

Labor Spokesman Says Engineers' Plan Inadequate

Portland—UPI—A r m y engineers were charged by a labor spokesman Wednesday with proposing an inadequate program for Columbia Basin water resources development. J. D. McDonald president of the Oregon AFL-CIO, charged that engineers in their revised 308 development report favored private utilities and gave "disproportionate consideration" to fishery issues.

Read at Hearing
McDonald's statement was read at the last of three regional hearings held by the board of engineers. Earlier hearings were held at Missoula, Mont. and Lewiston, Idaho.

McDonald asked how engineers could "offer us a smaller program than one of 10 years ago while Russia talks about beating the United States in economic development in another 10 years." The statement asked why engineers "put extra weight on the scales when they weigh the benefits of a project favored by a private utility, and try to reverse the scales when they weigh a better federal project?" He did not specify which projects he believed favored private utilities.

Endorsed by Chamber
The Portland Chamber of Commerce, in a statement prepared for the hearing here, gave endorsement to the Army engineers' plan. The chamber specifically endorsed the engineers' recommendation for a high dam at the Mountain Sheep site on the middle Snake river.

At Lewiston, Idaho, Tuesday, public power spokesmen favored a Nez Perce dam over the Mountain Sheep project, while Pacific Northwest Power Company, which has an application for Mountain Sheep, spoke in favor of this project.

Senate Receives 'Variable Ratio' Tax Proposal

Salem—UPI—A report signed by the majority members of the Senate Tax Committee recommending passage of a bill providing for the so-called "variable ratio" system in assessment of property for ad valorem tax purposes has reached the Senate desk.

Four Democrats signed the "do pass" recommendation while two Republicans dissented. The bill is one urged strongly by Senate President Walter Pearson.

Higher Ratio
The effect of the bill would be to assess private utility corporations at a ratio 30 per cent higher than that applicable to other property. Ten per cent of the true cash value of any single family dwelling, exclusive of land, would be exempt from taxation.

Estes Snedecor Jr., representing Portland General Electric company, said the bill was nothing more than a selective sales tax and that if it passed it would discourage business.

Chaos Seen
Bruce Pickett, representing the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph company, said enactment of the proposed law would lead to chaos.

Utilities are now assessed by the State Tax commission at 17 per cent above assessments made on business properties and homes.

An effort to pass the variable ratio bill two years ago failed.

If the Senate passes the bill, it may encounter trouble in the House taxation committee as Rep. Clarence Barton (D-Coquille), chairman, has previously expressed opposition to variable tax ratios.

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