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CAUCUS FOR EASTERN OKLAHOMA'S FUTURE

DEC. 3 1976

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quantity or well
Don't know / good news

REMARKS BY FERDIE J. DEERING, Editorial Writer,
THE DAILY OKLAHOMAN, at Henryetta, OK., Dec. 3, 1976 *also to*
Oklahoma Flying Farmers, Ada, April 16, 1977

Next to the air we breathe, water is the most essential element of life. It is indispensable ~~in many areas of living~~, beyond the mere necessity of living.

The average human drinks four pints of water a day, in one way or another, but consumes from 300 to 2,500 gallons when all uses of water in his life are considered.

It takes 500 lb. water to grow one lb. of wheat, and 500 lb. more water to turn that wheat into bread. It takes 700 gallons of water to remove the juice from a ton of oranges. It takes 700 gallons of water to produce a ton of paper, and we use nearly a ton of paper per capita *per year.* for all purposes.

In 1950, industrial water consumption was estimated to average 560 gallons per day per capita. In 1976, this is running well over 1,200 gallons per day per capita. The forecast is that by the end of this century, our nation's water consumption will double *again.* It has been forecast that world population will double, or close to it, by that time, which means our food requirements will double.

The story of man is the story of water, ~~although water was on earth first.~~ What we do with our water will determine the future of Oklahoma. We need more water for domestic and municipal uses. We need more water for agriculture. We need more water for industrial development and for navigation. We need more for recreation.

Oklahoma has made considerable progress in regard to water, but we are at a point of crisis for the future. Our water laws were a shapeless, chaotic mass until the 1950s when the Legislature created a water policy committee, whose work resulted in the present Oklahoma Water Resources Board and many of the present water laws.

Irrigation has developed in several areas of Oklahoma, boosting crop production and income. Farmers and ranchers have built more than 200,000 farm ponds. The Bureau of Reclamation and Corps of Army Engineers have assisted in building a number of large lakes. Last spring, Lake Liberty was dedicated in Pontotoc county, on Colony Ranch, as the 1776th upstream conservation structure in the state. It is to the credit of Oklahoma conservation leaders that our state has one-fourth all such upstream dams in the nation.

Oklahoma gets water from several sources, mainly rain and snow, which fill our streams and lakes, including an estimated 55 billion gallons of water that runs out of the state each year without being utilized.

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We also obtain water from underground aquifers, ^{which} ~~but these~~ are being steadily depleted as withdrawal rates exceed replenishment rates. They may not last out the century.

The cheapest water we can get is from the skies, and efforts to obtain more rain have brought weather modification (cloud seeding) to Oklahoma, with favorable results. Because of lack of consistent financing, programs have operated intermittently. (WRB request)

In my opinion, our future depends upon how well we utilize the water we have for development of our state. At the direction of the Legislature, the Water Resources Board has developed a preliminary plan for transporting surplus water from areas that don't need it to sections of the state that can use it. ~~The plan is incomplete and it has been criticized for that reason, but it is a start in the right direction.~~

The proposed plan has run into opposition from people who believe that it would deplete their water supplies unfairly. ^{open law provided} I know of no one who does not agree, that water does not become surplus until after needs in the basin of origin have been fully met. ~~If~~ ^{and} Such a guarantee is provided, many objections should be dissolved.

~~Not so readily overcome are~~ Costs of planning, engineering, acquiring rights-of-way, and construction of a water transport system. ^{will} ~~This would~~ run into hundreds of millions of dollars and ~~would take from five to 20 years, so this must be considered in the light of a long range development for our future.~~

A few people, perhaps many people, think that if Oklahoma does nothing to transport water from eastern counties to western areas, nothing will be done. This is not the case. Something will be done.

Inaction on our part will not prevent Oklahoma water from being appropriated and transported elsewhere. Inaction on our part will result only in our failure to benefit from its transport and use.

There has been a mania in Washington for years to create a "national policy" on everything. Water is no exception. We have a national policy on water, and it has resulted in federal agencies having excessive authority to overrule states on water.

Without going into detail, ~~I'd like to point out that~~ the Army Corps of Engineers presently has extensive authority over Northeastern Oklahoma Lakes and streams, and will receive additional authority in ^{year} 1977. The Bureau of Reclamation also has authority over certain Oklahoma waters, ~~and~~ ^B both agencies have powers not yet exercised.

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Much of Oklahoma, many parts of the United States and

~~many~~ other countries are suffering from critical drouth now.

Except ~~Other than~~ as a topic of casual conversation, most people do not seem to be worried. Maybe it will rain before it is too late, or another solution will turn up in time. After all, how could the world run out of water?

We can't use up the oceans of water, because most of the earth's water is not suitable for domestic, industrial or agricultural purposes, because most of it is not located where it is needed, and a great deal of ~~the~~ water has become polluted.

There is hope. Comments of state civic and political leaders in a water meeting sponsored by the Oklahoma Chamber of Commerce ~~last week~~ *just 3 days ago in OCC* reflected a spirit of unity that could result in action needed to meet Oklahoma's present and future needs.

Not all differences of opinion were resolved, but expressions indicated general willingness to support ~~work~~ workable plans to conserve, increase and utilize our resources. *Let me summarize* ~~Here are~~ some of the favorable and unfavorable aspects of our situation:

Oklahoma has sufficient water to satisfy our requirements, but ~~most~~ *all* of it runs out of state without full utilization *than we use -*

~~Oklahoma~~ ~~<<~~

~~Oklahoma has begun studies for transporting water to~~

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Oklahoma has begun studies to transport water to areas of need, but misunderstandings and lack of adequate explanations to people in affected regions are impeding progress.

Oklahoma has practical laws to protect users in basins of ~~the~~ origin and to allocate water for beneficial uses, but unless a ~~system~~ system for utilizing ~~the~~ our water is activated soon, unused resources may be allocated to ~~the~~ other states by federal agencies.

Oklahoma laws authorize weather modification districts to seed clouds to enhance rainfall, but although the ratio of benefits to costs is high, funding has not been provided.

Preliminary ~~planning~~ planning is well along for removing impurities from rivers to make the water usable, ~~money~~ but money is needed to complete the plans.

Oklahoma has built thousands of lakes and ponds to conserve water, but great quantities are wasted by citizens who do not seem to be aware that the supply of water is exhaustible.

Our long range prospects for adequate water are good, but the immediate outlook is bleak. Farmers are facing critical times and some towns may have to ration water this summer.

To avoid or alleviate such crises in the future, the movement that is under way must be ~~accelre~~ accelerated. We can't keep on spending water like is only money.

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On Oct. 9, 1976, a United States District Court in California ruled that nothing in federal law gives California the right to impose any conditions whatsoever for water quality, environmental protection, or any other purpose upon any federal agency. The clearly defined effect of this ruling is that states are held to be powerless to plan or manage future use of their water resources.

The Texas Water Development Board is expected to ask the Texas Legislature to pass laws creating necessary staff and procedure for transporting water from Oklahoma and Arkansas in 1977.

What these things add up to is that unless we get going to appropriate and use our own water, there is a very good chance that Texas, other states, may ask some federal agency for it and GET IT!

Tulsa, Oklahoma City and many other Oklahoma cities and towns need more water. Agriculture needs more water. Industrial development demands more water. Our future depends upon our water! Our income and prosperity depends upon our use of the water we have!

Oklahoma is a younger state than those around us, and Oklahoma has been exploited as a sort of colony since territorial days. This exploitation will continue unless we act to provide essential elements for agricultural, industrial and municipal development.

Agriculture is our biggest industry, with oil and gas next in line, but our greatest resource is our people.

We have exported our agricultural commodities to other states to be processed and marketed--at a profit to other states.

We have exported our petroleum products to other states to power their factories and transportation, to build their industries.

We have exported our bright young people to run their factories and to build up their states because our lack of industries in Oklahoma meant that they couldn't find enough good jobs here.

In order to grow and prosper, Oklahoma and specifically eastern Oklahoma, must have agriculture, industries and jobs. These are based upon our water resources, water that is utilized and not just allowed to run out of the state as an unneeded surplus.

IN order to accomplish this, we need statesmanship, leadership and strong public support for an aggressive program of development. Others profit by using our commodities, our petroleum, our young people, our resources. Why can't we do more of it ourselves?