, too, will be an economic monstrosity. Hydro-electric power does not enjoy the advantage it used to, particularly in southern California. In the Los Angeles basin billions of cubic feet of natural gas are going to waste daily. It is now possible, through the use of natural gas as fuel and other improvements in technique, to generate electricity by steam for less than one-tenth of a cent per kilowatt. The Long Beach steam plant of the Southern California Edison Co. is doing it now. The developments of the next ten years along this line should make the cost go still lower. Whereas in 1920, when the Hoover dam was conceived, hydro-electric power had a great advantage, practically all of that advantage has been wiped out. There is, therefore, good ground to believe that the government will never be repaid for the cost of the Hoover dam. After all, when everything is said and done, it means simply that the Federal government is building a municipal water works and a municipal power plant for Los Angeles, while the All-American canal is being built for the advantage of real estate speculators who hope to unload thousands of acres of desert land on a gullible public.

2 how - Therefore, in answer to your letter of July 16th, I should say that Arizona has submitted to the inevitability of the Hoover dam. She has lost that battle. The dam will be built. In the future, she will battle for a more equitable distribution of the water than ~~was made by the Santa Fe compact.~~ Under the terms of the Santa Fe compact and the Swing-Johnson bill Arizona is already using her share of the water. She will never accept such a division. She feels that the Colorado River is her greatest potential asset and that the water and the revenue from its development means much to her citizens a generation in the future. Arizona will be in a strong position to get an equitable division of the water because Los Angeles cannot take a drop of it for the cities of the Los Angeles basin until she secures permission from Arizona to build a diversion dam at Parker. After all, Los Angeles wants water more than anything else.

The opinion and views I have expressed above I believe represent quite

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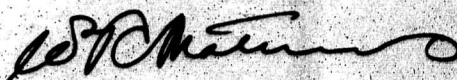
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accurately Arizona's position. They represent the opinion of the Star in the past and at the present time, as well as my own personal opinion. I am glad to say that the whole controversy is out of politics in Arizona at the present time, and that both the Democratic and the Republican leaders are working hand in hand along the lines I have expressed.

I hope I have not bored you with this long explanation, but it is such an important subject to us in Arizona that we want to grasp any opportunity we have to explain our position, which we think is fair and just.

I appreciate your kindness in allowing me to have this opportunity and you are perfectly welcome to use anything I have written in any way you may choose. My kindest personal greetings to you.

Very respectfully,



WRM:P