

DIXY HEATS UP ROSS DAM ISSUE

by the kaopectate kid

Well, it finally happened! Our governess, Dr. Dixy Lee Ray, after five months of beating on the Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, the Wilderness Society, Washington Environmental Council and various other groups of "people-haters", has turned her attention to N3C and its overriding issue, High Ross Dam.

On May 27, 1977, the same lady who insured the future preservation of Washington's billboards threw the weight of her office behind raising Ross Dam. This is the same scientist who legalized extract of apricot seeds for the treatment of cancer, that eminent marine biologist who believes oil tanker traffic through the San Juans can do no harm to marine organisms, that consummate politician who thinks government should not protect poor people against loan sharks.

Surely a governor of such multifarious talents would not reverse the State's position on High Ross Dam without a careful reevaluation of the issues and the trade-offs involved. Might there even be some public input? If you believe that, Mac, you're smoking something stronger than Winstons!

Governor Ray's letter to the Federal Power Commission, reprinted in this issue, seems to put the monkey on the back of the Department of Ecology. She supports their "Modification of the Position of the State of Washington", implying that DOE has come up with new data making High Ross power more valuable and environmental impact less significant.

What are the facts? Well, DOE's notice to FPC is only 37 lines long. The only part of it that gives any explanation for the change in position is the following paragraph:

"The Department of Ecology, on behalf of the State of Washington, has reevaluated the application of the City of Seattle relating to Ross Dam and, based upon an evaluation of the needs for power of the applicant, the additional power produced if the application is approved and the Ross Dam is raised, the environmental impact of such a modified project and international relationships, concludes that under conditions as they now exist, the application of the City of Seattle should be approved." (underscoring ours)

Now, let's go back a few years in this long drawn-out hassle over High Ross--to March 3, 1971, to be exact. John Biggs, director of our new Department of Ecology, the first in the nation, announced DOE's intention to intervene before the FPC as the official representative of the State of Washington. To help determine the department's position on High Ross Dam, Mr. Biggs requested his advisory body, the State Ecological Commission, to hold public hearings.

Two full-day hearings were held in Seattle and Mt. Vernon on March 16 and 17, 1971. Proponents and opponents of the project, including numerous Canadians, testified on engineering, economic and environmental issues of the proposal. In December of 1971, after still another meeting of the Ecological Commission, director John Biggs announced DOE's opposition to the project.

DOE also prepared a massive environmental assessment of High Ross Dam. This document, which reflected work of the department's own staff as well as input from local, state and

federal agencies, concluded that the additional power to be generated by the high dam could not justify the destruction of wild lands. The assessment particularly pointed out that the environmental impacts in Canada overruled any justification for flooding the Canadian Skagit Valley.

We invite you to contrast this thorough and painstaking approach by the old DOE with that of the new department under the reign of Queen Dixy. Director Wilbur Hallauer asked for no public input. He says they have reevaluated the application. Where's the documentation? What has changed? Certainly not the environmental impact. If anything, it would be greater now than back in 1971 because infinitely larger numbers of recreationists are visiting Big Beaver Valley and the Canadian Skagit. That old chestnut about a larger reservoir serving more recreationists has been put to rest this year when we saw what a drought can do to "beautiful Ross Lake". A high dam would just mean more and uglier mud flats whenever Ma Nature turns off the snow.

The only thing that has changed is that City Light is having to buy additional energy to supplement its drought-starved Skagit projects. So, to produce an extra 274 MW of peaking juice, Hallauer and Ray have decided to pressure the FPC into letting City Light spend another \$110 million on this destructive white elephant. Yeah, that's what we said! \$110 million! Remember just a few years back when High Ross seemed a poor bargain at \$40 million?

Hallauer implies that DOE has evaluated the international relationships of High Ross. Mebbeso, but the furor he and Dixy stirred up in Canada appeared to surprise him. "Just trying to help out Seattle and City Light!", he said. "We've tried to get them into a better bargaining position."

We recognize that Wilbur Hallauer just follows orders. Probably Dixy saw the High Ross issue as another opportunity for her to lambaste the environmental movement, the *bete noir* of her administration. A quick phone call, "Wilbur, how about having DOE reverse that Biggs-Evans stand on Ross Dam?" and the deed was done.

What makes our Dixy Dumpling act the way she does? That's the question that has political scientist all over the state scratching their heads. A friend of ours, who had best remain nameless, says Dixy's big problem is that she's a Social Darwinist. Social Darwinism, now a largely discredited theory, was at its peak in the American and British industrial societies during the late nineteenth century. The Social Darwinists, taking their lead from the theory of natural selection, contended that, just as the "fittest" organisms survive in nature, the "fittest" people in society also thrive and rise to the top (Pirages and Ehrlich, 1974). We can probably attribute Dixy's adherence to conservative dogmas to her belief in Social Darwinism. Some of her quotes, printed elsewhere in this issue, are classic examples of nineteenth century beliefs that the poor, weak and unsuccessful are the way they are because they are too lazy and shiftless to better their condition.

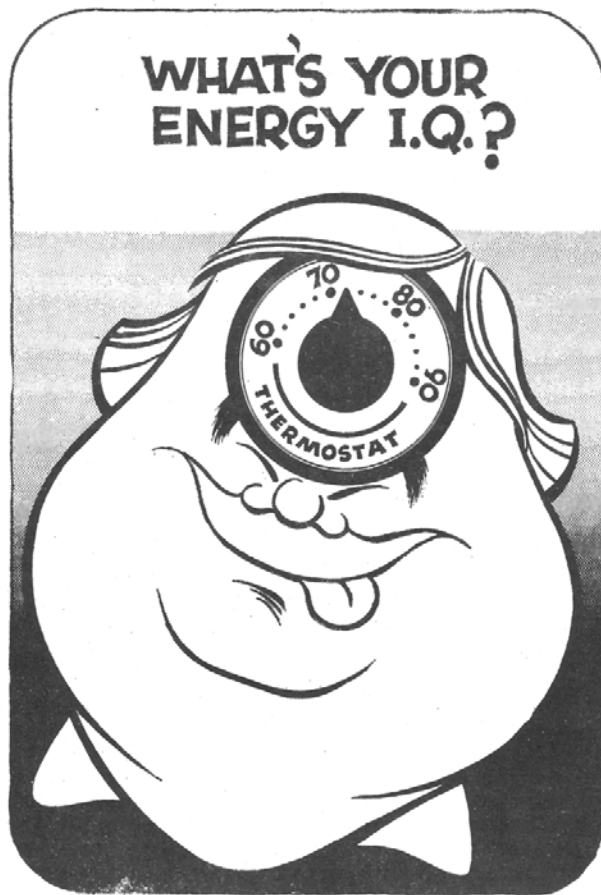
Dixy's own life has been eminently successful. She went to a good school, became a well-known professor of marine biology, was a successful director of the Seattle Science Center, a rather less successful Nixon appointee as director of the Atomic Energy Commission and, upon her first entry into elective politics, won a smashing victory as Washington's first female governor.

How could such a favorite of the gods fail to believe in her own infallibility? This undoubtedly accounts for her intolerance of criticism, either by press or public, her fumbling attempts to dictate state policy rather than administer it, and her failure to explain to the people her reasons for her actions. As the Seattle P-I editorialized in April after her closed-door meeting with the Northern Tier and Western governors,

"Such conduct, at its best, is nothing more than closed government in what is supposed to be an open society."

What does Dixy's action mean to N3C and its long-standing commitment to saving Big Beaver Valley of the North Cascades National Park Complex from flooding by Seattle City Light? Not much, really. Just mark it up to another venting of spleen from an old-time environmentalist-hater. She first took after our clan when we successfully bucked her on the Golden Gardens aquarium, and she's had it in for us ever since. The governor really doesn't have any substantive role to play in the negotiations between the province of British Columbia and Seattle City Light. And these negotiations are what will eventually save Big Beaver and the Canadian Skagit. N3C's role has been to buy the requisite time to permit the negotiations to come to fruition. Has it been worth it? You really have to go visit one of the valleys to make up your own mind. That's a privilege denied our Dixy Dumpling. She isn't very welcome in the Canadian Skagit, and she'd have to WALK up Big Beaver Valley!

Reference: Pirages, Dennis C. and Paul R. Ehrlich. 1974. Ark II, Social Response to Environmental Imperatives. The Viking Press, New York.



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