

Hells Canyon Would Require Another Dam, Engineer Says

By JOHN KAMPS
WASHINGTON (AP) — A former Army Engineer said Tuesday a second dam costing at least 50 million dollars would be necessary to provide navigation benefits planned for the proposed 424 million dollar federal Hells Canyon Dam.

Retired Maj. Gen. T. M. Robins said a re-regulation dam would be needed to make navigation possible as a result of the proposed Hells Canyon Dam in the Snake River between Idaho and Oregon.

He testified as an Idaho Power Co. consultant at the Power Commission hearing on the firm's application to build three dams to cost 165 million dollars in the Hells Canyon area.

Robins said Army engineers recommended a re-regulating dam to smooth out the flow of the Snake in the deepest canyon on the continent.

He said the Reclamation Bureau has not proposed a second dam, but possibly would decide to put one in after the first project is completed.

To reduce fluctuation in the river's level and permit navigation, Robins said, power operations would have to be curtailed without a re-regulating dam. Interference with power generation would be "material," he added.

Robins said also a witness for public power groups based his pro-Hells Canyon report on an unreasonable assumption.

He said John S. Cotton, former Power Commission engineer, based his report on a prediction "that a large number" of dams would be built in the Columbia Basin within 25 years, Robins said 50 years would be a more reason-

able assumption.

Robins and Cotton disagree on whether the Idaho Power Co. or the federal plan would best develop the middle reach of the Snake River, a tributary of the Columbia. Robins made a comparison of the opposing plans for Idaho Power. Cotton, now of San Anselmo, Calif., made his study for the Interior Department.

Cotton, a witness early in the hearing, said the federal plan is superior in every respect. Robins' statement that Cotton had made an unreasonable assumption was in reply to a question by Power Commission attorney John Mason on differences in the two engineers' estimates of downstream benefits credited to Hells Canyon Dam.

Mrs. Evelyn Cooper, representing pro-Hells Canyon group, said she wanted to reserve the right to have Robins returned for more questioning later. She said public power groups haven't had time to prepare an affirmative case for Hells Canyon and were without services of an engineer.

Idaho Power lawyer R. P. Parry said piece meal cross-examination has created an "intolerable" situation which "puts the applicant in an impossible situation."

Parry said opposing attorneys are trying to "build up a myth... that we might be about to pull a rabbit out of the hat...contending on schedule."

Mrs. Evelyn Cooper, representing public power groups, challenged Robins' statement that Congress probably wouldn't appropriate money to build dams in the Columbia River Basin on the schedule planned by Army Engineers.

Mrs. Cooper noted that Robins had estimated 2 1/2 billion dollars would have to be appropriated to build projects which would operate in the basin during the next 70 years.

She said appropriations in the past have been running 140 million dollars annually and if they continue at the same rate the 2 1/2 billion would be made available on schedule.

Questioning Monday by an attorney representing groups favoring construction of the Hells Canyon Dam failed to shake testimony of the 73-year-old retired major general. He is now an Idaho Power Co. consultant.

Robins, former Army division engineer at Portland, Ore., and later assistant chief engineer, said he made a fair comparison of the opposing plans for developing the Snake River.

He said the three smaller dams, at a cost of 165 million dollars would provide comprehensive development of the Snake River's middle reach. He said there is no need for the proposed federal project, which he estimated would cost 424 million dollars.

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