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FLOOD CONTROL HEARING DEVELOPS LITTLE DEMAND IN FABER HIGH DAM

The large courtroom in the courthouse at Mount Vernon was filled to capacity yesterday morning as Col. R. P. Young, District Army Engineer, opened what was to have been an all-day hearing on flood control problems of the Skagit River. At the last moment, however, the Colonel decided to cut off hearing those present at noon.

Editor Dwelley and Mayor Lowell Peterson had made appointments to be heard at 1:00 P.M. to make a rush trip to get their statements into the record. After barely making the deadline and turning in the minutes of the public meeting here and a two-page statement by Dwelley, it was found that so many had requested to be heard that the meeting would be continued in the afternoon after all.

The upper valley people present were mostly interested in the discussions regarding the proposed dams in this area, but soon found that the army was giving no report or information – just listening to the suggestions of Skagit citizens.

During the morning session only one speaker, representing a diking district, favored the Faber dam as the only solution. Speakers against the dam included the state game department, fisheries department and commercial fishermen. Also a number of speakers from the upper valley. A short but vehement telegram from Senator Fred Martin calling a dam at Faber ridiculous.

Most of the testimony heard was on need for better diking in the lower valley and projects to dredge the river on the lower reaches to give the water a better flow.

The local speakers plugged for a dredging project that would open the river to barge navigation.

Odds Against Future Dams

Due to the reaction of the various groups heard yesterday, and the report of the Army Engineers, as set out in 1951, odds that dams will be built on the Cascade, Sauk or Faber Skagit site are all against such methods of controlling the floods.

Number one point is cost: The 1951 estimate on a 300 foot dam at Faber was \$218 million, including only \$2 million for land purchase. At this height the dam would back water to Darrington and cover approximately 35,000 acres. Land in the lower valley considered threatened by floods was estimated at about 60,000 acres. Thus the cost of building the dam would far outweigh the benefits gained. On a per-basis the benefit cost ration is figured at 81 or a loss of about \$2.5 million per year.

The upper Sauk dam site listed on the report is 9 miles above Darrington and would cost about \$48 million. Here again the balance of benefit makes the dam impractical.

A site on the lower Sauk would come within the Faber dam reservoir and was not considered feasible as long as the Faber site is under consideration.

Other dam sites considered were on the Cascade, where a narrow gorge limits storage. Cost of a hydro-electric dam here was estimated at \$54 million to develop 32,900 kw of continuous power. Annual cost

of such a project would be about twice the value of power benefits.

The other dam suggested would be at The Dalles at Concrete – a regulating dam that would be in conjunction with the high Faber dam. This would be a 65 foot dam to utilize water from the Skagit and Baker dams and develop some 31,700 kilowatts. Cost of such a dam was estimated (1951) at \$21 million.

In view of the costs and distinct lack of profitable operation, it is not expected that any immediate move will be made to use any of the dam sites in the present flood control program. It would seem from listening in at the hearing that the concentration will be on diking, dredging and possibly a secondary channel for the river in the lower valley.