

Address at the Dedication of the Grand Coulee Dam.

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Harry S Truman

33rd President of the United States: 1945 - 1953

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THANK YOU, Senator Magnuson. I didn't know I was that good. I appreciate very much the cordial words of welcome from Governor Langlie. I am more than happy to see so many Governors and ex-Governors and Members of the Congress here today.

This is a great occasion. And I thank all you good people for taking the trouble to come out to see me. I take it as a compliment. I take it that you are interested in the public welfare and that you are interested in national public works.

As you know, I am on my way up at this time to make things more plain and understandable with the people who run this country. This Government is a government of and by and for the people. The only two men who are elected by all the people are the President and the Vice President; and I will say to you that the Vice President has been doing his duty in going around all over the country explaining to the people what we are trying to do and why we are trying to do it.

I made it a point this time, when I agreed to come out here, to dedicate this great public project, to travel across the country and report to the people just as I report to Congress once a year.

This is a great occasion. We have come here to dedicate Grand Coulee Dam--one of the mightiest structures man has ever built.

I stood over there a while ago and listened to the statistics of it. And it is almost unbelievable--it is almost unbelievable.

With this dam, man's ingenuity and perseverance have dramatically transformed the energy of a mighty river into a great new source of national strength.

At the foot of this dam is the world's largest power plant. It is already generating more low-cost electric energy than any other plant in the world. And it isn't through yet.

Behind this dam is a reservoir which extends 150 miles to the Canadian border. The water in that reservoir not only generates electricity. It helps to prevent floods. And soon, it will pour forth to irrigate thousands of acres of land which are now desert.

Grand Coulee Dam--with its tremendous power and irrigation benefits--is an instrument of our democracy, forged to contribute to a better life for ourselves and our children.

This dam was not built by accident. It is here because men with vision and determination fought for its construction. Men in the State of Washington--many of whom are here today--saw what this dam could mean to the Northwest and to the Nation. President Franklin Roosevelt, whose name honors the reservoir behind the dam, transformed their vision into reality.

This dam had to be fought for. It had to be built over furious opposition. You remember what its opponents said. One Congressman said: "Up in the Grand Coulee country there is no one to sell power to except coyotes and jack rabbits, and there never will be." I hope he is here today--I sure hope he is here today. The other opponents of Grand Coulee said it would be a "white elephant." They said it would be of no more value than the Pyramids.

We can laugh today at such foolishness. Right now, the generators at this dam are being run at overcapacity, straining to meet the soaring demands for power. All about us in the Pacific Northwest--in this land that was called the land of "coyotes and jack rabbits"--new jobs, new industries, new opportunities have been created.

Today, those who opposed Grand Coulee are trying to cover their tracks. They are trying to jump on the bandwagon.

But they can't erase the record. They did not understand then, and they do not understand now, the progressive steps that are necessary to keep our democracy strong, and confident, and moving forward.

The fundamental error of those who opposed Grand Coulee was their failure to understand that the United States is a growing, dynamic country. They saw no need to plan and work for a greater future. The way things were, was good enough for them.

But the American people have never been satisfied with the way things have been in the past. Our whole history is a record of eager striving to make things better.

One hundred years ago, out here in the Northwest, men and women were opening up new frontiers along the Oregon Trail. They struggled and fought to create farms and cities out of the wilderness.

The opponents of progress would have you believe that the frontiers are closed. They think we should now relax and struggle no more. Well, my friends, these are men of little faith.

I say to you that the American spirit which blazed the Oregon Trail is not dead. Here in the Northwest you are still pushing back frontiers.

There is no better example of that than this great dam. Less than 15 years ago, the energy of the Columbia River poured unused into the Pacific Ocean. It flowed past cities which were hampered by lack of power, and past farmlands which had been abandoned for lack of water.

In those days the people of the Northwest made their living primarily from timber and farming. They exported raw materials and imported finished goods. They lacked the power needed to process and manufacture their own raw materials.

Yet, through the heart of their rich country flowed the greatest potential source of hydroelectric power in the Nation--the Columbia River system. This area, tremendously rich in natural resources, was stifled, its future was limited, because it was unable to tap its own native source of power.

Today we are well on the way to harnessing that power. The imagination and vigor of free men have put the Columbia River to work.

The results are clear. The Northwest is no longer a backward colony. It is now one of the fastest-growing parts of the country. In the past 10 years, the population of Washington and Oregon has increased more than 30 percent.

Jobs--permanent, productive jobs--have been made available in new industries that have been established to use the Columbia's low-cost power. In the past 12 years, 11 new plants alone have paid more than \$135 million in wages and nearly \$50 million in taxes.

Power from the Columbia has not only served industry. It has made life easier in homes and on farms. The use of electricity on homes and farms in the State of Washington is more than twice the national average.

When Grand Coulee was being built, some thought it would hurt other parts of the country by drawing plants and industries from them. Of course, that has not happened.

The plants that have sprung up here were not moved from other States. They are new enterprises, adding to the productive capacity of the whole country.

The growing payrolls of the Northwest have made bigger markets for producers in every State. The products turned out here are needed elsewhere. Nearly half the aluminum of the United States is being produced along the banks of the Columbia. This aluminum is used everywhere in the country. A single rolling mill 90 miles from here--at Spokane--is providing basic materials for 600 factories, from Boston to San Diego.

And when we were trying to get those aluminum plants constructed, every effort was made to prevent us from getting it done. I was the chairman of the committee in the Senate which was working with all it possibly could to get more aluminum to win the war, and we were informed by the so-called aluminum experts that we were making too much aluminum then and we didn't need any more, we were turning out 300 million pounds a year now. Now we are turning out 3,800 million pounds, and we are short--and that's the reason we want to look forward and not backward or standing still.

What has happened here is what happens in the case of underdeveloped areas everywhere--in our country and the world. Sound, productive investment always makes bigger markets and more jobs.

Not only is Grand Coulee contributing to the growth and strength of the Nation. It is also a paying proposition from the standpoint of the taxpayers.

When the dam was being built, it was attacked as a colossal waste of public funds. Well, that was just a colossal misstatement. The investment in the power facilities of Grand Coulee is being repaid right now, and with interest. And in a broader sense, the entire investment has already been repaid several times over in the increased national wealth that it has brought about.

We are not stopping our work at this point. The Grand Coulee project itself is not finished. More power generators are being added. And over the next several years we shall begin to put water on the land below here. Thousands of family-size farms will replace the present sagebrush.

Elsewhere in the Northwest, work on other dams is proceeding. Hungry Horse Dam in Montana, Chief Joseph Dam just down the Columbia from here, McNary Dam on the Oregon-Washington border, are all under construction. These and other dams are part of the great work that must be done to produce power, promote inland navigation, reclaim land for cultivation, and prevent destructive floods.

But even more than this is involved in the development of the resources of this area for solid growth. Forests and grasslands should be placed on a permanent, sustained yield basis. Soil should be conserved and improved. Fisheries should be protected and

enhanced. Mineral resources should be opened up and developed.

All this work can and should go forward together. I can't emphasize that too strongly. Resources that occur together in nature must be developed and improved together.

This is the goal we are working toward here in the Northwest. It is the same goal for which we are working in other parts of the country.

In the Central Valley of California, we are developing great power resources. With the help of that power, we are redirecting the available water of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers to bring about the most productive agricultural use.

In the Colorado River Basin we are working to achieve the most sensible uses of the very limited water supply, and to expand the power supply throughout the basin.

Down in the Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas area, a number of dams are producing power, and others are being built. In that area also, as in the lower Mississippi Valley, soil conservation, flood control, drainage, and navigation work is going forward.

In the Southeastern States, we are moving ahead with the construction of flood control and power dams on the Savannah River, the Roanoke, and other streams. In that area, also, it is necessary to shift land uses to conservation farming and to restore the pine forests.

The Northeastern part of the country has great possibilities for the development of additional hydroelectric resources. Power from the redevelopment of Niagara Falls and from the St. Lawrence Seaway project will be nearly as cheap as the power out here in the Northwest. And it is just as badly needed. We should construct these projects as soon as possible. And there are also power sites on the rivers of New England which should be developed soon.

In the Ohio Valley, and around the Great Lakes, the principal work that is being done is on flood control, navigation, and soil conservation. There is also much need for reforestation.

The Missouri River basin is so large that it requires consideration of all aspects of resource development. From the high plains in the West to the humid areas of the lower Missouri, this basin presents perhaps the most complex problem of all. The work that is necessary includes extensive development of flood control, irrigation, and power works, as well as increased conservation efforts on crop and rangeland.

I have left until last the mention of the Tennessee Valley. In that valley we have made more progress than in any other. There the idea of coordinated planning for all resources was first worked out and most completely applied. The Tennessee Valley Authority has been outstandingly successful in its area.

We have worked out a set of recommendations for a Columbia Valley Administration which builds on that successful experience but recognizes the different circumstances out here. Take one simple example. In this area, a farmer's right to the use of water is vital to his livelihood, and is protected by State laws. This is the way it should be, and the Columbia Valley Administration I have recommended would have no power to tamper with anyone's water rights.

The private power lobby, and other people who have selfish interests to maintain, say the Columbia Valley Administration would be a "superstate." Of course, that is not true. Ask the people in the Tennessee Valley. Ask the mayors of the cities and the Governors of the States in that valley whether the State and local governments are stronger or weaker as a result of the progress the TVA has brought. Ask them whether they have more or less influence on what happens in their valley with an agency that has its headquarters right there where they can deal with it at first hand.

They will tell you that the TVA is the greatest thing that ever happened in their part of the country.

I believe the Columbia Valley Administration is a necessary step in the sensible, democratic development of the resources of the Northwest. I believe the people in this area think so, too. And when they make their voices heard, I am sure the Columbia Valley Administration will be established.

We have embarked, all over the country, on the task of fully developing our resources for all the people. This is a job that will take many years to complete. It will require sound and careful planning.

But it is a work that fires the imagination. We are undertaking to use the resources we have so that they will grow, not diminish, over the years. We intend that our children, and their children, shall live in a more productive and a more beautiful land than we do.

We shall not get the job done, however, by sitting still. We must continue to take positive action. And we shall have to continue to overcome the opposition of those who do not understand the greatness of our goal, and who fear some impairment of their selfish interests.

We will meet opposition from private power groups. Many of them--there are, of course, honorable exceptions--many of them do not want the energy of our rivers put to use as power and sold to the people at cost.

We have already met this opposition in building Federal projects. And the people have met the same opposition in localities where they wanted to establish local public power agencies, such as public utility districts and REA cooperatives.

This opposition of the private power companies is wrong. It would deny the people the benefits of low-cost power they themselves have brought about through public investment.

I am sure we will continue to overcome this opposition, just as we already have been doing and as we did in building Grand Coulee--just as the people already have in Nebraska, in large parts of Washington and Oregon, and other sections of the country, where they decided to distribute power through public bodies and cooperatives.

The benefits of public investment must be passed on to the people whose tax money is being used. Those benefits must not be diverted for private profit. We will continue to fight--and win--for that principle.

No doubt we shall also have to fight those who think expenditures for resource development are a waste of public funds. They should have disqualified themselves by now. Their fantastic claims about Grand Coulee prove that they can't tell the difference between a waste of funds and a sensible investment.

Finally, we still have to fight those who imagine that every progressive action is another step down that famous "last mile to socialism." The facts continue to make that claim ridiculous. They called Bonneville and Grand Coulee steps to socialism. Now, I ask you--is private enterprise in the Pacific Northwest stronger or weaker as a result of these dams? Have you lost or gained industries and jobs? Do the people out here have less or more freedom? The answers are perfectly obvious.

It is clear that we must go ahead in every part of the country with our resource development work. And proceed we shall. We shall not be stopped by those who are timid or shortsighted or selfish. We shall not be stopped by discredited claims and tattered slogans.

Our whole future depends on the wisdom and the maturity we bring to bear on our national problems. We are engaged in a great struggle to achieve peace in a world beset with danger and threatened by Communist imperialism. We shall be engaged in the struggle for peace for years to come.

If we are to be successful, we must display the adventurous spirit, the firm courage of our pioneering fathers. We shall not succeed if we follow the advice of those who look backward, sighing for the fancied security of an earlier time. We must have strong minds, ready to accept the facts as they are, and to make bold, new plans based on those facts.

We shall need the same kind of wisdom that saw Grand Coulee Dam when there was nothing there but desert.

We shall need the same kind of steady perseverance that built this mighty dam over the opposition of men with narrow minds and faint hearts.

With that kind of vision and determination we can build a world in which men can be free under laws of their own making and can live at peace with one another.

Note: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. at Mead Circle in Coulee City, Wash., after an introduction by Senator Warren G. Magnuson of Washington. In the course of his remarks he referred to Governor Arthur B. Langlie of Washington.

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