CONSERVATIONISTS GIRD FOR NEW FIGHT ON ECHO PARK DAM

Conservationists intend to fight harder than ever to prevent location of a reclamation dam at Echo Park in Dinosaur National Monument as a part of the Upper Colorado River Project, Richard M. Leonard, president of the Sierra Club, said today.

In a published statement, the Secretary of the Interior, Douglas McKay, had stated that he did not expect conservationists to offer as much opposition to the Echo Park Dam as they did last year, when they aided in blocking enactment of the Project by Congress.

McKay announced the Administration's intention to reintroduce the Upper Colorado River Project at the forthcoming session of Congress, including the controversial Echo Park dam.

"Secretary of the Interior McKay has been badly misinformed if he really expects conservationists to relax in their determined efforts to prevent invasion of our national park system to build Echo Park dam in Dinosaur National Monument," said Leonard.

"On the contrary, three new organizations have sprung into being since the last session of Congress, with the expressed purpose of joining in the campaign against the Echo Park dam, so successfully waged last year by conservation groups.

"We are more than ever convinced that the Echo Park proposal is the gravest threat to our national park system since its creation by Congress in 1916. Despite what Secretary McKay may say about the Administration having no intention of destroying our national parks, we repeat that for Congress to permit Dinosaur National Monument to
be invaded would be to invite disaster to our entire national park system.

"There are pending at the present time proposals to build 16 dams in eight national parks and monuments, and we have not the slightest doubt that if Congress should authorize Echo Park dam, the pressure would at once be on to authorize these 15 other dams.

"The Sierra Club reiterates that it knows of no reason -- and the American people have been given none either by the Bureau of Reclamation or Secretary McKay -- why the purposes of Echo Park dam cannot as well or better be served by alternative developments outside the Monument.

"The Department continues to insist that evaporation losses at alternative sites would be prohibitive, after the Sierra Club executive director, David R. Brower, proved conclusively that the Bureau's calculations were faulty. The Bureau finally admitted errors totaling 660 per cent in its evaporation figures, and moved former Undersecretary of the Interior Ralph Tudor to order a complete recheck of the Bureau's evaporation calculations.

"As a result of this recheck, the Department states it has found no further errors but despite repeated requests, the Sierra Club has been unable to obtain from the Department the raw data on which the Department bases its calculations, for the purpose of submitting them to competent and impartial engineers for analysis.

"The American people are entitled to this information, inasmuch as the preservation of their national park system is at stake. These rechecked figures may, on examination, prove to be of as dubious accuracy as the Department's previous figures. So long as the Department continues to hide them from the public, we shall continue
to distrust them and demand them. The American people are entitled to them as a matter of right and we challenge Secretary McKay to make them public."

Leonard listed as new organization allies in the Dinosaur fight the Council of Conservationists, New York City; Citizens Committee for Natural Resources, Washington, D.C. and Trustees for Conservation, San Francisco, Calif. All three of these groups, Leonard said, have been organized in the past four months in anticipation of a renewal of the threats to our national park system. All will carry the fight virogressly to Congress next year, he said, in a new effort to knock the Echo Park proposal out of the Project, or failing that, to defeat the Project.

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