

January 31, 1956

The Hon. Warren G. Magnuson, U.S.S.
United States Senate Building,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator Magnuson:

In relation to your news release, pertaining to introduction of your bill to preserve historical and archaeological specimens received for publication at our office, The Yakima Daily Republic I have some comments, based on considerable experience in the field covered.

I do not have a copy of the bill at hand, of course.

I am writing specifically about the Priest Rapids and Wanapum Dams, which I assumed would be covered in the legislation.

To avoid possibility of legislative "red tape" it may be that you will wish the following information pertaining to the Priest Rapids Project:

A memorandum is now in process of being prepared by the Grant County PUD, after I was called into consultation because of my interest in the remnant band of non-treaty Wanapum Indians.

The original license to explore the site protected the artifacts and historical relics of these people, largely the rock paintings of their genesis on the Island that will be disrupted by the lower or Priest Rapids Dam.

This protection was extended in the construction license granted by the Federal Power Commission. Originally the few remaining Indians were extremely worried by the disruption of these sacred relics, upon which they, and their ancestors since time immemorial, have looked with religious significance.

The memorandum relative to the preservation of these relics will be processed through the Area Office, Bureau of Indian Affairs and through channel to the Department of Interior. Undoubtedly it will meet the approval of the Federal Power Commission, to which agency the Wanapum Indians appealed before an exploratory license was granted.

I sincerely hope that the legislation does not become entangling in this situation, since the Wanapums do not wish an outside "agency" to come in and take possession of artifacts they have regarded as theirs for so long, and complications there might endanger additional security that the memorandum provides for these people.

Moreover the Wanapums will be found to be most cooperative in the matter of "sharing" discoveries, but they will oppose the removal of burials of their ancestors for archaeological purposes. They will not oppose exploration of proper archaeological sites. That has been worked out with them.

There has been an inclination to devest local areas of material that should remain in local areas rather than be hauled away and hidden in some distant repository. I think the whole system of river development leads to attendant developments of vista houses and expansion of proper repositories to enhance the value and tourist appeal, as well as preserve the culture of the areas. And I am sure that you, in your wisdom provide for this in the bill, rather than the centralization of archaeological power.

I have opposed indiscriminate and destructive digging that destroys what bits of culture true professionals may yet salvage, but many of the "rock hounds" are virtual professionals at preserving such material.

I am not too familiar with the John Day archaeological possibilities, but do know that a university from a distant state several years ago removed a body subsequently identified as that of the grandmother of Indians still living. I presume the bill does not include wholesale license and blanket power to pursue this practice.

In the matter of Ice Harbor, the very extensive burials there, including deep depositories of horse burial bones, contains relatives of Indians still living. Originally the last survivor of the area, to protect the grave area from indiscriminate removal to government repositories and by individual "collectors", was denied protection by court authorities at Walla Walla. His white friends aided him, so the Indians told me many years ago, in homesteading the land and this he did. Upon his death and with expiration of the 25 years protection I believe the land was sold for taxes. This I understand is on ~~the~~ both sides of the river at the Ice Harbor site. I have referred a descendant of those buried there, and of the "homesteader" to the Walla Walla Corps of Engineers, assuring her that she would receive every protection from that department.

I mention these things only to be helpful. I have yet to find any Indian, involved, to be uncooperative if approached by the proper agency. The trouble, when there was trouble, resulted from lack of contact or misunderstanding.

Fundamentally your bill sounds very good and like something that has long been needed. If it provides for points I have mentioned with no authority to an agency that is ~~xxxxx~~ restrictive to the wishes of individual Indians yet concerned, I will be most happy to extend my support as a brother of the Wanapums [if need be in that case] and as a curator of the State Historical Society and a board member of the Yakima Valley Pioneer and Museum Society.

The enclosed picture shows the last prophet of the Wanapums pointing out to engineers, for the Grant County PUD, and for documentation, one of the Wanapum genesis rocks on the island at Priest Rapids. It is one he selected to be his headstone in a graveyard not far distant, that is being protected.

Sincerely Yours

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