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Federal Power Plants And Public Power

(Reprinted from Public Utilities Fortnightly, June 9, 1938.)

Hydroelectric power is cheaper and more efficient than steam power, in the opinion of the administrator of Bonneville dam, and the government power plants are seen by him as symbolical of an endeavor to extend and intensify the benefits of electricity.

(By J. D. Ross)

The building of the great power plants in the Tennessee valley, at Boulder dam, and on the Columbia river has been the cause of unending discussion. Perhaps we may see the whole situation more clearly if we review the last 40 years of the rise of electricity. Much of this history is familiar to most people. Electric plants were very small two generations ago. Long-distance transmission was just being born. The development at Niagara, which was then the center of power, brought large users of power to its vicinity. Today these consumers be much more scattered with our present long-distance lines. Electricity was then new to the people. Gradually, the public became educated to its use. With that education came tremendous growth. The demand for electric power is so great now that it doubles in about seven and one-half years on the average throughout the nation. At first, electricity in the home was a luxury. It was confined to the use of a few lamps. Today it is a necessity, and its use is being rapidly extended to cooking, refrigeration, air-conditioning, and a host of other uses. The end is not yet in sight. The alternating motor and the use of alternating current generally a necessity in the factory.

While this great expanse was going on men in financial circles turned their attention to electric power. The usual proportion of these men devoted their efforts to honest endeavor and many electric companies were formed. At the same time

the usual few with wrong motives gradually got hold of these concerns, and instead of trying to do an honest business with honest profits, they manipulated stocks and got control of several hundred times as much as they really owned. They formed holding companies which were supposed to give a unified service to the subsidiaries they controlled, and in this way they could get better prices for materials, or for special engineering construction.

This system brought profits that should have satisfied the most avaricious, but not satisfied with this, holding companies were formed to control holding companies, and the pyramid of holding companies thus formed reached a point where it collapsed of its own weight. This crash, with all its attendant disaster, came at the beginning of the depression. Not fast, it had a large part in producing that depression. We cannot get something for nothing, so someone had to pay for the milking of these concerns.

To assist in preventing a recurrence of this great disaster, the Public Utility Holding Company Act was brought into being, creating a Federal control to prevent the pyramiding of holding companies.

During these forty years human characteristics have been the same as they have been for the thousands of years previous. The main objective of the executives of the

Cascade Locks

(Continued from Page Three)

Mr. and Mrs. Warren Davidson were in Portland last Friday on business. Saturday Mr. Davidson was accompanied to town by his daughter, Donna, and Eileen Sprague.

Miss Gertrude Goughnor was visiting her sister, Mrs. Frances Rosenbach, over the week-end.

Miss Ethel McRae and Miss Wetzel called at the Cascade Locks last Saturday and visited Mrs. Warren Davidson.

Rev. Willis Douglas is attending the Methodist conference in The Dalles this week. We'll know when he returns whether he will be with us another year or not and we certainly hope he will.

Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Brolliar received the felicitations of friends and relatives on their 59th wedding anniversary, June 23. Mr. and Mrs. Brolliar have been residents of Cascade Locks for a good many years and Mr. Brolliar worked for the government on the Locks until his age required him to retire. Mr. Brolliar is 84 years of age and Mrs. Brolliar is in her 70's. We wish them many more years of continued good health and happiness.

power business has been to take in all that the traffic would bear. In order to do this, the highest prices have been charged. In other lines of endeavor, a few people have seen the tremendous advantage of lowering rates and thereby increasing the volume of business. Notable among these are Henry Ford, and such people as Woolworth and Kresge of the 10-cent stores. These men soon became fabulously rich, while other concerns on high rates went bankrupt. Public power is dedicated to lower rates. Its great success has been largely due to this fact. In the years in which tremendous advance in electric science and engineering was being made, many people were employed in industry, but another large number were being continually put out of work on account of the replacing of workers by automatic machinery. In the decades before this, trouble did not exist. Life was simpler. It was easier to make a living. Society was not so complex.

(Continued Next Week)

Traffic around Hood River in the good old days revealed plenty of horse sense, and in a great number of cases the horse had the most of it.

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