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BUREAUCRACY BEATS A RETREAT

Address Delivered by the Secretary of
Interior J. A. Krug at Yakima,
Washington, February 14, 1947

I came here from Washington to thank you Yakima Valley farmers for a check in the amount of \$15,643.60. When this check has been deposited in the United States Treasury, the farmers of the Tieton Division will have paid the last penny of their debt of more than $3\frac{1}{2}$ million dollars; the amount spent by the Bureau of Reclamation 37 years ago in building the irrigation system that waters your lands.

Nowadays a \$15,000 check arriving at the Treasury's receiving window does not cause any eyebrows to lift, and an expenditure of \$3,500,000 on a Federal project does not seem especially large. The significance of this occasion is in what has been accomplished with that \$3,500,000 investment.

Some of you were here in 1910 when the Tieton area was a sagebrush desert about to receive its first water from the new canals. You have seen the Federal Government, through the conservation and use of the precious water resources here in the Yakima Valley expand the National production, create \$150,000,000 of new wealth, and provide homes for more than 1,000 families on 25,000 acres of land that formerly was not even good sheep pasture.

Last year these Tieton lands produced crops of an average value of \$750 per acre. Since they were first irrigated, each acre of this former desert has pumped new purchasing power of more than \$5,000 into the arteries of our National commerce.

Uncle Sam put his money into this venture under a wise law that was the keystone of the conservation program of Theodore Roosevelt. The Reclamation Law has been supported by every administration since that time. It is not a partisan matter. Here on the Tieton Division, Uncle Sam has now got his money back, dollar for dollar. In the meantime, the Treasury has sent its tax collectors

to these former sagebrush mesas that now are dotted with apple and peach orchards. While the exact figures are not at hand, it is clear that the Federal income taxes paid by farmers and businessmen who have earned their livelihood from these lands have greatly exceeded the cost of the entire irrigation project -- the cost that has, in addition, separately been repaid in full by direct payments from water users.

The picture I am trying to paint might be better seen through a comparison. What has been done by irrigation here is as though in 1910 a barren island had been purchased by the United States for \$3,500,000. Settled by our citizens, this island since then has supported a thousand families in comfort and prosperity on farms, and even a greater number in the towns and villages that have grown up among them. It does not stretch the imagination to compare an irrigation project with an island, since these irrigation projects are the only islands of intensive farming in vast unproductive expanses of the West which make up nearly half of all the land within the United States. These projects stand out in the sagebrush desert much as islands dot the sea.

You men and women on the Tieton farms should be especially proud. This check for fifteen thousand dollars is your final payment. Yours was one of the first irrigation districts established under the Reclamation Law and you have now carried out in full the contract made thirty-seven years ago. This is the first final payment by any irrigation district.

You have changed the desert to verdant fields and orchards. Through the years, out of your earnings from the watered land, you have provided funds by your payments which the Department of the Interior has re-invested in other irrigation projects in the West. Several of these new islands of production which have been helped by the fulfillment of your contract are already the homes of new pioneer settlers who, in turn, are beginning to repay their contractual obligations and thus re-create and increase the Reclamation fund for other new developments.

I take pride in turning over this project to you — to your own elected officials, in order that it may continue to irrigate your farms under your direct control. Uncle Sam built the project. You have repaid his cost and this irrigation system is now yours to operate and take care of. The Bureau of Reclamation will always stand ready to assist if you require help, but here is bureaucracy beating a retreat as planned. Here is the Federal Government, having extended a helping hand to its citizens, bidding them God-speed and withdrawing. Here is Democracy creating vital projects which work for the people, and then, when the task is done, leaving the people, strengthened and self-reliant, to carry on. That was Jefferson's way, expressed in his words, "He governs best who governs least."

Reclamation has worked here in the Yakima Valley and it has worked in similar valleys through the West.

Four million acres of irrigated land have produced five billion dollars in new American wealth. That partner of irrigation, hydroelectric power, created as a by-product, serves industries, towns, cities and farms with electric energy to improve living conditions for millions of people. The Congress wisely has authorized the expansion of the Reclamation program so that it will reach twice the population now served. New irrigated lands and more power are to be made available in the years ahead in every state from the Missouri River and the Rio Grande to the Pacific.

I agree with the Western people who feel that true economy can best be achieved by completing these authorized projects speedily so that production will start paying back the Government's investment. Veterans are clamoring for a chance to clear the sagebrush and to farm these lands. They need living space now and a hungry world needs food.

Among the projects authorized and under construction is the gigantic Grand Coulee Dam power and irrigation project just across the Columbia River from the Yakima Valley, which will develop an area about the size of Delaware. On these lands, now for the most part sagebrush, new farm homes and great new towns and cities will develop within as many years as have passed since the Tieton ranches were settled. It will be like the addition of another state to the Union, like a gradual reopening of the Western frontier.

There will be difficulties, surely, but there will be fewer heartbreaks and failures than have ever been experienced in the opening of a new land area. It won't be like Daniel Boone leading the hopeful into unmapped territory. More than forty agencies have cooperated with the Bureau of Reclamation to prepare the plans for development of these new farms and communities. Your experience here in Tieton and throughout the Yakima Valley - the agencies of the State of Washington - the Department of Agriculture - and all bureaus of the Department of the Interior - your State College at Pullman, and the State Experiment Station at Prosser right here in your own valley, each played an important and coordinate part.

Carrying forward its program in the Pacific Northwest, the Department of the Interior has just completed a comprehensive report for the full use of water and other resources of the Columbia River Basin through a development yet to be authorized.

This report shows that no other section of the United States is so favored with undeveloped hydroelectric power, with irrigable lands that can be reached by diversions from rivers with abundant water.

The addition of nearly four million acres of new land and of millions in kilowatts of new generating capacity will more than double the present irrigated area in the basin and increase the hydroelectric power installations here five-fold. Truly multiple purpose, - the plan provides for the delivery of needed

supplemental water to forty percent of the area now irrigated; - provides for flood control, navigation, recreation, fish and wildlife, silt control and pollution abatement. The irrigation, drainage and diking developments will support a new farm and city population of about seven hundred and fifty thousand. Low-cost power will bring new industries - develop mineral resources now untouched - foster a more efficient and fuller use of agriculture and forest resources - and through the new private business undertakings, create the basic opportunities that should double the population of the Pacific Northwest.

This new power, these new farms and industrial and trade opportunities for this new population will be made possible only if we treat the whole Columbia River Basin as a unit - a unit in its water resource and in the financing of its full development. We must refrain from dividing the basin into provinces and principalities. It is one basin with one common water resource.

Power from Grand Coulee Dam, generated because of heavy snows on the Continental Divide, is transmitted throughout the basin. Full irrigation development in Western Montana, Idaho, Western Wyoming, Oregon and Washington can be had only by being joined with the downstream dams which transform into power the entire flow of the river, regardless of its source.

The Interior Department proposes to achieve the financial stability for full basin development by pooling the costs of all the works and all the revenues by which these costs are repaid. When this is done, it should be clearly apparent to Congress and to the Country that this is, even in the banker's sense, an investment which will pay out.

In 1910, there were scoffers who said that the desert could not be beaten back and that the Tieton project would be a dismal failure. In 1947, the cynics who are the direct descendants of those same scoffers probably will contend that this new program for the Columbia River Basin will not pay out. They were

doubtful that the power from Grand Coulee Dam would ever find a market. When the war came along and used this power, they said it would go begging when peace returned. But it hasn't; the tremendous demands being made on the Bonneville Power Administration which sells the power from Grand Coulee and Bonneville dams conclusively proves that. The wartime peaks were surpassed in the Fall of 1946, and now the demands are hitting new highs almost every week.

What has been done through the construction of the great dams on the Columbia River toward the development of the Pacific Northwest, what you have done here in the Yakima Valley through the irrigation of the lands that were once desert will be done again and again in communities yet to be established from the remotest creek at the Continental Divide to the mouth of the Columbia River at Astoria.

The day will come when the final check of repayment will be delivered to the United States Treasury for all the developments on the Columbia River System. In that day and time, the Columbia River Basin will no longer be an area of undeveloped resources. It will have new millions in population. It will have great new factories and industries, and its agriculture, like the Yakima apple, will be famous throughout the world.