

ROSS DAM REVIEW

by the
kaopectate
kid

(Editor's Note: Because of the Arabian embargo and the shortage of you know what, our sometime Ross Dam correspondent, Old K. K., has changed his nom de guerre from Kerosene Kid to the above (ugh!) soubriquet).

It has been more than a year since we furnished our readers a progress report on High Ross Dam, and some of them may wonder if the battle has been won at last, enabling the North Cascades Conservation Council to move on to fresher fields. Such, we regret to report, is not yet the case. For an obviously terminal patient, Ole Hi Ross still shows surprising signs of life. And like all dying patients who are being kept alive by heroic measures, Ole Hi is a crushing financial burden on his family (the City of Seattle) as well as on those who are trying the hardest to give him a decent burial (us).

Many things have happened in this fifth year of the Ross Dam controversy, but we have space here for only a few of those that will prove most titillating to political scientists and other students of public folly. We'll tackle them chronologically:

January 29, 1973. Seattle City Light submitted its testimony to the Federal Power

Commission. The direct testimony and exhibits consisted of four Sears catalogue-sized books, containing considerable material not particularly pertinent to the issue. For example, Professor Grant (Cedar Tree) Sharpe's section contained 194 half-page photographs reproduced from his famous slide show. The most artistically composed shots were four pictures of outdoor latrines.

March 6, 1973. The ROSS Committee advised the B.C. government that, in view of Canadian reassurances that Ross Dam would not be raised, the Committee was withdrawing from the Federal Power Commission hearings as an intervenor.

March 5, 1973. Chief Vickery to John Biggs, Director, Department of Ecology: "My letter of February 9, 1973, requested that you advise me specifically of the 'substantial and serious environmental disruptions' which will result from raising Ross Dam. Your lack of response to date is very disturbing, and is hindering discharge of my responsibility, as Superintendent of City Light, for an adequate and environmentally acceptable power supply".

March 9, 1973. John Biggs to Gordon Vickery: "You indicate an interest in undertaking immediate commencement of work on corrective measures to mitigate the environmental disruptions anticipated. To the best of my knowledge, the best and only way to mitigate these disruptions would be to terminate your proposal to raise the Ross Dam and to seek other more environmentally acceptable sources of energy.

". . . I urge that you carefully read the record of hearings held by the State Ecological Commission on this matter. This record will demonstrate to you that at these hearings a substantial preponderance of people . . . strongly urged that the project be terminated. This record is replete with graphic testimony delivered by not only members of the scientific community but people generally, expressing their concern as to the need for this project as contrasted with the obvious environmental degradation which would occur . . ."

April 3-5, 1973. A big flap occurred when Environmental Minister Jack Davis was quoted as having said in the House of Commons in Ottawa that the U.S. and Canadian federal

governments had agreed to scuttle Seattle's plan for High Ross Dam. Clarification of Davis' remarks showed he had stated that the governments had agreed in principle to a series of meetings to renegotiate the contract between B. C. and Seattle. A spokesman for Foggy Bottom would only say that things had not progressed as far as Davis said they had. Chief Vickery accused the Canadians of waging "psychological warfare".

June 9, 1973. Federal Environmental Minister Jack Davis and B. C. Lands, Forest



October 25, 1973. The Federal Power Commission released its draft Environmental Impact Statement on High Ross. Not a particularly profound document, it appeared to have been based chiefly on data furnished by City Light. The most serious deficiency was its failure to consider at all the environmental impact in Canada. It failed to assess the total impact on the pristine ecosystem of Big Beaver Valley. It did not discuss the logical sequence of events that would occur if High Ross is denied, and it failed to study the environmental consequences of alternative courses of action. All

Ross Lake from Lightning Creek Trail
(Harvey Manning Photo)

and Water Resources Minister Bob Williams met and "buried the Skagit hatchet". The two ministers reportedly agreed on a joint strategy to prevent the flooding of the Canadian Skagit Valley.

September 21, 1973. The B. C. government set aside 81,000 acres as the Skagit Valley Recreation Area and 15,000 acres as a special Forest Service recreation corridor along the Hope-Silver Skagit Road. The new recreation area was jointly developed by the Parks Branch and the Fish and Wildlife Branch and the British Columbia Forest Service and was agreed to by the B. C. Environmental and Land Use Committee. The recreation area adjoins Manning Provincial Park on the east and on the south abuts North Cascades National Park, Ross Lake National Recreation Area and the Pasayten Wilderness. While the establishment of this dedicated area may have been triggered by the B. C. government's desire to emphasize its opposition to flooding of the Skagit Valley by City Light, rapidly increasing use of the area by lower mainland residents has necessitated the provision of recreational facilities and restrictions to protect the environment.

RIGHT ON, B. C. ! MAPLE LEAF FOREVER!

in all, it was pretty much project justification. N3C was by no means the only organization or agency to submit sharply critical comment to the F. P. C.

November 1, 1973. As Seattle's municipal elections approached, the Seattle Times linked the current water shortage and hydroelectric power deficiency with their long-time advocacy of High Ross. In a series of editorials and letters to the editor they hammered away at the theme that had it not been for those misguided and over-zealous environmentalists, High Ross Dam would have solved all our power problems. The purpose of the barrage of misinformation was obvious -- to support the mayoral candidacy of Liem Tuai, City Light's warm friend.

N3C president Pat Goldsworthy attempted, without success, to get the paper to print the truth about the project's relation to the energy crisis. Fact: It would not have been possible for High Ross Dam to have been completed in time to help with the power shortage of 1973. Fact: During construction, Ross Reservoir would have to be drawn down twice, severely reducing its generating capabilities. Fact: Assuming F. P. C. permission is granted, mini-

mum construction time would be two years, and assuming normal stream flows in the Skagit, it would take another three years to fill the reservoir. Fact: Had no one objected to City Light's plans to construct High Ross, the reservoir would have been partially empty during the 1973 drought-caused energy crunch, and Seattle would have been in a helluva mess.

November 2, 1973. The Canadian House of Commons adopted the following resolution under its unanimous consent procedure:

"That the House of Commons of Canada is unalterably and unanimously opposed to the flooding of the Canadian Skagit Valley which will result from the proposed City of Seattle project to raise the height of the present Ross Dam situated in the State of Washington and downstream from the Canada-United States border; and

That this House further resolves that the Government of Canada deliver the text of this resolution forthwith to the Government of the United States of America, the Government of the State of Washington, and the Council of the City of Seattle'.

November 6, 1973. The N3C sent its researchers into the City Comptroller's vault to check again on how much of the public's money "Our City Light" was shovelling out on the High Ross project. For the year 1973 to date, these expenditures amounted to a trifling \$414,657. Major recipients were our Canadian friends, F. F. Slaney & Co., \$122,950.00, for their unsurpassed blend of scientific research and public relations, and City Light's Washington, D. C. lawyers, McCarty & Noone, \$97,623, for breathing down the necks of the F. P. C. Messrs. M and N. shared \$43,007 of this legal bonanza with their Seattle counsel, Helsell, Paul, Fetterman, Todd and Hokanson. Makes you wonder what Seattle has a Corporation Counsel and all those lawyers on the payroll for! The University of Washington raked in \$93,057 for their biotic survey of Ross Lake Basin and some more fisheries studies. Professor Grant (Cedar Tree) Sharpe didn't do so well this year -- his share of the pie was only \$2280. Professor R. L. Burgner fared a bit better -- \$3049, and old Electric John Nelson had to be satisfied with a consulting fee of \$175. Well, maybe when City Light finally gets the Canadians to agree to ran-

soming their Skagit Valley, the City of Seattle will get some of this dough back.

December 5, 1973. Chief Vickery, as quoted in the Everett Herald: "If we get the F. P. C. permit, we will build the dam. I don't know what the Canadians can do to stop us. If the dam goes up and the water will back into Canadian land, (B. C. premier) Barrett will be unhappy, but I don't know what he can do to stop the water". THAT'S TELLING THOSE BLOODY COLONIALS, CHIEF!

February 1, 1974. The State of Washington, Department of Ecology, published its Environmental Assessment of the Proposed Elevation of Ross Dam. The 197-page document contains a thoughtful analysis of all environmental data submitted so far by advocates and opponents of the project as well as a useful summary of the history of the controversy. Some quotes we like (emphasis provided by DOE):

"In the absence of determinations regarding the logical alternatives to High Ross and the environmental consequences of those alternatives, THE LOSS OF BIG BEAVER VALLEY HAS NOT BEEN JUSTIFIED."

"IT IS CONCLUDED THAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS IN CANADA OF RAISING ROSS DAM REMAIN CRITICAL AND UNSOLVED."

"The F. P. C. and Seattle City Light should study the combination of conservation and purchase of power as a potential alternative to High Ross Dam. Additionally, the environmental impact of such a combination-alternative should be presented for public consideration".

"If Seattle City Light does not intend to further develop the Skagit River Valley, they should disavow Cooper Creek and all other future projects on the Skagit River. ONLY THEN CAN HIGH ROSS AND ITS ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES BE CONSIDERED ALONE".

"IT IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED THAT, PRIOR TO ANY APPROVAL TO RAISE ROSS DAM, APPROVAL ALSO BE ASSURED FOR THE DESIGNATION OF PRISTINE AND WILDERNESS AREAS, INCLUDING BIG BEAVER VALLEY, WITHIN THE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA".

Good show, DOE. Our compliments to

John Biggs and his hard-working staff!

Today, what remains to do before this crummy project is buried for good? The F. P. C. hearings, which we once thought would be held in 1971, are now scheduled for the spring of 1974, and N3C must submit its testimony (an expensive proposition). Time, of course, is on the side of the white hats, and some day, when all this is history, we'll be able to tell you just what N3C and its legal staff really did to keep City Light from stealing Big Beaver Valley and the Canadian Skagit. They wouldn't believe us down at City Hall and the Lighting Department back in '69 when we said we had just begun to fight.

Forget Raising Dam, Say Ecologists

The State Department of Ecology has concluded in an Environmental Assessment highly critical of both Seattle City Light and the Federal Power Commission that all feasible alternatives to High Ross Dam have not been revealed.

The assessment recommended that plans to raise Ross Dam be scrapped and the prospect of combining conservation measures with the purchase of power from British Columbia be studied instead.

The report also stated that those two agencies had not presented information for the public to compare alternatives to the dam project and the expected environmental impact of the alternatives.

The report pointed out that the FPC is required by federal regulations to investigate both the alternatives to an action and the environmental consequences of the alternatives.

Steve Mitchell, head of the environmental evaluation team within the Department of Ecology, which prepared the report said yesterday that the federal hearings on the

dam project have been postponed one month until April 15 in order to give the FPC time to revise its Draft Environmental Impact statement.

Testimony from all agencies concerned, including the State Departments of Fisheries and Game, must be filed in Washington, D.C., by March 15.

The environmental assessment, while not an official environmental impact statement, summarizes and supplements the environmental statements which have been filed so far, and fulfills the Department of Ecology's responsibility under the State Environmental Protection Act, said Mitchell.

The report also criticized the "conspicuous absence of a logical sequence of events that would occur if the High Ross proposal is denied."

In addition, it said that both City Light and the FPC had failed to commit themselves to measures which would minimize and protect the Skagit River Valley against environmental damage should the FPC approve the 48-year-old project, which would raise the level of Ross

Lake 122.5 feet and increase the surface area of the reservoir about 8,300 acres to a total of 20,000 acres.

The reservoir would extend seven miles further into Canada and flood an additional 3,600 acres in the U.S. and 4,720 acres in Canada.