

Problem of the Yellowstone Water

When the horrors and the suffering of this war have passed into the pages of the history books, its wounds are healed and its heroes take on the sacrosanct attributes of deliverers of the nation, Montana people will still be concerned over the waters of this great state.

These streams which thread their way through our mountains and high plateaus toward the sea, in both directions from the continental divide, constitute our most precious resource. Upon them the productivity of our land depends. Upon them is dependent, too, the future growth and the economic strength of the state.

The mighty Yellowstone river, coursing through its broad valley for approximately 500 miles in eastern Montana has been designated by a former chairman of the Montana water conservation board, Rockwood Brown of Billings, as the "greatest irrigation ditch in the world."

Not only the people of Montana, but those of Wyoming and of North Dakota have a vital interest in its great flow and the possibilities of its waters when spread over the broad and fertile valleys through which it and its many tributaries wend their way toward the sea.

For several years now devoted representatives of these three states have been endeavoring to reach a just and impartial basis for the division of these waters. With each succeeding gathering of the representatives of this tri-state convention further approach has been made toward a compact which is of tremendous concern to all.

With the most recent considerations at Billings such progress has been made that a formal interstate compact for the division of these waters is in sight. Such compacts are authorized by the Constitution if they are approved by congress.

It is under such a compact that the waters, and the electric power generated from them, of the mighty Colorado river have been divided among a group of western states.

But in view of recent developments, it must be observed that our tri-state negotiators must be men of strong faith. This year such a compact for the equitable division of waters in a group of states in the south-central section of the west was reached. The compact was approved by congress, as required by the Constitution. And after that it was vetoed by the president. The legal question now has arisen over the right of the president to exercise his veto power in such a case because the Constitution places but a single condition upon the validity of these compacts between the states—the consent of congress.

Thus state sovereignty over the state's own resources comes into question. It is a revival of the problem of state's rights, affecting the whole economy of such states as Montana. It raises the threat of distant bureaucratic control over the waters upon which all other state resources and the entire state economy are dependent, because the Washington bureaucracy has made it plain that it proposed to control all the waters of the country.—The Montana Standard.

Gazette Writes Editorial On Montana's Own Irrigation Ditch

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