

EXAMINER REPORTER INTERVIEWS ACTING MANAGER YUMA PROJECT

(From Examiner July 1)

Oh but what a gold mine of information one finds in the printed official documents relating to the Yuma project.

Take yesterday's issue of the Examiner, for instance, and you will see that former Project Manager Sellev's annual report shows that up to June 30, 1914, "Operation and maintenance during construction" had cost \$412,853.74. Now pick up "Part 1, Hearings before the Committee on Irrigation of Arid Lands" 63rd Congress, 3rd Session, Dec. 16, 17, 18 and 21, 1914, and you will find on page 17, that Mr. Wm. A. Ryan, comptroller of the reclamation service, testified that "the total cost of operation and maintenance (Yuma project) to June 30, 1914, amounted to not merely \$412,853.74, but \$610,239.63 showing a discrepancy between these two reports of \$197,385.63, or quite enough to keep several families in ice cold water-melons during an entire season. Why this juggling of figures? It is beyond comprehension to the average man, even though it may be as "clear as mud" to the reclamation officials.

There are Congressman, however, who do not understand the bookkeeping methods of the Reclamation service. As proof of this turn to page 41, of the Congressional Record above referred to and you will find some interesting questions put by Congressman John B. Raker of California, known all over that state as "the fighting judge" because when acting as Superior judge he was in the habit of adjourning court long enough to "lick the stuff" out of any man in the court room who wouldn't obey his orders. On this occasion Chief Engineer A. P. Davis, of the Reclamation Service was on the witness stand testifying about the Yuma project and explaining the necessity for the \$934,000 appropriation for the fiscal year of 1915-16. Now

read:

"Mr. Raker—Now Mr. Davis, how much of this amount that is in the estimate here, of the \$934,000, is to go to the building of ditches and such work as that to prevent overflow."

"Mr. Davis—About \$600,000. I do not have the overflow and drainage items separately."

"Mr. Raker—I would like to have the overflow separate."

"Mr. Davis—I do not have that. I can get that, however, for the next meeting."

In brackets this item appears: "Drainage \$125,000. Flood Protection \$475,000."

"Mr. Raker—Have the water users agreed to that item of overflow expenditure, and drainage?"

"Mr. Davis—No sir."

Mr. Hayden—(Congressman from this district) There has not been any opportunity for the water users to agree. The project has not been opened. The law we passed (20 year extension) applies after the project has been approved and opened, by public notice."

It can be seen from the foregoing that Congressman Raker could see no reason for throwing the "overflow" money and "drainage" money in the same kettle, which was the enigma expressed in yesterday's Examiner. Mr. Davis separated them for the Congressman's benefit—\$125,000 for "drainage" and \$475,000 for overflow protection; this based on the total sum asked for, \$934,000. The local project got the \$934,000 all right enough, and now comes the Sellev document, page 37, showing that \$498,500 is the amount set aside for "drainage and flood protection." And what will become of the remaining \$101,500? Why (again it may be asked) all this juggling of figures?

When "Fighting John" Raker finds out that "one was slipped over on him" he may have something to say, and he will say it in the same manner he used to do when he broke up the greatest gang of outlaws in California.

But these are all very small things. No one contends for a moment that anything actually "crooked" has been done to cause these great discrepancies in the official reports. They only go to prove that somebody was "talking through his hat." It is to be hoped that his elimination from Yuma project affairs is permanent and complete and that henceforth the "book accounts" can always be made to balance without the necessity of "robbing Peter to pay Paul."

Some days ago, the Examiner stated that the printed records showed that up to June 30, 1914, (page 419 "Thirteenth annual report of Reclamation Service") "104,694 barrels of cement" had been used on the Yuma project. If these "barrels" were divided into sacks, the question was asked "what became of the sacks—worth 10 cents each?" It has been ascertained from reliable sources that all

this cement was delivered in sacks, and, inasmuch as it requires 4 sacks to make a barrel, it can readily be seen that there have been used on the Yuma project thus far 418,776 sacks of cement and that the sacks were worth \$41,877.60!

Many thousands of these sacks, probably all of them, were used in making levees and dikes; but, as a matter of fact, were they all used that way? Some of them possibly went the same way that much of the cement and concrete is said to have gone—dumped into the river at the siphon work—for what? Well, just to give a perfect illustration of the wilful waste and extravagance of the local project manager.

Just how much of the cement was allowed to be ruined will never be known, just as it will be more than difficult to tell how many thousands of cubic yards of concrete work is "too rotten to talk about." On one particular piece of work in the Bard unit the concrete is so soft that the birds and chickens are scratching it up in order to get "sand in their craws." When Mr. "Escaped" Sellev's attention was called to this flagrantly outrageous piece of work by the unit holder near the job, he simply "winked the other eye" and let it go at that. But Mr. Unitholder got "hot under the collar" and wrote to Secretary Lane. He got an instant reply, saying a special inspector sure would be sent to examine the work. The inspector came, was taken under the protecting wing of "the greatest project manager the world has ever known," bundled into one of those delightful joy-riders and started for the defective concrete job. Mr. Unitholder saw them coming, and hastened to the spot in order to make good his assertion. The project manager saw him, too, but instead of stopping the aforesaid joy-rider, he "put on more juice" and went whizzing by. The inspector couldn't find the place and, upon recommendation of the project manager, the report was made that no such man "lives on the Bard unit." A subsequent complaint was made by the same exasperated unit holder, with the result that another inspector was sent out. This one went by himself and had no trouble in finding the "rotten work," as well as the irate unitholder. He used his hands for pick and shovel and got a suitcase half full to take back to Washington as a sample of the concrete work on the Yuma project.

Can you wonder that Secretary Lane has made up his mind to make a very thorough investigation of every crook and turn of the Yuma project? Can you wonder that the unit holders and water users are thoroughly and completely exasperated over the ruthless manner in which their money has been spent? Can any citizen of Yuma wonder why the Yuma project is not settling up faster than it does? The whole truth is that everybody with a grain of grey matter in their cranium knows that the Yuma project has been shamefully mismanaged—if not worse. But the board of cost review will soon sift the whole thing to the very bottom. Every item of expenditure must be satisfactorily explained, or—well, you'll hear something drop!

Federal grand juries sometimes take a notion in their heads to investigate federal contracts just as was done on the Panama Canal job, when a lot of "get-rich-quick" fellows were very promptly told where to head in at. However, it is to be sincerely hoped that no stigma like that will ever be put at the door of the Yuma project.

It was currently rumored about the streets last night that a "general shake-up" had taken place in the local Reclamation Service, and that as a result something like two hundred men had been laid off, about 60 of whom had been at work down at the end of the line. In order to get the exact facts, Acting Project Manager Priest was visited by an Examiner reporter early this morning, when the following important and interesting information was obtained:

Reporter: "Good morning, Mr. Priest."

Mr. Priest: "Good morning, sir."

Reporter: "I have called for the purpose of having a nice, friendly chat with you about Yuma project affairs."

Mr. Priest: "I have absolutely nothing to say about Yuma project affairs."

Reporter: "It is reported on the streets that quite a number of men were discharged yesterday; you certainly can tell me how many, can't you?"

Mr. Priest: "No sir; I can not. I have absolutely no information to give out regarding project affairs."

Reporter: "Were any changes made here in your office force?"

Mr. Priest: "No, sir; but, as I have already said I have no information to give out regarding Yuma project affairs," and, with an impatient wave of his hand, Mr. Priest turned and walked away.

Why all this secrecy?

Does the acting project manager imagine that the people of Yuma, and particularly of the Yuma project, have no interest in knowing what is being done in the local Reclamation Service affairs? If he does he is entirely mistaken, and if he refuses to give out information that the general public is legitimately entitled to, well, it will be obtained just the same, even if we have to get a new manager here to give out the information.

Did you ever hear of the power of the press?

TOO SOUR

Prof. Copeland, of Harvard, as the story goes, reproved his students for coming late to class.

"This is a class in English composition," he remarked with sarcasm "not an afternoon tea."

At the next meeting one girl was twenty minutes late. Prof. Copeland waited until she had taken her seat. Then he remarked bitinglly:

"How will you have your tea, Miss Brown?"

"Without the lemon, please," Miss Brown answered quite gently.

"Prisoner, have you anything to say?"

"Only this, your honor. I'd be mighty sorry if th' young lawyer you assigned to me was ever called upon to defend an innocent man."

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