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EDITORIALS

WE DON'T LIKE THIS BUSINESS

(The following editorial is reprinted from the COLUMBUS, GEORGIA, LEDGER)

In the mail Saturday, June 16, came a two-foot long, heavy cardboard mailing tube, addressed to this newspaper by the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, P.O. Box 2511, Sacramento, California.

From it we pulled the following: A cartoon map diagramming the various dams and lakes in the Central Valley "multi-purpose reclamation project."

A press and radio release, running 1,500 words long, telling of plans for gala celebrations in various towns when the project is put into first full operation August 1.

A sheet listing the dates and places for various local celebrations from August 1-10.

And a three-page, single-spaced mimeographed collection of "filler" items describing the project.

We cannot say for certain just how much the heavy cardboard mailing tube cost. A local retailer once carried them in stock but has no current price list. Smaller ones sometime ago cost 15 cents each. This one must have been the 25-cent size, although the Department of Interior probably buys them in bulk at a lower rate.

No postage was involved. The matter was sent through the mail under a frank. Penalty for private use of the same facilities without postage would be \$300. First class, the postage on the material, according to our own postal scales, would have been 18 cents.

The cartoon map, of little if any interest in Columbus, Ga., (although possibly of great interest to Communists inasmuch as it pinpoints the Central Valley's entire system of dams, reservoirs, etc.) would require almost a full news page for clear reproduction.

The press and radio release was too ridiculously long for any consideration by any newspaper or ra-

dio broadcaster, and was loaded with "propaganda" compliments to the Bureau in general, not to mention "regional Director Richard L. Boke," who was quoted at length.

None of the other press release material is of any use whatsoever. The Government-paid propagandists might have been on firm ground in issuing factual data on the project. But the ridiculously long release was an attempt to report on various community plans for celebrations, which strikes us as being slightly out of the realm of Federal information service duties.

"The Central Valley Water Festival—the most colorful celebration in California history—will play with an all-star cast," the release shouts breathlessly. "Its central characters will be the State's greatest assets—the bountiful streams of the north, the amazingly fertile land of the valleys and the thousands of farmers who developed its agricultural empire."

As thrilling as this sounds we are left unimpressed in view of the cost of the propaganda and the questionable right of the Bureau to spend our tax money for such purposes.

This is the second such mailing we have had from those people in recent weeks.

And the material contained in the latest one was "For release to the PMs (afternoon newspapers) of Wednesday, June 13, 1951."

We didn't get it until Saturday,

June 16, 1951.

We don't like it — COLUMBUS, GEORGIA, LEDGER.

Economic Highlights

The cheating scandal at West Point was simply the latest in a series of shocking developments within and without the government. In the Academy case, some of the accused cadets said that such practices had been going on for a considerable period of time, and that men had been graduated and commissioned who had been guilty of them. It is noteworthy that most of the members of West Point's big-time football team were involved. West Point has extremely high academic standards, and large numbers of cadets who are unable to meet them are dropped each year. The football players, apparently, had to devote so much of their time and energy to practicing and traveling that they couldn't properly cope with their studies. So the system of cribbing was developing and, it seems, rather widely accepted within the corps, despite the fact that it was a clear and flagrant violation of an honor code which has existed since the school was founded during the Monroe administration.

Prior to this, the nation was treated to the revelations concerning the bribing of key players on some leading college basketball teams by professional gamblers. The players concerned either deliberately threw games, or saw to it that the winning margin was restricted to a certain number of points. The gamblers

thus had a sure thing and cleaned up.

We have recently witnessed the dramatic Kefauver investigation of organized gambling. It brought to light an amazing amount of state and municipal official corruption. In instance after instance, police chiefs, sheriffs and other influential officials worked hand in hand with the gamblers and received handsome payments for their services.

At about the same time the Fulbright committee looked into the moral standards of certain Federal officers, including men close to the White House. Apparently nothing actually criminal was unearthed. However, to say the least, some extremely questionable practices and associations were discovered. Some men in public positions of responsibility and power seemed to think it was quite all right to exchange official favors for "gifts" from people who were interested in government contracts, RFC loans and so on. With few exceptions, the officials involved still have their jobs.

Not so long ago the newspapers were full of the activities of the five percenters—the men who, because of real or alleged connection with top Washington officials, obtained government contracts for a fee. This

practice is supposed to have been outlawed. But it is widely believed that some of the five percenters are still doing business at the same old stand.

What makes all this particularly important is that, in the view of many thoughtful people, it indicates a terrible decline in the moral fibre of the nation. There have always been scandals—they destroyed two administrations, those of Grant and Harding. There has always been corruption, graft, bribery, cheating, dubious practices. But rarely if ever have they been seen on so wide a scale as in very recent times. And never, so far as any one can see, have they been accepted with so much equanimity, so little interest or indignation, by the public at large. The wave of public revulsion and anger that followed the disclosures of the scandals of the Harding administration, for example, has not been duplicated to even a small degree in any of the recent scandals.

So the big question is this: Have we, as a people, reached a point of moral cynicism where we regard graft and sharp practices in and out of government as inevitable and of relatively small importance?

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