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Wildlife Zealots Versus Realists

By Claude Buchanan

Corvallis Member of the Willamette
River Basin Commission

The one-sided controversy at the Wildlife conference at Corvallis, and reported in many newspapers, needs some clarifying, lest the misunderstanding prevail that the action taken by the Wildlife conference is unchallenged.

Hits Finley Stand

The great naturalist, W. L. Finley, who leads the fight in opposition to the development of the Willamette valley, loves wildlife and nature in its primitive state, unspoiled by man. To him, wildlife, natural woods and streams mean more than improved farms and growing cities. To him, the preservation of a few spawning beds for the salmon means more than the saving of farm buildings, livestock and the rich soil that is washed away by flood waters. In his zeal to maintain the Willamette valley in its primitive, undeveloped state, he would block the work that has been in progress since Governor Martin started the Willamette Valley Project committee to work in 1935. To state, as did Mr. Finley, that no opportunity was given the public to oppose the project, is misleading. Mr. Finley should know of the committee work, and of the public hearings, and of the investigation, the survey and the approval by the army engineers.

Wildlife zealots oppose the Willamette River Basin project, of course, because, to them, fishing means more than the prosperity of the farmers. But these men, who dream of the few fishing pools affected in the headwaters of the Willamette river, in all its primitive setting, cannot keep the settlers from building homes and improving the rich lowlands near the Willamette river. Neither can they keep the cities on the river from growing. Neither can they keep the farmers from practicing intensive agriculture and irrigation.

Benefits of Project

The proposed dams will materially increase the stream flow during the summer, to aid irrigation and navigation, and to offset increasing stream pollution, so deadly to fish life. The million dollars allotted for improvement of fish hatcheries should offset the loss of the few spawning beds that will be rendered useless for natural spawning.

It has taken a lot of hard work on the part of men who have given of their time and talent unselfishly, without compensation, to promote this improvement for a greater Willamette valley. It will require team work of public-spirited people to complete the project, now only begun. Let us not allow the element that always comes forward to oppose improvement and block progress, to block also the development of the Willamette valley that means so much to ourselves and to future generations.