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CUSINO WILDLIFE EXPERIMENT STATION, SHINGLETON, MICHIGAN

A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN CONSERVATION

Dinosaur National Monument had its origin some eons ago when giant, grotesque reptiles died for reasons now resolved only by speculation. These monsters were buried in rock and soil of a land that was later to become part of the state of Utah. So scientifically and recreationally important were the remains of these prehistoric animals, that in 1915, 80 acres surrounding the main fossil site were set aside as a national monument.

The graveyard of the dinosaurs in the valley of the Green River is auspiciously located. The swift flowing Yampa River joins the Green about 20 miles upstream. Together these two streams with whirlpools and eddies have cut a series of exquisitely beautiful canyons from the equally handsome mountain landscape.

The awe-inspiring grandeur of these two river valleys in the region of the dinosaur fossils caused 209,000 acres of the combined watersheds in Utah and Colorado to be added to the monument in 1938. As a national monument, it is not as well known as others; it is none the less as elegant scenically and as important scientifically as they.

Despite the fact that the 1935 amendment to the Federal Power Act prohibits such areas from becoming part of a power project, the Bureau of Reclamation in 1946 proposed two dam sites *within* the area. The National Park Service came to the defense of Dinosaur National Monument with the same fervor it would have shown had the proposal been that Yellowstone National Park be leveled in order to build a mammoth roller skating rink. The problem in brief is this: one government agency is recommending that a national park, which is under the jurisdiction of another government agency, be made into a reservoir instead of serving in its present capacity as a recreational and scientific area.

The main stand of the Bureau of Reclamation is that, without these dams, there will be less annual revenue and higher unit power costs for the people of the Colorado watershed and Bonneville basin. The Park Service contends that it is not unmindful of the needs of even this extremely small fraction of our national population. The benefits of the proposed impoundments would be adequately and satisfactorily derived from dams and reservoirs *outside* the monument.

The life expectancy of a dam and reservoir of this kind and in this place is about 80 to 120 years. The natural beauty and scientific wealth of this area was about a hundred million years in the making. Flooding the Dinosaur National Monument would ruin it for all future generations.

It must be realized that once a proposal of the Bureau of Reclamation is accepted by the Congress, moneys are made available to carry out the dictates of that proposal. In this case, the dams would cost about \$207,000,000. The immediate political and economic potency of such a plan might be overwhelming to an agency like the Park Service which must carry its

case on the long range benefits derived from the aesthetic values of the land and the fact that national parks were made inviolate as part of our heritage.

This proposal for more water to produce more irrigation to produce more farm commodities comes at a time when this nation is subsidizing farm goods at a phenomenal cost and when our surpluses are greater than at any time in our history. Unfortunately our present emergency creates a *modus operandi* for "big" agencies to gobble up that part of our way of life that cannot be reduced to taxable figures.

No one doubts the sincerity of those who propose to better the economic status of any area or community by the impoundment of water. It is only the wisdom of method that is challenged. The disturbing factor in this conflict of values, however, is the fact that the Reclamation Service should prescribe an apparently unnecessary encroachment on a national park. If such demands are realized, the waters of Yellowstone, Glacier, Yosemite and Grand Canyon national parks (to name a few) would be in jeopardy. To lose Dinosaur National Monument on this issue might well be the opening for other governmental branches and large private interests to exploit our all-too-few national parks.

What does all this mean to you? That depends on how you regard your stake in our national heritage. It depends also on whether you can accept an unnecessary ruination of national property in order to receive a short term monetary benefit for a few, or whether you subscribe to a long range view which keeps the national parks program inviolate in order to insure the greatest good for the greatest number over the longest period. It doesn't matter whether you are a rock-ribbed Vermont yankee or a mullet fisherman from the bayous of Louisiana: the problem in principle exists in your part of the country, your state, and even your local community.

As members of the Wilson Club, this report is directed to you as a matter of information.

What to do about this deplorable situation is a matter of what your conscience dictates, but what your conscience dictates might be of great importance to your congressman in Washington. This report is also to put your conservation committee on record as opposing any violation of our national parks as they are now set up. We feel that if our national parks and monuments are to be ruined in the name of national security, it should be done only as a vitally necessary and unavoidable measure.

Let us not melt our liberty bell except to cast the shells for the last cannon.—ROBERT A. McCABE.