

TUTTLE CREEK DAM:
A CASE STUDY
IN LOCAL OPPOSITION

by
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A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Political Science

Chapel Hill
1962

PREFACE

This project was made possible by the continuing encouragement and advice of Dr. Frederic N. Cleaveland and his associates at Chapel Hill; and by John W. McReynolds, who supplied the original spark of motivation. I am also grateful to the people of the Blue Valley, especially Glenn Stockwell, Doris Velen, and Leona Velen, who generously supplied their time for discussion and their personal and organizational records for review. The Topeka Daily Capital made its library available, and I am indebted to James L. Robinson, who, as state editor, saw that it was well-stocked with basic documents relating to this case.

Any bias which this study reflects may be attributed to my personal involvement at certain points in the narrative stemming from service as a novice reporter at the Manhattan Mercury and Topeka Daily Capital during irregular periods between 1951 and 1956. Three unforgettable assignments from those newspapers have probably contributed to my compulsion to get this story told more fully: reporting the breaking of the dike at North Topeka in 1951; witnessing the felling of the first oak tree at the Tuttle Creek Dam site in 1952; and speeding through the shadows of the hills, less a reporter than a courier of doom, on that afternoon in June, 1955, when the House Appropriations Committee settled the valley's fate for all time.

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CHAPTER I

LATENT PRESSURE GROUPS

Of all the flaws in the decision-making process of the political system of the United States, the one perhaps most commonly cited and the least controversial is the low level of citizen participation. Institutional advertisers and civic clubs attack its most obvious phase through efforts to attain a higher ratio of voter participation as election year projects. Editorial writers who balk at taking sides in elections fall back on theme, "Vote as you please, but please vote." Individuals or groups who disagree with any given governmental decision can generally be counted on to say in tones of despair, "If only the American people would wake up . . ."

But we do not "wake up." Even in the 1960 presidential election, which followed the most publicized campaign in our history, nearly 40 per cent of the adult population failed to vote.¹ And newspaper editors continue to amuse themselves by sending reporters into the streets to inquire of citizens whether they can name their state legislators or county judges. Most cannot.

Public apathy, it is generally agreed, is bad.. But a counter argument has been suggested by an author who wonders whether a healthy citizen in a healthy nation wouldn't be "as unaware of the government as a healthy man is unaware of his physiology."²

If this could be proven to be so, apathy would be a sign of political health, rather than morbidity. Extending the analogy, public excitement is like fever in the human body. It exists only where there is infection to be dealt with and the degree to which it rises is a measure of the seriousness of the infection. A healthy political body is nonfeverish. If people are satisfied with things as they are, there is no need for them to seek active participation in the affairs of government. Does not the government exist to keep people safe and happy? Tranquillity, therefore; so long as it is not induced dishonestly (or artificially in the manner of Huxley), may be said to represent an index to the success of government.

In theory, it should be possible to test this proposition. Take a happy, apathetic group. Make it unhappy. Observe its political activity before and after

¹ Based on 1960 census.

² Joseph Wood Krutch, "Whom Do We Picket Tonight?" *Harpers Magazine*, March, 1950, p. 67. Discussed in David Truman, *The Governmental Process*, New York, 1960, p. 356.

the change and compare its behavior with that of a control group, i.e., a happy, active group made unhappy.

While this study proffers no such empirical test, it does examine the capacity of one particular apathetic group to rouse itself and become active after its stable, tranquil position is threatened. To the extent that it has this capacity, doubt is cast on the position that apathy is a sign of weakness, and, insofar as the case at hand is concerned, apathy is shown to be accompanied by latent strength.

Political decision making involves the continuing adjustments of countervailing forces. David Truman has pointed out that a force need not be active in order to participate in this process.³ Merely potential forces can also have an effect on decision making. Elected government officials are often aware of the potential power of the so-called "sleeping masses" who owe their apathy to a state of equilibrium. And many such officials have gained this awareness the hard way when they disturbed the equilibrium. Examples can be found at even the lowest levels of government, e.g., a zoning board of adjustment member confronted by home owners whose property values are threatened by proposed variances.

In the case here under study, we will find that a group of apathetic, non-cohesive citizens can, given a sufficiently violent disturbance, quickly become active and sophisticated in the techniques of political pressure. But we will also find some flaws in their activity which will suggest that newly-manifest pressure operates at certain disadvantages in relation to counterforces which have been continually active.

It should be noted that no pretense can be made that this is a typical case. The disturbance involved is extreme. The pressure group consists of the residents of the Blue River Valley in Kansas whose property is threatened by a proposal of the United States Government, represented by the Army Corps of Engineers, to construct a reservoir. While in its original state the group could not be considered cohesive, the potential for cohesion is great because all of its members face the identical problem. In addition, the geographic situation makes frequent and prolonged interaction feasible. Finally, nearly all the members are equipped with the same basic set of conservative political values.

Here, then, are the ingredients for a speedy and effective transition from latent to manifest political power. And yet there are certain disadvantages inherent in the group's position.

The most obvious of these is the lack of readily developed access to centers of power. Such access takes time to establish and a certain amount of ef-

³ Truman, *op. cit.*, p. 51

fort to maintain. A newly awakened group must develop this access in one way or another.

The mere fact that a newly-manifest group finds it necessary to reach, influence, and, if necessary, change the established centers of power involves it in some inherent contradictions. Its apathy has existed because of its satisfaction with the existing structure. It can therefore be expected to be associated with the political values which contribute to the maintenance of this structure. Suddenly the workings of time and chance cause the group to be touched by an aspect of the existing structure which it has not previously encountered and which now presents a disturbing threat. The disturbing force is not really new. Like the pressure group which it spawns, it is newly manifest. The need to attack the disturbing force is easy for the pressure group to perceive. The problem of identifying the force in the context of the total political structure is much more difficult, because this is likely to threaten long-term, cherished values. An unsophisticated group cannot be expected to choose between its immediate problem and its entrenched values if these are in conflict. If it can possibly do so, it will rationalize or ignore the contradiction, but it may do so at the peril of sacrificing effectiveness.

When the conflict is too clear-cut to ignore or rationalize, the group may forego its basic beliefs in favor of attacking the immediate problem. The Blue Valley group does this at one point in its case history. But as soon as it has gained enough of its ends to make the issue no longer a clear one of change-or-perish, it swings back to the deeper underlying political values.

It is a truism that the more complex an issue, the easier the rationalization of one's conflicting positions becomes. An inexperienced pressure group with a firm set of political values faces the hazard of structuring its problems in terms of these conventional attitudes, even though they may have little or nothing to do with the problems. Had the Blue Valley been dominated by the John Birch Society, it doubtless would have visualized the Corps of Engineers project as part of a Communist plot. Other types of entrenched attitudes could have produced equally anomalous images, none of which would be of much help in attacking the problem. The political orientation of the Blue Valley residents was conventional Kansas conservatism, which is not an extreme variety of conservatism, but it was nevertheless a handicap in arriving at pragmatic courses of action. For the most part they fought only the project when their enemy was the system which permitted the project to exist.

One other hazard in the activation of a new pressure group deserves mention. When a group becomes active it is usually because it faces a threat of some kind. Sometimes it is the threat of destruction of the group. At the very least the threat must involve destruction of some of the cohesive factors which are essential to group effectiveness.

A permanent, continuing pressure group does not, on the other hand, necessarily exist primarily to oppose something. It may exist to procure favored treatment for its members in the continuing political process. This kind of group can win some battles, lose others, and still stay alive. The newly-manifest group, however, is more likely to be diminished by every successful thrust at its position. The following case is an extreme example, of course, because the group is opposing the execution of an irrevocable act. It can gain only temporary victories as opposed to the prospect of permanent loss.

In summary, the following case contains these factors: an awakened political force characterized by an atmosphere favorable to cohesion; rigidity in prior political attitudes; the continuing threat of destruction of the group. Given the latter two circumstances, it would be imprudent to expect a surprise ending. Bitter struggle and ultimate defeat seem probable, if not inevitable. And yet, the story does take some unexpected turns. And it does offer some insights into the process of government.

CHAPTER II

1938-1951: BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF AN ISSUE

On March 31, 1938, the Blue River was a narrow, muddy stream winding through limestone hills from the southeast section of Nebraska down to Manhattan, Kansas, where it empties into the Kansas River. Though shallow and sluggish, it had a tendency to flood in years of heavy rainfall, and so was the subject of discussion at a hearing of the Committee on Flood Control of the House of Representatives.

It was on that afternoon that Tuttle Creek Dam received its first public mention. Proposed for a site 12 river miles above Manhattan and named for a tributary of the Blue, it was one of several flood control projects offered by Col. C. L. Sturdevant, then the Army's Missouri River Division Engineer. This exchange took place:

The Chairman: Would there be any towns or villages destroyed or required to be removed by the construction of either of these two reservoirs, Milford or Tuttle Creek?

Colonel Sturdevant: No.¹

The colonel was wrong. But none of the citizens of Randolph, Garrison, Cleburne, Irving, Bigelow, or Stockdale, all towns in the Tuttle Creek Reservoir area, were there to refute his statement. Lacking communication, the potential pressure group remained latent. The committee recommended that the dam be authorized, and the 75th Congress concurred. The battle of the Blue Valley had begun, and the local residents had lost the first engagement without even realizing the threat existed.

The battle would last for 20 years before the mile-long barrier of earth, rock, and concrete stretched across the valley. By 1962, the towns, farms, and the 3,000 people who inhabited them would be gone. Trees and buildings would be stripped from the landscape while people in the surrounding hills waited for a rainy season to cover its 60,000 acres with water.

¹ U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Flood Control, Hearings, 75th Cong., 3d Sess., 1938, p. 110.

This was the end result of the struggle. To understand how it came about, let us begin with an examination of the valley's physical and social character in the days before the dam.

The Blue River is a major tributary of the Kansas River (called the Kaw by the natives), one of the southernmost streams of the Missouri Valley. It is located 142.5 miles above the mouth of the Kansas and is sometimes called the Big Blue to distinguish it from a tributary, the Little Blue. Its drainage area is 9,600 miles. From Marysville to Manhattan, a 45-mile distance, it meandered in the pre-dam days through a valley flanked by limestone hills rising up to 150 feet above the valley floor. While it drains nearly a sixth of the entire Kansas basin, it accounts for more than that proportion of flow in the mainstream because of its location in the eastern third of Kansas where the rainfall, 36 inches a year on the average, is higher than in the western regions.²

The black alluvial soils of the valley were ideally suited for cultivation. The hill land above is composed of residual soil formed where it lies by the weathering of underlying rock. These hills are at the northern tip of the Flint Hills grazing area. A farmer with both hill and valley land was in an ideal position for cattle raising. During the summer he could graze his herd in the hills while raising forage crops in the valley. These crops would be harvested in the fall and stored for use in feed lots during the winter.

Throughout the dispute, both sides agreed on this point. These were among the finest farms in Kansas.

Because of its richness, the Blue Valley, with its numerous side valleys formed by creeks flowing into the mainstem from east or west, was one of the first sections of Kansas to be settled. People who went there tended to stay, and their children stayed after them. One family, living on Carnahan Creek, celebrated the 100th anniversary in 1955 of the founding of its homestead by the ancestor for whom the creek was named. Not all families could boast of such tenure, but the average for the entire valley was 40 years. Virtually the only way land could be acquired there in the 20th century was by inheritance or by marriage. A typical resident was Leona Velen, one of the leaders of the anti-dam movement. Her grandfather homesteaded the family farm near Cleburne in 1867. The basement of her stone house contained the original stone walls of the dugout in which her grandfather first lived.³

Other Swedish immigrants settled near the Velen homestead, and in 1886 the town of Cleburne was founded nearby. As late as 1956, a wooden sign still paid a weather-beaten tribute to the three original settlers: "They left their

² Abel Wolman, Preliminary Report on Flood Protection in Kansas River Basin, Kansas Industrial Development Commission, Topeka, 1953, p. 8.

³ Statement of Leona Velen to the Missouri Basin Survey Commission, June 5, 1952. From her files.

native land of Sweden and found new homes amid these eternal hills and lovely valleys.”

The land was broken before the days of good roads and automobiles, and the valley was at first divided into tightly contained ethnic groups such as the Swedish settlement. A language barrier separated the Swedes, the Germans, and the New Englanders, and the lack of communication extended well into the period covered by this study.⁴

One community which still retained its old-country identity was the Mariadahl settlement. Its center was the Mariadahl Lutheran Church, oldest of its denomination in Kansas, built in 1866 out of stone from the surrounding hills. The “church ladies” served a yearly smorgasbord which enjoyed an area-wide reputation.

Another typical village was Garrison, mapped out in 1879 and named for C. K. Garrison, president of the Missouri-Pacific Railroad. The post office was established in December that year, and the first ferry across the Blue was launched in August. The population reached 200 in 1882 and doubled by 1884. Stagecoaches provided transportation twice weekly to Randolph, farther north in the valley, and Manhattan, down. at the river’s mouth. By 1897, two railroads served the town: the Kansas Central, and the Leavenworth, Kansas, and Western.⁵

By 1955, the history of the town had completed nearly a full cycle. Automobiles had replaced the railroads. Mechanization had thinned out the farm population. With no industry to support it, Garrison was inhabited mainly by retired farmers and workers who commuted to Manhattan. It still supported a Methodist Church, the post office, a two-room elementary school, and a combination grocery store and gasoline service station. But many of the old ways remained:

It was a good community, kindly, tolerant, and cooperative. Neighbors gathered to dig graves when members of the community passed away... There were woodcutting bees. There were sleigh riding parties when young and old gathered on the hill tops for the long, breath-taking slides. There were excursions to the timber to cut the family Christmas tree. Whenever a farmer became ill, neighbors took care of his crops and livestock.⁶

It was not, therefore, a small group of obstreperous farmers with which the Corps of Engineers and the downstream pro-dam interests had to contend; nor were all the issues economic. The Blue Valley was an informal federation of mature, close-knit communities, and the roots which had to be torn out to

⁴ Kenneth S. Davis, River on the Rampage (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1953), p. 168.

⁵ Florence Hawley, untitled article in The News Letter, Garrison, Kan., Dec. 31, 1959.

⁶ Unsigned editorial, ibid.

build Tuttle Creek Dam were real and deep. There was no possibility of constructing the project without severe emotional shock to large numbers of people. Though sentiment may have been the main force impelling the opposition to the dam, the downstream interests, accustomed to thinking in hard-headed economic terms, never fully appreciated the extent or power of the emotions involved.

Though Tuttle Creek Dam was first authorized by Congress in 1938, the chain of events which led to its construction began four years earlier. The idea did not originate with the Corps of Engineers, but with a Kansas City pressure group which opposed the flood control plan then in existence and sought an alternative.

In 1934, the Corps of Engineers plan⁷ was to protect property at the two Kansas Citys with a high levee, some 11 to 12 feet higher than the existing levees. This was opposed by railroad and industrial interests because it would have disrupted transportation facilities, making it necessary to raise railroad bridges and blocking some industrial areas. Accordingly, the chambers of commerce of the two cities organized the Flood Protection Planning Committee for Greater Kansas City to seek a different solution.⁸

This committee promoted an investigation of the problem by the Corps of Engineers, but hired its own consulting engineer, F. H. Fowler, to direct the study. The arrangement had been proposed by the National Resources Board, which told the committee that

if you will form a small committee to represent your interests in Kansas City and will hire a nationally known consulting engineer to make a study of your situation, we will see that enough money is appropriated to the Army engineers to furnish the surveys and the technical data.⁹

The survey took two years, and Fowler's report was ready in March, 1937. It pointed to what, for the Kansas City interests, was the obvious solution: a system of upstream reservoirs.

Previous reservoir plans for the Kansas Basin had been simple: the Corps in 1934 had proposed only one project, named Kiro Dam, to be located on the mainstem of the Kansas River just west of Topeka. Its estimated cost was \$60 million. The Fowler report went further than this. It proposed substituting two projects farther upstream on the main tributaries of the Kansas. These were to be a reservoir on the Republican River at the town of Milford, and at Tuttle Creek on the Blue.

⁷ Contained in House Document No. 195, 73rd Cong., 2nd Sess. Known as the 308 Report.

⁸ U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Flood Control, Hearings, 1938, op. cit., p. 811.

⁹ U.S., Congress, House, Civil Functions Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, Hearings, 82nd Cong., 2d Sess., p. 393.

The Fowler Report was submitted to the House Committee on Flood Control in the spring of 1938. W. J. Breidenthal, chairman of the Kansas City group, pointed out that

with the reservoir system, transportation and normal business activities would continue during high-water periods, whereas with high levees, transportation and business would be interrupted during flood periods.¹⁰

Dropping its plan for protection by dikes alone, the Corps of Engineers included Tuttle Creek and Milford Reservoirs in its recommendations to the 75th Congress.¹¹ Also reversed were the findings of an Army report made only a year before under a provision of the Flood Control Act of 1936. This Act called for preliminary reports and surveys for flood control at Manhattan and on the Big Blue with its tributaries. Sent to Congress on March 18, 1938, but not printed, the resulting report concluded that flood control works such as levees, improved channels, or a system of reservoirs could not be justified, and that there was no point in further surveys.¹²

Congress, then, had conflicting reports before it when it passed the Flood Control Act of 1938 which authorized Tuttle Creek Dam. So far, only one pressure group - the Kansas City committee - was active. Upstream interests were still unaware of the plans being made for the Blue Valley.

Once authorized, the Tuttle Creek project lay dormant for the next five years. The marriage of the Pick and Sloan plans brought it to life in 1944 and Blue Valley residents awoke to find theirs one of eight valleys in the Missouri Basin having dam projects on the drawing boards of the Corps of Engineers. Twelve more were planned by the Bureau of Reclamation.

The opposition first organized as the Blue River Study Association and invited Col. S. G. Neff, Kansas City district engineer, to a meeting in Randolph to give details of the project. It was then that valley residents learned that it had been authorized six years before and that only another act of Congress or the lack of appropriation of funds could prevent its eventual completion. Col. Neff predicted that construction would start within six months after the end of the war.

After hearing him, the group decided to name a permanent slate of officers and elected J. A. Hawkinson of Cleburne president. The first move was a conference with Congressman W. P. Lambertson of the First District, which included the Blue Valley and all of the downstream areas except Kansas City. Lambertson agreed to oppose the dam.

¹⁰ U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Flood Control, Hearings, op. cit., p. 811.

¹¹ U.S., Congress, House, Flood Control Committee Document No. 1, 75th Cong., 1st Sess. Also Flood Control Committee Report No. 2353, 75th Cong., 3d Sess.

¹² Cited in Wolman, op. cit., p. 28.

Before he could act, he was defeated in the 1944 Republican primary by Albert M. Cole. However, Cole was also cooperative. No requests for construction or planning funds had yet gone to Congress, and the valley residents began to compile information to apply in their cause.

One of the first projects was a survey to determine what the economic effects of the loss of the valley would be. Assisted by the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce, the valley residents added up such items as “16,733 hogs valued at \$803,184,” “44 geese valued at \$111,” and “50,253 pounds butterfat valued at \$30,151,” to arrive at “an annual recurring loss of \$6,121,233 . . . if and when the land is taken out of production.”

Published in an eight-page booklet titled “Flood Control in Reverse,” illustrated with a line drawing of people and animals fleeing to the hills to escape the rising waters of the reservoir, the figures were supplemented with accounts of the “social destruction” which would result from the project. “At least 1,500 persons would be forced to leave farms which have been their family homes for as long as 90 years,” it was pointed out.

As counter proposals, the association listed construction of small dams upstream and intense promotion of soil conservation practices to retard runoff.

The Corps of Engineers held a public hearing on Tuttle Creek Dam at Marysville on September 7, 1944, at which members of the association proposed an alternative plan. It was limited in scope, consisting mainly of a recommendation that Tuttle Creek be broken up into several smaller dams and that these be put somewhere else.

At a second meeting, in Manhattan on May 26, 1946, eight specific sites were proposed for the smaller structures. Seven of them were across the state line in Nebraska. All were far upstream from Tuttle Creek.¹³

Investigating this proposal, the Corps of Engineers immediately discarded four of the eight proposed locations as unsuitable, but found two near sites which could possibly replace them. This left a total of six, and the Corps devised six possible combinations of these, making a detailed analysis of each. A reduced-capacity Tuttle Creek Dam was included in some of the hypothetical combinations.

The analysis showed unfavorable cost-benefit ratios for each of the plans. Tuttle Creek, it was demonstrated, would inundate a smaller total area while draining as much or more area than any of the alternate combinations. Further, with the exception of one plan calling for a reduced-capacity Tuttle Creek and a smaller dam farther upstream, it would displace fewer families than any of the other plans.¹⁴

¹³ U.S., Congress, Kansas River and Tributaries, House Doc. No. 642, 81st Cong., 2d Sess., 1950, p. 63.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 64-67.

This analysis was contained in a report made after the end of World War II when interest was renewed in civilian projects. Its purpose was to update earlier studies and reconcile some of the conflicts in the record. Going back to the 308 Report of 1933 and other reports made in the interim, it reviewed the entire basin plan and set forth revised recommendations. Though it was dated March 15, 1947, by the Kansas City district engineer, it did not complete its journey through the established channels of communication and reach Congress until June 21, 1950. Residents of the Blue Valley got a preview, however. On March 22, when the report was a week old, a meeting was held at the Hotel Gillett in Manhattan between Hawkinson, members of the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce, and the new district engineer, Col. W. E. Potter.

According to notes taken by C. C. Kilker, Chamber of Commerce secretary, these points were made:

1. Potter had recommended "a very large" Tuttle Creek Dam (average height above the valley floor: 135 feet).
2. The report would not reach Congress for at least six months.
3. When it did get to Congress, residents of the valley could get it delayed indefinitely if they continued to oppose it. This would be a mistake, in Potter's opinion.
4. The proposed dam was a key project needed for controlling flood waters in the Kaw Valley, and any opposition which would delay it would also tend to delay other important river control developments in the Kansas Basin.

While they waited for the full report to be made public, Blue Valley leaders started reading water resources law. They found temporary encouragement in the provision of the 1944 Flood Control Act calling for review of proposed projects by affected states and laid plans to present their case to Gov. Frank Carlson. They did not learn until late in 1948 that, because Tuttle Creek Dam had already been authorized, the review provision was not applicable. At this point, the urgency of their situation was becoming apparent, and Hawkinson called a meeting of the Study Association at Randolph High School on December 2.

"The people in the Blue River Valley find themselves today with their backs against the wall," he said, according to minutes taken by Kilker as acting secretary.

"We thought we had two strikes left. We were all set to talk against the dam at the governor's hearing of proposed projects Dec. 16, and, if that failed, we hoped to block appropriations for construction."

It was clear by the time of this meeting that the only courses left were to try to block the initial appropriation and to seek legislation deleting the dam from the Pick-Sloan plan.

It was also at this point that a related pressure group made its only public appearance in the controversy. The Kansas Power and Light Company had an obvious interest, for a dam as large as Tuttle Creek has potential public power use. This possibility was later borne out when the 1947 review report finally became public. Provision had been made for a possible future installation of a 10,000-kilowatt plant, although the engineers' estimates showed that production of water power at Tuttle Creek would not be economical "under present conditions."¹⁵

The Kansas Power and Light Company representative was H. S. Hinrichs, head of the company's rural electrification program, who presented a watershed plan which might prove an effective alternative to Tuttle Creek." The idea was well received, and another meeting was scheduled for December 29 at the Manhattan Country Club. In the meantime, signatures were gathered for a petition in which

the owners and operators of land, and other interested citizens concerned with flood control and soil conservation practices in the Big Blue River Watershed in Kansas and Nebraska, petition the Secretary of Agriculture for early initiation of work in our watershed under the flood control legislation. We have followed closely the investigations made by your department of the flood conditions in this watershed and are ready and willing to do our part in getting this work under way. We expect to associate our interests locally so as to work closely and expeditiously with your department and others concerned.

We urge that you take appropriate action to obtain early Congressional approval of the survey report and appropriation of funds so that work can start as soon as possible.

The Flood Control legislation referred to was the 1938 follow-up to the 1936 Flood Control Act authorizing the Department of Agriculture to construct pilot watershed projects in specific localities. (The petitioners were ultimately successful, although the first pilot watershed on a tributary of the Blue River was not approved until 1954.)

At the meeting on December 29, 1948, attended by 23 members, two more positive steps were taken. A legal firm was hired to advise the association and a committee consisting of Hawkinson, John Holmstrom, and N. D. Harwood, was appointed to visit Congressman Cole to discuss the possibility of having Tuttle Creek eliminated from the flood control program.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 61-62.

The petition was mailed to Secretary of Agriculture Charles F. Brannan on January 11, 1949, and the opposition, after nearly 11 years, was finally on the move.

On February 10, Hawkinson, three state legislators from the Blue Valley, and Manhattan attorney Hal Harlan, the Study Association's newly hired legal advisor, met with Governor Carlson. They asked him to seek a review of the Tuttle Creek plan, despite its exemption from the review provision in the 1944 act. Carlson suggested that it was a matter for Congressman Cole to work on. Accordingly, the association made the proposal to Cole and to the Kansas senators, Clyde M. Reed and Andrew F. Schoeppel.

"After 11 years of authorization, it is like a blanket mortgage and we must have it lifted," said Hawkinson.¹⁶

Meanwhile, some work was done in the Kansas legislature. Blue Valley representatives successfully sponsored a resolution in the Kansas House of Representatives on March 4, 1949, calling for deletion of Tuttle Creek Dam from the Pick-Sloan program. The resolution was discussed by the State Senate, which took no action.¹⁷

Also in 1949, Hawkinson tried to line up support in the Mississippi Valley Association, a strong pressure group, only to find that it had a pro-dam bias. He attended its Missouri Basin Flood Control Conference in Kansas City on October 3, 1949., armed with a resolution asking for a re-study of Tuttle Creek. The proposal failed in the resolutions committee. Explained Hawkinson in a circular to valley residents:

One member of the 21-member committee informed me the Resolution Committee reported to the assembly that our request for a re-study had been rejected because Kansas City, with seven members on this committee, informed the chairman and members that if they went ahead and approved a re-study on Tuttle Creek . . . then they (the Kansas City members) would start tearing down your part of the Pick-Sloan plan and all will be lost.

Hawkinson complained that he found "all committees packed with members from Kansas City, St. Louis, and other Missouri River towns. As for the agricultural people, we were not given any voice."

In the following year, the first of a long series of trips to Washington to defend the valley before committees of Congress was held. The Corps of Engineers requested a \$5 million appropriation to start the projects, then estimated to have a total cost of \$58,459,000. The appropriation was eliminated

¹⁶ Letter from J.A. Hawkinson to Albert M. Cole, Feb. 19, 1949. Files of Blue Valley Study Assoc.

¹⁷ U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, Hearings, Civil Functions, 82nd Cong., 2d Sess., p. 372.

without difficulty in the House Subcommittee on Public Works, when Congressman Cole urged a more thorough study.¹⁸

In 1951, a related pressure group became organized on a statewide basis. It was the Kansas Watersheds Association, organized as a nonprofit organization to

promote a maximum program of on-the-land water and soil conservation integrated and coordinated with proper water run-off, retarding and retention structures, and other flood and erosion control measures necessary for the full and proper development, conservation and protection of the natural agricultural, industrial, and recreational resources of the several watersheds in the State of Kansas; to cooperate with other associations for the purpose of unifying and coordinating the work of other associations and to cooperate with municipal, county, state, and Federal agencies for the prompt, efficient, and economical organization and development of watershed projects and the enactment of enabling legislation; and to conduct an educational program in behalf of such watershed development.¹⁹

The new group's president was Dwight Payton., publisher of a weekly newspaper in Overbrook, located just across the southern ridge of the Kansas Basin in the Marais des Cygnes Valley. Its statewide membership included a hard core of Blue Valley representation.

It was partly through efforts of these people that the Kansas House of Representatives again passed an anti-Tuttle Creek resolution. This one did not, however, mention the project by name. It requested Congress to review all projects which had been authorized for five years without work having started.

By mid-1951, the Blue Valley position appeared to be strong. With Congressman Cole opposing the appropriation proposed for his own district, prospects were good for an indefinite delay. Meanwhile, efforts could continue to have Tuttle Creek Dam "deauthorized." This was the ultimate goal of the Blue River Study Association.

But in June and July of 1951, this secure position was drastically altered. The change came about, not because of the machinations of politicians and pressure groups, but through a freak of nature.

¹⁸ Topeka Daily Capital, March 3, 1950, p. 1

¹⁹ Articles of Incorporation, Kansas Watersheds Association.

CHAPTER III

1951-1952: OF POLITICS AND THE WEATHER

The storm began as a strong high-pressure ridge floating over the Eastern Pacific Ocean. To the east of it, a trough of low-pressure air extended from south central Canada through the southwestern United States. The combination produced a persistent floor of cold air from Canada down to the Great Plains.

Meanwhile, the low-pressure trough was sucking up warm, moisture-laden air from the Gulf of Mexico. The warm and the cold air streams met over Kansas, resulting in what meteorologists call a warm-air advection. The moist air rose, was cooled, and its moisture condensed into rain, starting to fall on July 9. Now only one other chance factor was needed to create a major storm. It happened. The high-pressure ridge over the Pacific persisted and blocked the normal west-to-east pattern of air movement across the continent. The rain storm hovered over the Kansas Basin for four days and four nights.¹

The rain fell onto land already muddy and saturated from an abnormally wet spring and early summer. It ran off into creeks and rivers already swollen. At 5:40 P.M., July 11, 1951, Kansas City forecaster J. R. Lloyd made a special broadcast:

Frequent heavy to excessive rains over Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, and Nebraska for the past month and a half with cloud burst rains in Kansas last night, have brought about one of the most serious flood situations in history in Missouri and Eastern Kansas . . .

Severe flooding is occurring in the area covered by the Kansas River and its tributaries, the Big Blue, the Republican, the Solomon, the Saline, and the Smoky Hill in northeast and north-central Kansas. At Manhattan, on the Kansas River, a crest of near 17 feet above bankful is expected by tomorrow evening, five feet above the all-time high which was established in 1903.

At Topeka, the Kansas River will crest at about 12 feet above bankful by tomorrow evening, which will be slightly higher than the all-time record also set in 1903 . . .

¹ Kansas-Missouri Floods of June-July, 1951, Weather Bureau Technical Paper No. 17 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952), p. 91.

The present very serious situation is almost sure to become worse due to further heavy rains that are forecast to fall over Kansas, Missouri, and southern Nebraska, during the next 48 hours. The floods . . . are really catastrophic.²

Sixty hours later, the flood crested at Kansas City. Behind, it left damages first estimated by the Corps of Engineers at \$870,245,000. A total of 2,256,300 acres of land were flooded, 183 towns affected, 87,377 persons evacuated, 2,533 homes destroyed, 24,893 others flooded, 354 businesses ruined, and 18 persons killed.³

The bulk of the loss, as estimated by the Corps, was in the industrial area of Greater Kansas City which accounted for \$363 million of the total. Flood-water covered the Argentine and Central Industrial Districts on the right bank of the Kaw, and the Armourdale District on the left. The Fairfax area on the right bank of the Missouri, just upstream from the mouth of the Kaw, was also flooded. Together, these areas constituted an important wholesale, industrial, and transportation center with warehouses, packing plants, grain elevators, and factories concentrated on the flood plain near the nation's second largest rail center.⁴

At Manhattan, the damage totaled \$13,394,000. But the impact was greater in proportion to size than at Kansas City. The flood covered 60 per cent of the town at depths up to eight feet. Included in this area were 1,600 residences, 300 commercial and industrial buildings, four churches, and five schools. More than 1,900 persons were evacuated and housed with friends or in facilities of high-and-dry Kansas State College. The most severe structural damage to buildings was near the river where, as in Kansas City, much of the valuable commercial property was located. Stores in the main business section, lower Poyntz Avenue, suffered heavy stock losses, and sewer systems were clogged so badly they had to be rebuilt.⁵

The flood began to have an effect on the Tuttle Creek controversy even before the water went down. In the first two weeks, these things happened:

In Kansas City, a meeting of businessmen was called to promote the Pick-Sloan projects in the Kansas Basin.

In Washington, the Corps of Engineers asked Congress for \$5 million to begin construction of Tuttle Creek Dam. Senator Carlson followed up with a bill to authorize construction of the Pick-Sloan projects not previously authorized.

² Quoted in Flood Control – A Proceedings Report on a Forum Held at Kansas State College, Manhattan, Kan., November 27-28, 1951 (Manhattan: Kansas State College Press, 1951), p. 23.

³ Interim Report on Storms and Floods in the Kansas City District, May-July, 1951, Corps of Engineers, October, 1951, pp. 7-13. The estimate of total damages was eventually revised to \$750,000,000.

⁴ Ibid., p. 11.

⁵ Ibid.

In the Blue Valley, the Blue River Study Association was reorganized as the Blue Valley Study Association with a new president: Glenn Stockwell, a 1923 graduate of Kansas State College and valley resident since 1928. After being briefed by the old association's Washington committee, he addressed the full group at Randolph on August 20.

"When I reviewed the situation, I found that they had not made it black enough," he said. He emphasized the need for keeping the Kansas Congressional delegation on the valley's side and proposed "a bold new approach to flood control." This was to be "a complete watershed program embracing soil conservation and land use measures, retention dams in smaller streams, dikes and levees, proper flood channels, and dry storage dams."

The opposing pressure groups were beginning to draw their ideological battle lines. A new pro-dam organization was formed: the 12th district of the Missouri-Arkansas Basins Flood Control Association, organized October 4 at a meeting in Topeka. The new unit's first act was adoption of a resolution calling on the 82nd Congress to approve an appropriation for construction of the Tuttle Creek project. Ned Engler of Rossville, a small riverside town between Manhattan and Topeka, was elected president.

Congress adjourned that fall without acting on the Tuttle Creek request, permitting some time for study and debate in the light of the record flood. The first public debate was at a forum sponsored by Kansas State College (renamed Kansas State University in 1959) which invited experts from throughout the basin to discuss the problem. Col. L. J. Lincoln, who had replaced Potter as Kansas City district engineer, was there to succinctly sum up the pro-dam ideology: "Those who saw the Kaw Basin in July, 1951, with flood waters extending from bluff to bluff, must sense that nothing short of great works is needed to control the torrents that will otherwise flood the lowlands of our rivers and their tributaries."

Levees, floodwalls, and channel improvement could not by themselves stop flood damage, he said. "There is only one way . . . and that is by dams and reservoirs. No other method known to engineering science today will be effective or should merit serious consideration in our efforts to control waters which produce major floods."⁶

Speaking for the Soil Conservation Service was Kirk M. Sandals of Lincoln, Nebraska, who, quoting H. H. Bennett, former chief of the service, said that "flood control is a job which begins where the rains fall and the runoff starts - that is, in the fields and pastures and forests, and ends only when the runoff has safely reached the ocean."

As far as the Blue Valley residents were concerned, Sandals could have stopped speaking right there. But after describing the benefits of soil conser-

⁶ Flood Control, A Proceedings Report, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43.

vation, he went on to say, "This kind of program alone will not prevent flooding of the main river valleys and the cities in them . . . In my opinion, additional controls such as reservoirs, levees, and other main channel protective works will be needed to safeguard the flood plains of our major rivers against such disasters as we have just experienced."⁷

In months to come, the Blue Valley residents would place their primary stress on watershed control as a substitute for large reservoirs, despite such statements by Soil Conservation Service officials, which they regarded as equivocation in the light of the demonstrated technical achievements of the service. But when Col. Lincoln said, "I have yet to hear any responsible member of the SCS or the entire department of agriculture contend or imply that their program., however intensely applied, would alter the need for adequate major flood control structures," they had no ready reply.⁸

Among other interests represented at the State forum was the League of Kansas Municipalities, whose director, John G. Stutz, expressed a view also championed by Dr. Walter T. Kollmorgen, outspoken chairman of the Department of Geology at the University of Kansas, located further downstream at Lawrence. Sensible flood plain zoning would solve much of the problem, he argued. He pointed out that

anyone who occupies a flood plain takes a calculated risk on a flood . . . This calculated risk, however, is so vast and so irregular that it has been nearly impossible to develop any economical plan of flood insurance. Every stream, however, has a clear water right, flood water right,, to all of its flood plain. Those who take title to land in a flood plain do so subject to the prior rights, titles, and easements of the streams which built such land.⁹

Flood plain zoning would reappear as a proposal during the long controversy. But for the most part, the ideological warfare was to be kept on fairly simple terms of big dams vs. little dams. Practically overlooked was another viewpoint which the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reiterated on August 5. Staff Writer Richard G. Baumhoff took the opportunity to raise what he regarded as "the long range question - whether a single, unified, specifically chartered administrative agency shall supplant the present divided authority and voluntary coordination" between the various agencies concerned with river development.¹⁰ The St. Louis paper had supported a Missouri Valley Authority patterned after TVA since 1944, a few months before Sen. James E. Murray of Montana introduced the first in a long series of unsuccessful MVA bills.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 16-17.

⁸ Ibid., p. 43.

⁹ Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁰ Richard G. Baumhoff, "Nine Disastrous Floods in Nine Years Raise Vigorous New Demands for Unified Control Plan in Valley," St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Aug. 5, 1951, p. 1.

Generally, MVA was shunned by both sides of the Tuttle Creek dispute. Pro-dam forces wanted quick action, and the Pick-Sloan plan, as the only one on the drawing boards, was the obvious choice. And to the conservative Republican farmers in the valley, MVA would be just another aspect of “big government” with which they tended to identify the threat of the big dam.

The Kansas Watersheds Association’s Dwight Payton, for example, even distrusted the Missouri Basin Inter-Agency Commission, the organization for voluntary coordination. In a pamphlet published by the Lyndon, Kansas, Booster Club, he blamed this group for the failure of the Department of Agriculture to promote soil conservation as a flood control measure in competition with the Comas of Engineers and its big dams:

Because of some inter-agency agreement, the moguls of soil conservation have been unwilling to stand up for the watershed program. Ask them about facts and figures from the Washita, their own project, or the Muskingum Valley in Ohio, and they say they don’t know. Why they don’t know is a mystery, for the facts are readily obtainable . . .

Most recent line of inter-agency agreement is for the USDA to insist that the watershed program must be installed before the big dams, that watershed (programs) will control floods on the small tributaries, but will not make an appreciable difference on the main streams . . . That’s about like saying a corn picker will strip the ears off a single row, but could not be expected to harvest the whole field.

If, from the Blue Valley point of view, the United States Department of Agriculture did not know how good its flood control measures were, the Corps of Engineers was equally ignorant about how poor its measures were. Shortly after the flood, Gen. Lewis A. Pick, chief of the Army Engineers, made a statement which gave no comfort to those who feared that the Corps tended to act on the basis of inconclusive technical information. Pressing for early appropriations for dam construction, he made the claim that if the dams then planned – Tuttle Creek, Perry, and Milford – had been in existence, the flood damage to Manhattan, Topeka, and Kansas City would have been prevented. Simple arithmetic showed that this was not the case.

First to refute the general’s statement was James L. Robinson, then state editor of the Topeka Daily Capital and a member of the Kansas Watersheds Association. Taking stream-flow reports of the U. S. Geological Survey, he multiplied the average stream flow in excess of channel capacity at Topeka (213,000 cubic feet per second) by the time during which that flow existed (147 hours) to get the total volume of water which dams would have needed to hold in order to keep flood waters from topping Topeka dikes. The total: 2,799,665-acre feet.

But Tuttle Creek, Milford, and Perry reservoirs had a total flood capacity of only 2,487,000-acre feet. Therefore, if each dam had been in place, if each reservoir had been completely empty before the last big storm, and if together they had trapped as much runoff as they would hold, the dikes would still have been topped. Furthermore, neither of the latter two conditions would have been possible. Some water would already have been in the reservoirs because of the wet spring. And they could not have trapped all of the runoff, because most of it occurred below the dam sites.¹¹

The Corps of Engineers had already begun to hint at the truth. In an address written for delivery to the Kansas Reclamation Association at Salina on September 20, Lincoln had made a less drastic claim than that of General Pick. The previously planned reservoirs, he said, would have “reduced the flow of the Kansas River at Bonner Springs (a Kansas City suburb) about 40 per cent. Twenty-five per cent of the remaining flow of the Kansas River at that point was attributable to uncontrolled tributaries which would not be affected by the reservoirs now in the plan.”

In nearby Clay Center, a town whose trade area would be considerably diminished by construction of Milford Reservoir, the weekly Times concluded from this that it was “evident that the Army Engineers had backed down considerably from previous claims.”¹²

But the backdown did not become official until December 14, 1951, at the meeting of the Inter-Agency Committee in Topeka. C. R. Van Orman, assistant chief of the engineering division for the Kansas City District, presented an analysis of the flood.

“It brought home very forcefully,” he said, “the fact that nearly every tributary was contributing to the Kansas River at unprecedented rates of discharge so timed as to produce an accumulative total beyond any ever officially recorded in this basin.”

Consequently, he said, the Corps was basing its new planning on a different “design flood.” The previous design flood, i.e., the theoretical storm whose flood the structures were designed to prevent, had been based on the flood of 1903. The new design flood would not, however, be the 1951 flood. Rather, it would be the flood which would have occurred if the July storm had happened a few miles farther north so that the water which fell on the south side of the basin’s lower ridge and into the Marais des Cygnes and Arkansas Basins would have instead gone into the Kansas Basin.

This study proved “the location and efficacy of the key reservoirs previously recommended for flood control,” Van Orman said. “However, to ac-

¹¹ James L. Robinson, “Lesson of Flood: All Measures Planned So Far Wouldn’t Have Saved City,” Topeka Daily Capital Sunday Magazine, Nov. 25, 1951, p. 1.

¹² “No Complete Program in Pick-Sloan Plans,” The Times, Clay Center, Kan., Sept. 27, 1951, p. 1.

comply with the protection job now confronting us, additional basic units must be added to the framework already established.”

Later in the meeting, Colonel Lincoln described the “additional basic units” in detail: 22 new dams, of which 18 would be clustered in a relatively small segment between Salina and Kansas City. Together, they would impound about 3,300,000 acre-feet of water. This brought the total of new dams proposed for the basin, both upstream and downstream, Army and Reclamation, to 34. It doubled the prospective cost of the total program to \$700 million.

Two previous Army proposals and four Bureau projects were not included in the list of 34 basic reservoirs. Five of this group were put on a “recommended” list for possible future consideration. Among those declared not immediately necessary were Kirwin and Webster Dams, both Western Kansas projects of the Bureau which, according to Baumhoff, General Pick had sought unsuccessfully to have shifted to Army jurisdiction.¹³

At the Inter-Agency meeting, Colonel Lincoln brought up one other point important in the pressure group struggle. Power development, he said, would no longer be considered in the Kansas Basin. This reassured Kansas Gov. Edward F. Arn who appeared at the meeting to oppose public power at Kansas dam sites. Arn also said he was “certain the people of Kansas would join me in saying we oppose such a device as MVA both in principle and in purpose.”

Lincoln’s no-power statement deprived the Blue Valley of a potential ally. According to Stockwell, the Kansas Power and Light Company, which before the flood had provided some technical assistance in the area of soil conservation, then withdrew from the controversy altogether. However, some new possibilities for alignments were created by the December 14 announcements. Blue Valley residents believed that when the vastness of the Corps’ new program became known, farmers in other areas marked for reservoirs and the businessmen with whom they traded would join the opposition forces.

Stockwell lined up other binds of support in the closing weeks of 1951. He made a tentative liaison with Kansas CIO leaders who had a soil conservation committee through which the labor federation hoped to weld a workable farm-labor bond. He got support from the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce, which, despite heavy flood losses sustained by its members, passed a resolution opposing the dam. Farther downstream, the chambers of commerce were less sympathetic. In Topeka, the Kansas State Chamber of Commerce held a board of directors meeting on December 28 and adopted a policy calling for “appropriation by Congress of the funds necessary for such flood control and

¹³ Richard G. Baumhoff, “Army Engineers Propose 22 Dams Costing \$300,000,000 to Prevent Future Missouri Valley Floods,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Dec. 14, 1951, p. 1D.

irrigation projects as have been recommended by the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation and authorized by Congress.” This, of course, included Tuttle Creek. It also urged “the most rapid extension of sound soil conservation practices possible,” but was less specific in this area. Finally, it reiterated the point on which both sides seemed to agree. There should be no “establishment of any new Federal valley authorities which would give the Federal Government virtual life and death control over the economy of the area.”¹⁴

The Kansas Farm Bureau took an anti-dam stand and president H. A. Praeger wrote to Rep. Clarence Cannon, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, calling attention to reorganization proposals in the Hoover report and declaring that “so long as they (the Corps of Engineers) resist reorganization of Federal agencies dealing with natural resources, I don’t believe they should be given one dime for new projects on whose value there is serious doubt.”¹⁵

From groups located in the flood plain came the obvious recommendations. Chief engineers of thirteen railroads serving Kansas City met and endorsed the “principle of flood control and protection by levees and reservoirs as being essential and very important parts of any plan to control floods . . .” And they resolved to “especially endorse Tuttle Creek Reservoir, if designed and constructed for flood control purposes only . . .”¹⁶

This qualification was a significant one and foreshadowed what was to become known as the dry dam compromise. Originally, Tuttle Creek Reservoir was designed to include a 495,000 acre-foot conservation pool. In its revised plan, the Corps was eliminating this feature to increase the flood storage from 1,600,000 to 2,095,000 acre-feet. This was justified as being necessary to accommodate the new design flood, but it had an immediate practical value as a device to weaken opposition. Only a small amount of land would be permanently inundated and the rest could still be farmed much of the time.

While both sides prepared their cases to take to the committee rooms of Congress, the new Kansas Watersheds Association met on February 8 to adopt by-laws and elect a permanent slate of officers, including Payton as president and Stockwell as vice president. A diversity of interests was represented. Members included Irving Hill, a Lawrence paper manufacturer, representing the Kansas Associated Industries; Walter C. Bryant of the Topeka CIO Council; and members of the Kansas Farm Bureau, who were joined at the next meeting by the Kansas Grange and the Kansas Farmers’ Union.

¹⁴ “Private Memo to Members,” Kansas State Chamber of Commerce, Jan. 2, 1952. From Topeka Daily Capital files.

¹⁵ Letter from H.A. Praeger to Rep. Clarence Cannon, undated. From Topeka Daily Capital files.

¹⁶ Topeka Daily Capital, Jan. 4, 1952.

At the second meeting, held March 24, some specific aims were set forth. Payton and Stockwell urged that a basic policy statement be drawn which members could quote at Congressional hearings without the possibility of having anyone misquote any member organization.” The two reported on a trip to the Muskingum Conservancy District in Ohio where they found physical problems to be different, but they felt that ‘a plan for Kansas could adopt their techniques wherein a basin area is treated as a unit affecting the maximum control and benefits with minimum destruction. “

State Representative William H. Avery of Wakefield, head of a committee to prepare legislation for a statewide watershed program, distributed copies of a bill being considered by the Nebraska legislature to use as a starting point for Kansas action. And Irving Hill proposed that the group sponsor an independent engineering survey to correlate data from all agencies involved in the basin and produce recommendations based on a unified approach.¹⁷

By now, the anti-dam argument had become fairly well defined. First, it attacked the lack of unity in planning for the various river development problems by the different agencies involved. It suggested that major projects, i.e., Tuttle Creek, should be held up, at least until there was some kind of unified planning. However it did not seek the kind of unity embodied in proposals for a Missouri Valley Authority. Instead, it called for unification at the national level with local organizations overseeing development within each major subdivision of the Kansas Basin. The Blue Valley would be such a subdivision. A state law permitting the organization of watershed districts would be the first step in this direction.

Another important tenet of the anti-dam argument was the claimed ability of watershed control measures to provide, if not as much flood storage as large reservoirs, at least as much as was needed. Muskingum and the Washita project in Oklahoma were held up as models, and the watershed advocates continually chafed at the failure of the Department of Agriculture to promote watershed treatment as vigorously as the Corps of Engineers promoted big dams. The most quoted source on this subject was Elmer T. Peterson, reporter for the Daily Oklahoman, and coiner of the Blue Valley battle cry, “Big Dam Foolishness.” To illustrate his point, Peterson compared two Oklahoma projects, Lake Denison Reservoir (Lake Texoma), and a small Soil Conservation Service detention data with automatic drawdown. Lake Texoma, even if kept drained to its lowest point, could impound only 1.3 inches of runoff, while the small dam could impound 5.22 inches from its drainage area, he said.¹⁸

¹⁷ Minutes of the Kansas Watersheds Association, March 24, 1952.

¹⁸ Elmer T. Peterson, “Big-Dam Foolishness,” Country Gentleman, May, 1952.

Expanding this comparison to the Little Washita watershed, where the Corps had shown interest in building a dam, he quoted this parallel drawn by the Chikasha, Oklahoma, Chamber of Commerce:

	<u>Army</u>	<u>SCS</u>
Number of reservoirs	1	34
Draining area, square miles	195	190
Flood storage, acre feet	52,000	59,100
Permanent pool, acres (recreation)	1,950	2,100
Flood pool, acres	3,650	5,100
Bottoms inundated, acres	1,850 ^a	1,600 ^a
Bottomland protected	3,371	8,080
Cost	\$6,000,000	\$1,983,000

^aRichest bottomland would be covered by Army dam; SCS dams would largely be on wasteland.¹⁹

Unfortunately, the accuracy of this table was not supported by Soil Conservation Service officials, a fact Payton blamed on inter-agency agreement. When testifying before the Subcommittee to Study Civil Works of the House Committee on Public Works, Payton accused the Soil Conservation Service of deliberately withholding the supporting data. Responding to questioning by Chairman Robert E. Jones, Jr. (D-Ala.), he said:

I have no other conclusion. There is no other conclusion to give. Why would they not be willing to talk about it? I do not know. But you were asking those questions, and that is the frank and brutal answer.²⁰

The anti-dam point of most immediate importance, however, was that Tuttle Creek needed further study. This was a bid for time to get a watershed program going. To bolster the argument for delay, the anti-dam group pointed to the fact that the Kansas Basin was to be included in a study by the Missouri Basin Survey Commission. Creation of this group was a stroke of luck for the valley. The Commission, named by President Truman in January, 1952, was to review all existing and proposed plans, conduct on-the-site hearings and surveys, and take a fresh look at cost-benefit ratios and the economic soundness of proposed projects. Appropriations Committee Chairman Cannon said he would probably await the report – which would take about a year – before seeking funds for flood control projects in the Missouri Basin. When the Commission had made its findings, “we will furnish the money for the desirable projects,” he said.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ U.S., Congress, House Dec. No. 82-16, 82d Cong., 2d Sess., p. 368.

²¹ “New Agency Created for Basin Survey,” Topeka Daily Capital, Jan. 3, 1952, p. 1.

Armed with these arguments, the Blue Valley sent a delegation led by Stockwell to Washington to appear before the House Civil Functions Subcommittee.

In the Capital, they found Congressman Cole wavering under strong pro-dam pressures from Kansas City and Topeka interests who were also there to testify. Cole attended a dinner held by the Kansas City group and met with the Blue Valley delegation the next day. As Stockwell recalled the occasion in an interview six years later,

Albert called us in and said, "I've got to come out for Tuttle Creek tomorrow."

I said, "Albert, Tuttle Creek is not going to stop that flood." Bill Edwards asked, "Why, why, Albert?"

Cole said, "I think the people of the first district want it. I told him, "That's a poor way to decide things, Al."

He said, "That's sometimes the only way to decide."²²

Stockwell believed that Cole's switch was a "political decision, not based on engineering data at all." Cole, also interviewed in 1958, denied this.

"After the flood, I looked at that thing and decided to give it careful attention," he said. "I assigned Paul Conrad of my office to the task of getting all the information so we could make as objective a decision as possible. We decided that soil conservation alone wouldn't work. That was the deciding factor right there: that soil conservation as flood control was not valid."

Cole specifically denied that he had yielded to pressure.

"The thing that pushed the politics out of the picture was my going out to see what had occurred after the flood," he said. "When I saw that, it was no longer a political decision."²³

The decision made, Cole headed a group of twenty-four witnesses who appeared before the House Civil Functions Subcommittee on February 26, 1952, to present the case for Tuttle Creek. Said Cole:

I have come to the conclusion that the issue now has boiled down to one point: Shall the Federal government do something about flood control in the Missouri Basin and for Kansas? If that answer is yes, and my answer is yes, then it seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that Tuttle Creek Dam must be constructed . . .²⁴

Other pro-dam testimony included long and detailed descriptions of the 1951 flood damage and presentation of resolutions from chambers of com-

²² Interview with Glenn Stockwell, June, 1958.

²³ Interview with Albert M. Cole, March 25, 1958.

²⁴ U.S., Congress, House, Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, Hearings, Civil Functions, 82d Cong., 2d Sess., 1952, p. 356.

merce and other organizations, including newly formed flood control associations from cities along the riverbank.

Stockwell headed a group of eight anti-dam witnesses on the same day. Included in the group were a Kansas Farm Bureau spokesman and some Manhattan businessmen, representing the only group of flood-damaged business interests who opposed the dam.

“Manhattan does need flood protection,” said Arthur Torlemka, an automobile dealer. “But Manhattan also needs the Blue Valley . . . We need the \$6 million annual income from the valley to support our schools, our churches, and our hospitals, and selfishly, we need the valley for income to pay back the RFC loans and other debts contracted as a result of the terrible flood of last year.”²⁵

State Rep. William P. Edwards presented the small dam argument:

The hills which border this valley are teeming with thousands of sites for smaller retention dams to temporarily store excess rainfall on timbered and pasture land. Such dams, combined with soil conservation and watershed engineering, would prevent soil erosion losses and materially decrease the danger of flood damage. Completed watershed treated areas will show that such a plan will effectively control water runoff in creeks and small streams.²⁶

After the delegation returned to Kansas, Stockwell called a meeting of the Blue Valley Study Association for March 14 and summed up its position so far. With the initial hysteria past, he said, it could proceed on two fronts: attack the immediate problem of securing a delay in appropriations, and the long-range problem of getting a workable substitute plan into operation. Reviewing the situation, he said:

I believe that it will fail in this session because Congress feels that the President’s commission should review the entire question of flood control. What will happen next time is anybody’s guess . . . Congress is willing or at least appears willing to spend some money in Kansas. The type of program adopted may depend largely upon what we do during the next year.

He summarized the alternatives:

First, we can do nothing, and Tuttle Creek will probably be built . . . Second, we can work for a modification of Tuttle Creek and get an open dam and possibly flowage easements instead of land purchase for the greater part of the reservoir site. Third, we can work for the substitution of several smaller reservoirs in place of Tut-

²⁵ Ibid., p. 425.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 431.

tle Creek. Fourth, we can work for a complete watershed plan with a large number of small detention dams.

Stockwell closed the meeting with a warning against optimism: “Now we face political and bureaucratic maneuvering which we are poorly prepared to meet.”²⁷

The watershed alternative was favored as the best course by the association, although the dry dam idea was given consideration as a last resort measure. Stockwell then proposed, and the full association agreed, to present a specific proposal to the Missouri Basin Survey Commission. Using field notes of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, it was able to come up with a plan for 912 detention dams and 2,088 stabilizing and sediment-control structures. After debate on whether to count estimated downstream flood control effects in computing their claimed cost-benefit ratio, it was decided to include them – despite the fact that the downstream benefits were out of Department of Agriculture jurisdiction.

Stockwell’s prediction of another year of grace seemed to be borne out in April when the House Appropriations Committee reported out a bill with no new projects in the Kansas Basin. The Committee also took some positive action for the anti-dam site. Echoing the Blue Valley arguments, it said that until an “integrated national program for development of water resources” was prepared, there was no need for more than a minimum of planning for new water projects.²⁸

The Committee particularly criticized the Army’s handling of the Tuttle Creek project. “The claim has been made by the Corps of Engineers and others time and again that this is one of the key flood-control projects in the Kansas Basin,” it said. “Despite these strong claims, the executive branch never requested construction funds from Congress, nor did the Corps of Engineers present requests for them to the Bureau of the Budget until after the 1951 floods, despite the fact that the project was authorized in 1938.”

The Committee also criticized the skimpiness of the data with which Tuttle Creek Dam was justified and complained that cost estimates appeared to be “woefully inadequate” and “unrealistic.”

Finally, it called attention to the pending survey by the Missouri Basin Survey Commission and proposed waiting for its report before further action.²⁹

On April 2, two attempts were made on the floor of the House to include Tuttle Creek in the civil functions appropriations bill. Representative Errett P. Scrivner (of the Kansas Third District, which includes Kansas City, Kansas)

²⁷ Minutes of the Blue Valley Study Assoc., March 14, 1952.

²⁸ U.S., Congress, House Report No. 1652, 82d Cong., 2d Sess., March 27, 1952, pp. 6-7.

²⁹ Ibid.

offered an amendment diverting funds already appropriated elsewhere to Tuttle Creek. It failed 80-50 on a teller vote. Then Representative Morgan Moulder, his Democratic counterpart from the Missouri side of the river, offered an amendment to include a special \$5 million appropriation. This lost on a voice vote.

Representative Cole joined Kansas Representatives Myron George, Ed Rees, and Wint Smith in support of the Scrivner amendment. Representative Clifford Hope of extreme Southwest Kansas, a strong conservationist and friend of the Blue Valley, was absent.

The fight went next to the Senate. The actions of the Kansas Senators, Frank Carlson and Andrew Schoeppel, were not encouraging. Schoeppel appeared before the Subcommittee on Agricultural Appropriations to suggest that a way be found to get the Corps of Engineers and the Department of Agriculture to “sit down together and work out a coordinated plan.” Obviously concerned about the Tuttle Creek controversy splitting his constituency, he observed that “these good friends of mine” in the Blue Valley were opposed to the dam, while “just as many of my good friends . . . firmly believe that the Tuttle Creek Dam is the only solution to this problem..”³⁰ He did not add the obvious punch line, “I am for my friends.” But he did say that probably there should be a combination solution with a soil conservation plan and “some sort of dam.” He would get specific later.

On April 16, 1952, Senator Schoeppel endorsed the dry dam compromise in a speech on the floor of the Senate. On the surface, his proposal appeared to be the dry dam plan which was considered by the Blue Valley Study Association as a measure on which to fall back when all else failed. Schoeppel observed that construction of Tuttle Creek as originally planned would

result in the inundation of some of the best farm lands in Kansas. For this reason, I do not go along with the engineers’ plan completely. I am convinced that the job can be done just as efficiently, more economically, and with less damage to our farm lands by adopting a coordinated plan of water retardation and soil conservation above the dam site, and through the construction of a dry dam. The construction of such a dam, as I understand it, would make it possible to farm or use thousands of acres of the land nine out of ten years in the dam area. At the same time, it would offer the protection so necessary to the people at the dam site.³¹

When the Civil Functions Subcommittee of the Senate met on May 19, the two sides came as close to agreement as they ever would again. Stockwell had decided to base the Blue Valley’s future on the outcome of the proposed restudy and to agree to accept a form of the dry dam compromise should the

³⁰ Quoted in Press Release issued by office of Senator Schoeppel, April, 1952.

³¹ Congressional Record, April 16, 1952.

study prove favorable to the big dam principle. He anticipated some difficulty in getting the Blue Valley to unite behind this position:

I may need some editorial support on it. I feel that is the only defensible position. I believe that we are definitely headed for a review, and I have always said that after a thorough review we would have to let the chips fall where they may. I will gain a lot of support with this statement, but may need home support . . . Give me a trial run in the news and see how the public reacts.³²

When the Subcommittee met on May 19, both Stockwell and Senator Schoeppel testified.

“I am led to believe,” said Schoeppel, “that most of the objections to the dam would be removed if it is used as a so-called ‘dry dam.’”³³

Stockwell called for deferment of the project until further study and reorganization to coordinate mainstem and tributary planning. If later studies showed Tuttle Creek to be feasible, it should be “constructed for flood control only,” he said.

However, Stockwell and Schoeppel had somewhat different concepts of a dam “for flood control only.” Stockwell defined his as

an open bottom dam designed to pass the normal flow of the stream, but to detain the flood flow for a gradual discharge. The operation would be automatic. The people of Kansas would recognize the benefits of this type of construction because:

1. It is cheaper to build, with no costly gate.
2. It eliminates costly operational personnel.
3. It eliminates the human element of judgment on when to close the gates.
4. Such a fixed plan of operation will allow a definite plan of farming in the reservoir area by means of flowage easements.
5. It will lessen the chance of future encroachment on the flood control features of the reservoir by any government agency more interested in water impoundment than in flood control.³⁴

³² Letter from Glenn Stockwell to James L. Robinson accompanying advance copy of his statement to the Senate Subcommittee, undated. From Robinson’s files.

³³ U.S., Congress, Senate, Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, Hearings on H.R. 7268, Civil Functions, Department of the Army, 82d Cong., 2d Sess., 1952, p. 925.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 870.

As Stockwell was aware, few of these features were likely to be viewed favorably by the Corps of Engineers. Schoepfel, who had conferred with the Corps on the dry dam idea, said that he supported the same principle, but that the outlets would have to be controlled by gates “because it is necessary to have flexibility on the release of the water during flood periods.”

However, he said the dam could be designated for flood control only by eliminating the conservation pool and earmarking the entire space for flood storage. Inasmuch as the Corps of Engineers had already done this in order to cope with the near design flood, this was not a new concession. Stockwell’s main concern, however, was the permanency of a dry-dam provision, so Schoepfel proposed that there be “some definite assurance by Congressional action that the dam will be used only for flood control and that there will be no permanent reservoir behind it. . . .” Specifically, he suggested placing in the appropriation bill suitable language limiting the height to which water can be stored behind the dam except on a temporary basis for flood control only.”³⁵

When it reported a bill including \$10 million for Tuttle Creek Dam on June 17, the Senate Appropriations Committee did include such a provision. Skeptical Blue Valley leaders feared that the provision would not prove irrevocable. Their fear was to be justified by subsequent events.

While leaders of the Blue Valley were busy in Washington in the spring of 1952, there was still much activity back in Kansas. The opposition campaign was focused on two significant events: the hearing of the Missouri Basin Survey Commission scheduled for Manhattan on June 5 and the approaching visit of CIO leaders to the Valley to bolster their new liaison.

On May 28 the Randolph auditorium was jammed to capacity as members of the Blue Valley Study Association gathered to prepare testimony for the hearing. Backing Stockwell and easing his anxiety about home support, it adopted a resolution

that we endorse a co-ordinated survey of the Blue Valley Watershed; that we continue to endorse a complete watershed treatment; and that we support and recommend that soil and water conservation be applied before any big dams are built on the Blue River.³⁶

When the Missouri Basin group met in Manhattan, the testimony of Blue Valley residents tried every approach imaginable. There were emotionally phrased descriptions of the cultural losses that would result from the building of the reservoir, e.g., “My grandparents homesteaded our farm in 1867; our

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 926.

³⁶ *Topeka Daily Capital*, May 28, 1952.

stone house is one of the many landmarks of early pioneer days.”³⁷ There was a detailed substitute proposition for a \$98,700,000 watershed treatment program. The latter plan, sponsored jointly by the Kansas Watersheds Association and the Blue Valley Study Association, listed the needs in detail. It included such items as 771,000 acres of contour plowing, 59,840 square miles of terraces, and 12,580 erosion control structures. Of the total cost, the plan would have \$61,712,000 come from the Federal Government, \$3,078,500 from state and local government sources, and \$33,931,400 from private citizens. Basically, it amounted to a refinement of existing Department of Agriculture proposals accelerated to be completed in twenty years.

The report estimated that “a period in excess of 100 years will be required to complete installation of all items included in the total needed program at current rates of progress.” The main lag, it pointed out, was in construction of large items requiring heavy capital investment and participation by groups of farmers. In this particular area, “at present rates the job may never be completed,” it pointed out. Despite the cost of the recommended program, the reported claimed a cost-benefit ratio of 4.2 to 1, made possible by “distribution of benefits over the entire area of the watershed,” including control of main channel and tributary flood crests.”³⁸

Two weeks later, the valley residents made a less detailed presentation to the CIO Committee on Regional Development and Conservation. This group was given a tour of the entire valley with a stopover at the Garrison Methodist Church for a traditional dinner of fried chicken and cherry pie. The meeting brought prompt results. Within the week, Committee Chairman Anthony W. Smith made a strong statement in opposition to the Pick-Sloan plan and supported the agricultural program as a substitute. He reported that he was wiring CIO lobbyists in Washington to bring the pressure of the labor organization to bear against appropriation of funds for Tuttle Creek Dam. Displacing the Blue Valley residents and taking their land out of production would be “inexcusable brutality,” he said.

The CIO would press for a basin project giving first priority to conservation and watershed treatment, then small agricultural flood storage dams, small power dams where possible, and finally such flood storage dams on the main stems as might then be necessary.

Why the CIO’s interest in the Blue Valley? It was concerned, said Smith, because members’ jobs depended on flood protection in river bottom lands where factories were located; it favored public power development and agri-

³⁷ Statement of Leona Velen to the Missouri Basin Survey Commission, Manhattan, Kan., June 5, 1952.

³⁸ “Flood Control Plan for the Blue River Basin of Kansas and Nebraska,” presented to the Missouri Basin Survey Commission by Dwight Payton, President of the Kansas Watersheds Association, and Glenn D. Stockwell, President, Blue Valley Watershed Association.

culture development because “the whole nation depends on farm production.”³⁹

There were those who suspected that the CIO was interested in using the alliance to remove conservative Republican Cole from the House. Since this was now the aim of the valley residents, it made no difference.

Early in July, the complexion of the struggle took an abrupt change. Blue Valley residents had felt safe after the stern House Appropriations Committee report ruling out funds for Tuttle Creek. The Senate Committee had, however, included \$10 million with a dry-dam stipulation. Both measures were unchanged in their respective Houses, and the appropriations bill went to conference committee.

Late Saturday night, July 5, the Committee agreed on a \$5 million initial construction appropriation for the project. Anxious for early election-year adjournment, the House passed it the same night. Despite a last-minute telegram campaign by valley residents, the Senate gave its approval on the following Monday.

By act of Congress, Tuttle Creek Dam, once a shadowy threat, had been given sudden substance – five million dollars worth.

³⁹ Kansas-Nebraska Watershed Council Newsletter, July 2, 1952, p. 3.

CHAPTER IV

1952: THE ISSUE REBORN

The Blue Valley's reaction to Tuttle Creek Dam's first appropriation was one of gloom followed by anger and then resolution. "It was as though a son or brother had been lost in battle, and there were lumps in many throats," reported the Manhattan Mercury.¹ "Anti-dam forces were taken by surprise," said the Manhattan Tribune, adding that valley leaders considered the move a "double cross."² Stockwell, who had left the state on vacation, was not available for comment. Adding fuel to the charge of "double cross" was a statement issued from Kansas City by Col. L. J. Lincoln as soon as the appropriation had been confirmed. It clarified the Army engineers' interpretation of the dry-dam provision.

"No definite decision has been made on whether to operate Tuttle Creek Dam dry or wet," he said. Lincoln explained that he personally favored maintaining only a small flood pool behind the dam, but, that since the dam would take five years to build, there was plenty of time to decide. "The people may change their minds and want a large conservation pool."³

With the five million dollars practically in hand, the Corps wasted no time. Lincoln visited the valley on July 15 to meet with farm owners who would be immediately affected. Appraisals would begin at once, he announced, and the farmers at the immediate dam site need not even plan to harvest their corn.⁴

The meeting was held on the front porch of John Vanier,, one of the affected farmers. It was orderly. "There was a funeral air," intoned the Mercury. The gloom, however, was premature, for the Blue Valley was just beginning to fight.

Now the emotional depth of the opposition was revealed. Wrote Paul L. Jameson of Garrison in a letter to the Topeka Daily Capital:

If anyone believes this is the final answer, they pitifully misjudge the character of the people of the Blue Valley . . . Where we have previously acted with diplomacy

¹ "Blue Valley Rallies in Anger," Manhattan Mercury, July 7, 1952, p. 1.

² "Last Ditch Fight Against Dam," Manhattan Tribune, July 7, 1952, p. 1.

³ "Could Start Buying Land in 30 Days, Col. Lincoln Says," Manhattan Tribune, July 7, 1952, p. 1.

⁴ "Quick Action on Dam," Manhattan Mercury, July 15, 1952, p. 1.

in dealing with our representation in Washington, we can now fight without restraint and expose their every act of cowardice and double talk. Well may be the knife that Albert Cole thrust into the backs of the Blue Valley on Feb. 26 be the knife that cuts his ties with political life . . .

It was at this point that the women of the Blue Valley entered the battle on an organized basis. On July 30 some seventy-five farm wives from along the river gathered in the tree-shaded yard of Mrs. Curtis Phillips. They sat on planks supported by bales of hay, talked, and made a decision: to carry a protest directly to President Truman, who was scheduled to visit Kansas City that same week. Without making prior arrangements, seventeen women drove to Kansas City on the morning of August 1, camped in the lobby of the Muehlebach Hotel until Truman's arrival, and then sent word that they wanted to see him. Truman replied that he would meet the leader of the group, who was Mrs. Gaylord Johnson. Mrs. Johnson asked to bring Mrs. Robert Dreith with her, and the President consented to a five-minute interview.

Their direct action got nationwide attention. The two women found the President "courteous and warm," but not especially interested in their arguments. "He stated his views first. He told us he knew what we were going to say. He gave us the impression that he was not interested in hearing our views," the two women said in a joint statement afterward.⁵

If the trip did not have much effect on the President, it did have an effect on the Blue Valley. The national publicity provided encouragement, and the women noted a strengthening of "an already strong Blue Valley determination to fight to the last clod of the earthen dam."⁶ Their actions prompted an editorial in the New York Times which noted that

the good ladies from the Big Blue River Valley who stormed into President Truman's Kansas City Hotel to protest construction of a dam that would flood their homes were not cranks trying to block the march of progress. On the contrary, they were making a very serious point which deserves nationwide attention – a point which the President himself has perhaps insufficiently considered. . .⁷

The Times reviewed the conflicting ideologies of the big dam-little dam argument, quoted the House Appropriations Committee's tongue-lashing of the Corps of Engineers, pointed out that Truman's own Missouri Basin Survey Commission was busy drafting an integrated program for the area, and concluded that "rushing into construction of Tuttle Creek Dam at this particu-

⁵ "Blue Valley Women Tell Impressions Brought from Interview with Truman," Manhattan Tribune, Aug. 3, 1952, p. 1.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ New York Times, Aug. 6, 1952. Quoted in Manhattan Tribune, Aug. 10, 1952, p. 1.

lar juncture is hardly the way to insure a considered flood-control program for the Missouri Valley.”⁸

Thus encouraged, the Blue Valley women set their sights on a new target: General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Republican nominee for the presidency. Several phone calls and a wire to Eisenhower’s Denver campaign headquarters produced no response, so, again taking matters into their own hands, they sent this telegram:

Women of Kansas Watersheds Association, spearheaded by Blue Valley, will be in Denver Friday, Aug. 22, to present to you our views on rational water policy as it affects our agricultural midwest. If we receive no answer by Aug. 16, we shall consider appointment confirmed.⁹

Eisenhower responded. He said he would see them on the 19th.

This time, the valley women chartered a bus. Sixty of them made the trip, “sweeping into town like a crackling prairie fire.”¹⁰ Wearing felt sunflowers and name tags, the women were closeted with Eisenhower for more than an hour. The only other men present were Senator Frank Carlson and Representative Clifford Hope. Eisenhower stated frankly that he lacked a deep knowledge of the problem, and promised to give it his study. The women gave him a scrapbook and left full of praises for the Eisenhower charm. They carried “applause in their hearts and tributes on their lips” for the candidate.¹¹

While the women stoked the flames of publicity, the men of the valley were quietly laying new plans of their own. Although it had not yet been officially announced, it was known that Governor Edward F. Arn was going to order a state survey of the flood protection problem by the Kansas Industrial Development Commission. This had been quietly promoted by Stockwell and Payton for the better part of a year after they had heard of a major study undertaken by the Santa Fe Railway. The railroad had hired its own engineering firm to analyze the prospects for flood control with existing programs and decided, on the basis of its findings, to raise its track to a height above the record flood stage. The engineers’ analysis had indicated that even with large dam construction, this was the only way to insure uninterrupted service for its transcontinental traffic.

Arrangements were made, therefore, for a related survey to be made for the Kansas Industrial Development Commission (KIDC), using the Santa Fe field notes. It was announced on September 2 as “an independent engineering

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ “‘You Have a Date,’ Blue Valley Women Notify Eisenhower,” Manhattan Tribune, Aug. 14, 1952, p. 1.

¹⁰ “Kansas Women Storm into Town,” Denver Post, Aug. 19, 1952.

¹¹ Letter from Leona Velen to Dwight D. Eisenhower, Aug. 24, 1952.

study of the Kaw River Basin.” Arn said he was asking the KIDC to search for the “highest qualified specialists in the nation.”¹²

As far as the State of Kansas was concerned, the survey would have a noble purpose: to make an unemotional appraisal of the conflicting technical data continually cited by both sides in the controversy. Noting conflict between both private groups and different federal agencies, Arn observed that “the people of Kansas cannot be sure what is right. As in other matters, our state is challenged to determine what is necessary to insure proper protection for our families, agriculture, and industry.” He added that “such an authoritative report will stand secure in its integrity and impartiality.”¹³

At the same time, officers of the Kansas Watersheds Association decided, to drop plans to finance an independent survey of their own. Dwight Payton expressed confidence that the KIDC survey would satisfy the requirements of the anti-dam forces for impartiality.

Three weeks after the Governor’s original announcement, it was announced that a board of nationally famous engineers, N. T. Veatch of Kansas City, Abel Wolman of Baltimore, and L. R. Howson of Chicago, had been hired by the KIDC for the survey. Only casual mention was made of the fact that Veatch’s firm had recently completed a study for the Santa Fe Railway “in connection with the July, 1951, flood in Kansas.”¹⁴ The three engineers were instructed to “review and analyze all plans for flood control and land-water use in than Kaw Basin, both local and federal, and . . . submit a long-range and immediate ‘practical plan’ for protection of farms, cities, industries, and transportation in the Kaw flood plain.”¹⁵ Completion was scheduled for the following January, in time for consideration by the 1953 Kansas legislature.

This survey marked a unique approach to federal water policy which was appealing to independent-minded Kansans. For the first time, a state was spending its own money to question the wisdom of federal expenditures for public works within its borders. Said Kansas Watersheds Association member James L. Robinson in a column written for Kansas weeklies:

No longer will it be necessary to run to the Army Engineers and say, in effect: “We’re tired of floods. Tell us how to stop them.”

Instead, the people will be able to approach Congress and say:

¹² “Arn orders Basin Study of Land-Water Problem,” Topeka Daily Capital, Sept. 3, 1952, p. 1.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ James L. Robinson, “Engineers Hired for Basin Survey,” Topeka Daily Capital, Sept. 22, 1952, p. 1.

¹⁵ Ibid.

“Here’s the kind of flood control Kansas wants. Don’t let the federal agencies press you into forcing something on the state which is not needed.”¹⁶

And now the Blue Valley had two independent surveys on which to stake its future.

The failure of the opposition to give up after the initial appropriation was disconcerting to the Corps of Engineers. Colonel Lincoln betrayed his concern at Marysville on September 19 when he spoke to the Kansas Association of Real Estate Boards. He complained that “there is apparently no local organization or citizen’s group whose desire it is to assist and represent the property owners and look after their interests from the legal, financial, property, and human point of view.” He accused the opposition of being “more interested in seeking publicity in dramatic opposition to a project which in my opinion is now as inevitable as progress in America.”¹⁷

Stockwell was quick to reply that “progress means different things to different people.” He added that until the Missouri Basin and KIDC survey reports were in, “We will continue to fight the engineers with all the publicity, legal, and all other means available to us.”¹⁸ The valley’s means were becoming diversified. Much hope was now based on the independent surveys, and a bill was being prepared for the state legislature which would get the alternate plan moving. It would permit the organization of watershed districts with certain regulatory powers along the natural boundaries of the watersheds.

At the national level, the crucial problem of representation in Congress remained unsolved. Cole had been renominated without opposition in the August primary. At first, there had seemed little point in opposing him. But now, with the resurgence in Blue Valley spirits, Stockwell and his group decided on a bold plan to remove Cole from office by electing in his place the first Democrat ever to represent the district.

The decision was prompted in part by the fact that the Democratic candidate, who had filed for the office mainly as a favor to the party organization to help fill out the ticket, had been a long-time subscriber to the anti-dam position. He was Howard S. Miller, 73-year-old farmer from Hiawatha, located just east of the Blue Valley watershed. He had run for the House once before, in 1936, as a strong New Dealer. Though Roosevelt carried the state, Miller failed to carry a single county in the First District.

In the 1952 election, all the factors seemed to point to a Cole victory. In 1950, he had beaten his Democratic opposition by a two-to-one majority. His primary victory had also been decisive – 33,800 to 21,400 against Walter G.

¹⁶ From galley proof in Robinson’s files.

¹⁷ “Lincoln Raps Valley Group,” *Manhattan Mercury*, Sept. 19, 1952, p. 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Stumbo. Moreover, he had served eight years in the House and his seniority and hard work had earned him the status of a Republican whip.

The Blue Valley had but one issue on which to oppose him: Tuttle Creek Dam. If, as the Corps of Engineers claimed, the dam was opposed only by a “small but vocal minority,” the attempt to unseat him would indeed be hopeless. Valley leaders recognized an opportunity to prove the engineers wrong, and decided to back Miller.

The campaign was a noisy one. Miller ran on a single plank of big-dam opposition. Tuttle Creek became the only popular issue in the campaign and valley farmers organized caravans of automobiles to stump for Miller in each of the district’s thirteen counties. According to one of the participants,

most of us had never participated in any kind of a political campaign, but in a time of crisis, one will attempt almost anything. Our cars were bedecked with huge signs, and loudspeakers announced our mission as we entered each town. We distributed “Miller for Congress” campaign literature in all the parked cars and talked to everyone who would listen. “We are Blue Valley Republicans campaigning for a Democrat.” Strange words indeed! By election day, Blue Valley automobile tires had been well worn and many campaign shoes were ready for half soling.¹⁹

Now the previously-formed CIO-farm alliance began to assume significance. The CIO, already opposed to Cole because of his right-wing voting record, campaigned actively on Miller’s behalf in Topeka, the largest city in the district. Miller made radio talks and speeches attacking Tuttle Creek as a “symptom of bureaucracy gone mad” and promised to work for the enactment of Hoover Committee recommendations to “strip the Army engineers of their arrogant power.”²⁰

Blue Valley efforts were spurred by the actions of the Corps of Engineers in the valley. As if to demonstrate the irrevocable nature of the Tuttle Creek decision, the Army Engineers hurried into the valley to make test borings and surveys. The contract for preliminary construction work was let by early September. The first bulldozer began felling giant oaks at the dam site in October following a formal ground-breaking ceremony. (Much later, Cole revealed that he had made an unsuccessful behind-the-scenes effort to have that ceremony delayed until after the election.)

Writing off the Blue Valley area, Cole concentrated his campaign in the more heavily populated downstream areas. He also wrote off Clay County, where the Clay Center Dispatch, previously his strong supporter, opposed him on the dam issue. Editor Harry Valentine reasoned correctly that if Tuttle

¹⁹ Leona Velen, “Let Freedom Ring,” Blue Valley Vistas, United Amateur Press Association, July, 1954.

²⁰ Kenneth S. Davis, River on the Rampage (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1953), p. 180.

Creek Dam could be built over local opposition, so could Milford Dam, which would eliminate a large section of Clay Center trade area. Cole did campaign in neighboring Riley County, located just below the Milford site, looking for pro-dam votes from the flood victims along the Kaw.

In his downstream speeches, Cole stressed that he still favored watershed control. However, he added:

I have called into my office the ablest men at the top of the Soil Conservation Service. They tell me frankly that the watershed programs, by themselves, are not sufficient to take care of the big floods. I cannot find an authoritative expert who will contend that the upstream conservation programs, of and by themselves, will afford necessary flood protection against the big floods.

No member of Congress will get up on the floor of the House and really oppose major dams for flood control.²¹

In response to questioning, Cole gave his version of the dry-dam agreement. It was not, he said, a double cross, for

I wired General Pick as soon as I learned the conference report finally had been approved. I asked him what the Engineers felt the provision meant. I got a reply from him that the Engineers took the action of the committee and of Congress in approving the language of its report as a directive and that the directive must be followed.²²

This was of some comfort to those Republican on the anti-Tuttle Creek side who were torn between loyalty to the party and to the Blue Valley cause. Among these was Clif Stratton, elderly political writer for the Topeka Daily Capital and a member of the Kansas Watersheds Association. Suggesting that the next appropriation bill include even stronger dry-dam directive, he came out in support of Cole, explaining that he “would hate to see him ‘purged’ through what we believe is a misunderstanding of the Tuttle Creek problem.”²³

Editorially, the Daily Capital took no stand in the election. The afternoon Topeka State Journal supported Cole and Tuttle Creek. Cole also got the support of the Kansas City Star, which has some circulation in rural areas of Kansas, and several weeklies along the river between Topeka, and Kansas City. Virtually every other newspaper in the district opposed him.

The general election of 1952 proved to be a landslide for the Republican party in Kansas, with one exception. In the First District Congressional race,

²¹ Albert M. Cole, address to Hi-Twelve Club, Topeka, Kan., Oct. 22, 1952. Quoted in Topeka Daily Capital, Oct. 23, p. 15.

²² Ibid.

²³ “Clif Stratton Writes,” Topeka Daily Capital, Oct. 24, 1952.

Howard Miller, pulling in split-ticket votes, defeated Albert Cole 68,909 to 66,963. It was the only contest in which there was any discernable crossing of party lines. The Eisenhower-Nixon ticket got 102,151 votes in the district to 41,923 for Stevenson and Sparkman.²⁴

Cole won a majority in Shawnee County, the district's main pro-dam stronghold, but by an unexpectedly narrow margin. The vote was 25,016 to 21,071, giving Cole a 54.3 per cent majority. In 1950, he had received 62.4 per cent.

Miller rolled up decisive margins in other counties affected by the dam. But his biggest majorities came in Nemaha County, his home territory, and Clay County, where Editor Valentine stirred up an anti-dam crusade that led the voters to turn against Cole by nearly 3-1.²⁵

Cole got support in the extreme northeastern counties, but not enough to offset the Blue Valley vote. The three counties which include the Kansas portion of the valley are Marshall, 6,232-2,453 for Miller; Pottawatomie, 3,940-2,516; and Riley (where Manhattan contributed some pro-dam sentiment) 7,182-4,493.²⁶

Cole lost seven of the thirteen counties and ended up with 48.4 per cent of the total vote, becoming the first Republican congressional candidate in a decade to get less than 59 per cent.

Looking back, Cole decided that he had made a mistake in failing to campaign in the valley. By leaning on the dry-dam compromise, he felt he might have been able to pick up the extra votes he needed. "I should at least have spoken at Randolph," he said. "That was a real failure on my part politically."

He also expressed doubt that his defeat was due strictly to a grass roots uprising. Loss of conservative GOP precincts in Topeka aroused his suspicion that power company interests might have worked against him there. In any event, he refused to believe that it was exclusively the work of irate housewives and embattled farmers. "Somebody professional planned it," he said. "The use of amateurs by professionals is one of the neatest political tricks you can pull."²⁷

Kansas newspapers, however, tended to give the credit to the Blue Valley Belles, as the travelling housewives now called themselves. One editor, Rolla Clymer of El Dorado, located outside the Kansas Basin, doffed his editorial hat when Mrs. Curtis Phillips, chairman of the publicity committee, reported their total expenses in the campaign to be 1,625.50:

²⁴ "Biennial Report, 1951-52," Secretary of State, State of Kansas.

²⁵ *Ibid.* The writer, as a native of Clay County, can vouch for the remarkable character of this feat. The Republican tradition is so strong that small children are ostracized by their peers for suspected Democratic sympathies. The Republican presidential ticket carried this election by 5,059 to 831.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Interview with Albert M. Cole, March 25, 1958.

Now that is a revealing figure. This paper naturally dislikes to turn on its brother men. But candor prompts the following conclusion: If a group of men had planned ways and means to oust Al Cole . . . they would undoubtedly have raised a fund of \$50,000 and spent it all. They would consider that sum a cheap outlay for accomplishing such a feat.

But the women did it for \$1,625.50. It seems clear that we of the United States are never going to have real economy in government until the women folk gain complete administrative and legislative power.²⁸

The \$1,625 was not, however, the only sum spent in the campaign. The record-keeping system of the Blue Valley Study Association was casual and no accurate accounting is possible. Fred Pfeutze, secretary, reported expenditures of \$5,000 between March, 1951, and January, 1952. This included the campaign, as well as the cost of transportation of the delegation to Washington. However, many expenditures and individual contributions were never recorded. Service station operators, for example, would frequently donate free tankfuls of gasoline to drivers of cars taking part in the Miller caravans. Individual phone calls and letters could not be tabulated, nor could the time lost from work by the farmers. Those with money to contribute were asked to just "leave it at the bank"

According to Pfeutze, much of the \$5,000 came from contributors outside the valley who had read of its battle. Now, in January, it was entering the next phase with a war chest of \$3,000 remaining.²⁹

²⁸ El Dorado Times, Jan. 9, 1953.

²⁹ "Blue Valley Continues Dam Fight," Topeka Daily Capital, Jan. 6, 1953.

CHAPTER 5

“TUTTLE CREEK IS A DEAD DUCK”

Farmer Miller laid down his pitchfork and went to Washington. While still Congressman-elect, he wired President Truman to ask for an executive order halting construction of the dam until settlement of the controversy. He got no reply. His first action upon taking office was to introduce a bill to rescind the 1938 action which had authorized the dam. It got no support.

When outgoing President Truman sent his annual budget message to Congress with a recommendation for \$15,800,000 to continue work on Tuttle Creek, tension mounted anew. Suspense was heightened by the approaching completion of the state and federal, independent surveys. Blue Valley representatives and their allied groups announced in advance that they would accept the results, whatever they might be. Pro-dammers were silent. Senator Carlson said at a State Board of Agriculture meeting that he would support “any revision in current water policy or the Pick-Sloan plan that might result from the surveys by the Missouri Basin Survey Commission or the KIDC engineers.”¹ Later, there would be bitter argument over what he meant by this.

The first hint about the contents of the Missouri Basin Survey Commission report came on February 7 when excerpts were published from a letter from Representative Clifford Hope of Kansas, a member of the Commission, to Z. R. Hook, former Manhattan mayor and a member of the pro-dam faction in Riley County. Hope said that in his opinion, “Tuttle Creek is a dead duck.” He added that he doubted whether it was a wise policy to construct dams and reservoirs which will flood thousands of acres of good agricultural land and destroy thriving communities when the estimated flood damage downstream is pretty dubious at best.²

The two review reports were finally released within a week of each other in mid-February. Coming on the heels of Miller’s upset, they dealt a cumulative blow to the big-dam cause from which it would take several years to recover. Both reports recommended the abandonment – for the time being – of Tuttle Creek Dam.

¹ Topeka Daily Capital, Jan. 16, 1953.

² Topeka Daily Capital, Feb. 7, 1953.

First to be released was the preliminary report of the Kansas Review Board. The three engineers called for an immediate halt to construction of three big federal reservoirs: Tuttle Creek, Kirwin, and Webster. The latter two were Bureau of Reclamation projects in the western section of the basin.

As a substitute, the engineers offered a plan of their own: channel improvements to enable the river to hold more water, and a system of flood plain zoning. Combined, the two steps would cost a fifth of the price set on the Corps of Engineers program.

Wolman, Howson, and Veatch made these main points:

1. The 1953 storm was “one of the greatest ever recorded in the United States” both in intensity and area covered. From July 9 to July 13, ten inches of rain or more fell on more than 10 per cent of the watershed with a peak downpour of 17 inches.
2. The resulting flood exceeded any of record on the Kansas River. “Statistically, it is probably of the magnitude to be expected on an average of once in hundreds or even thousands of years.”
3. Despite the infrequency of such a flood, a plan should be found to care for such a flow with a reasonable factor of safety.”
4. Flood protection could be provided by reservoirs and enlarged channels (referred to as flow-ways) or by enlarged channels alone. The former system, however, would be difficult in the Kansas Basin because of the lack of suitable reservoir sites near the areas needing protection. “There is no precedent for successful flood protection by reservoirs where most of the storage is at great distances from the property most needing protection, such as the Kansas River Basin.”
5. If the Corps of Engineers had built all eighteen dams authorized or recommended prior to 1951, at an estimated cost of \$400 million, “the 1951 flood would have overtopped all urban levee protection works from Manhattan to the Missouri River by from one to three feet and the damage in those areas would have been great.”
6. The enlarged reservoir program developed after 1951 would require the purchase of some 450,000 acres of land (compared to the one million flooded in 1951) and displace more than 1,500 farm families. Total cost of the reservoir system would be at least \$1 billion.
7. For only \$200 million, it would be possible to protect all of the urban areas against a flood as great as that of 1951 with a provision for a flow about 30 per cent greater without overtopping the dikes.
8. The difference between the two programs is \$800 million. Subtracting the \$150 million already spent on flood protection works in the valley, there is a total of \$650 million which could still be saved. This

would, of course, be at the cost of leaving farm lands unprotected. However, spending that \$650 million to protect farm lands figures out to \$650 an acre, an unjustifiable expense, particularly in view of the fact that a large part of the flooded land actually benefitted from top-soil deposits.³

9. Channel enlargement and levees, therefore, would provide “the most effective and positive flood protection in the Kansas River Valley...”

Finally, the report made this recommendation:

The Board stresses...the necessity of curtailing at once the development of any additional reservoirs, new or only partly constructed at this time, until the State of Kansas has had an opportunity to review the entire situation in the light of our findings. Additional construction on Tuttle Creek and the initiation of construction on Milford and Perry reservoirs, should be deferred. New reservoirs, essentially for irrigation, but with major flood control features, should also be deferred.

It is our judgment that no major harm could accrue to the Basin if these deferrals are accomplished until the final report of the Board has been completed and the official agencies concerned have had ample opportunity to review it and to debate conclusions and proposals. We find no logical basis for precipitous haste in rushing into construction and completion of highly debatable projects.⁴

To the disappointment of Blue Valley leaders, however, the survey board discounted the effects of watershed treatment for handling major floods. It pointed out that “virtually no watershed of significant size has so far been sufficiently developed along the principles proposed by the Department of Agriculture, to give an authentic prospect of measuring such effects.”⁵

The Board did hold, however, that watershed management appeared useful in controlling small annual floods. In explanation, it said:

Apparently no claim is made by the Department itself that such measures, even if completed over the decades, could result in major reductions in the volume of water in the lower Kansas River valley under storm conditions that existed in 1903 or 1951. General agreement among these officials appears to be that watershed programs will have only relatively minor effects on the disaster-type floods and that the larger the storm or the flood event, the less real effect land treatment alone will have.

³ In its final report, released the following May, the Board revised this figure to \$720 an acre and pointed out that it was more than twice the market value of the land involved.

⁴ Abel Wolman, Louis R. Howson, and N. T. Veatch, Preliminary Report on Flood Protection in Kansas River Basin (Kansas City, Mo., Feb., 1953), p. 64.

⁵ Ibid., p. 52.

In the 1951 flood, the watershed protection programs, had they been completed, would not have provided major relief. The Board concludes, therefore, that the effects of watershed management can be taken into account only after a considerable number of years and should be considered only as factors of safety in the design of structures for flood protection.⁶

For the anti-dam interests, the KIDC report did two useful things: It challenged the reliability of specific Corps of Engineers technical conclusions, and it questioned the basic validity of the big-dam approach.

The cost-benefit ratio claimed by the Army for Tuttle Creek was slender at best (1 to 1.26).⁷ But even this appeared to be based on exaggerated estimates of damages, according to the KIDC panel. The Army's final estimate of direct and indirect damages was \$725 million, of which \$490 million was attributed to urban areas.

"The calculation of indirect damages leaves ample room for doubt as to general validity," the Kansas Board said. "When these estimates are made in the midst of flood, they always tend to be exaggerated. Experience everywhere has shown that when these indirect damages are calculated some time after the catastrophe, their significance and their amount tend to dwindle."⁸

Also questioned were the Army estimates of agricultural damages (one million acres at \$122 an acre). Studies in the School of Agriculture at Kansas State College had shown that 72.5 per cent of the flooded acreage was improved as a result of the flooding. In some 13.6 per cent of the flooded area, there was no change in soil conditions. Of the remaining land, 6.7 per cent was slightly impaired and 7 per cent was "considerably impaired."

For an independent estimate of damages, the Board compared assessed valuations in the 29-county flooded area for the years immediately before and after the flood. It found a difference of less than \$1.5 million – considerably less than the claimed \$122 million.

The basic validity of the big-dam approach in the Kaw Valley was questioned because of its vast size and the lack of suitable reservoir sites near the metropolitan areas. Basically, the problem was this: A given dam can hold a given amount of flood water in the presence of two conditions. First, the water must fall in the watershed above the dam. Second, the reservoir must have

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 54-55.

⁷ With later requests for appropriations, this ratio as adjusted to reflect the increasing value of property in the flood plain. In 1961 it was given by the Corps of Engineers as 1 to 2.2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18. The question of indirect damages also came up at the November, 1951, Flood Forum at Kansas State College. Kansas University economist John Ise was asked, "In figuring the cost of flood damage reduction, how much consideration should be given to benefits in reducing human suffering caused by floods or to the intangible benefits?"

Answer: "Well, I wouldn't rate that very high. I think quite a few of these people had quite a picnic. It was a new experience, and they could do heroic things they had never done before. I wouldn't weigh that too heavily here in Kansas."

been sufficiently empty before the new rainfall. Both of these are obvious, but when a system of reservoirs is operated, the matter becomes more complex. With a general rainfall as in 1951, the gates of the dams must be opened and closed with precise timing so that the maximum reservoir space is kept empty for more rain while at the same time, water must not be released to flow downstream in quantities which, when added to water released from reservoirs on other tributaries, will cause flooding on the main stem.

After a flood, it is possible to chart the course of the water - as the Corps of Engineers did in planning for the design flood - to see what system of timing should have been used. Before the flood, it is another matter.

In pointing out this basic weakness of a reservoir system, the Kansas Board was able to quote a Corps of Engineers study made after the 1903 flood. It considered reservoirs unfeasible in the Kansas Basin "because of the probable impossibility of predicting the characteristics of great floods with sufficient accuracy to permit efficient operation of such a system."⁹

Publication of the KIDC report brought a variety of reactions. State Representative John Brooken of Pottawatomie County announced he would introduce an anti-Tuttle Creek resolution in the legislature. When the report was read to a joint session of the legislature, Senator Joe McDowell of Kansas City, Kansas, accused the Engineers of failing "to do their job," which he defined as finding the best way to "catch water, retain it., and release it." Wolman's reply was that catching the water is not practical.¹⁰ Legislators and the packed gallery applauded, drowning out further questioning by the Kansas City Senator.

In other reactions, Governor Edward F. Arn endorsed the report. "I would make their recommendations mine, he said, "based on the facts they have obtained and presented." Dwight Payton, still KWA president, endorsed the report, despite its stand on his watershed program. "The report shows that both sides in the old controversy between big dams and watershed treatment were wrong," he said. Glenn Stockwell said the Blue Valley was "satisfied with the report and is ready to join the rest of the state to get sensible flood protection for Kansas."¹¹

Farther downstream an opposite stand was taken. "The plan was designed to sell Wyandotte County down the river," said the Kansas City Kansan. "We are convinced that big dams are the only answer for flood defense in Wyandotte County. We will settle for nothing less," said Joseph F. Reardon, chairman of the Wyandotte County Commission. The Greater Kansas City Flood Control Planning Committee, the group which had given birth to the Tuttle Creek idea nearly twenty years before called a special meeting. "It seems to

⁹ U.S., Congress, Senate Doc. 160, 58th Cong., 2d Sess. Quoted ibid., p. 25.

¹⁰ "Anti-Tuttle Creek Dam Move Due in House," Topeka Daily Capital, Feb. 17, 1953.

¹¹ "Flood Report Opinions Vary," Topeka Daily Capital, Feb. 18, 1953, pp. 1-2.

put flood protection and cost on a local basis and doesn't give enough consideration to downstream interests," said Willard Breidenthal, chairman.

Colonel Lincoln withheld comment. "All I know," he said, "is what I read in the papers."¹²

Residents of the Haw and Delaware River valleys met in Perry and called on Governor Arn to submit the report to the Corps of Engineers for review before taking any action on it. Plainly irked by the fact that agricultural losses were written off as not worth controlling, they passed a resolution that "our homes are just as valuable as those in Manhattan, Topeka, Lawrence and Kansas City."

District Engineer Lincoln maintained his silence for a week and then met with committees of both houses of legislature where the resolution asking Congress to halt Tuttle Creek construction was being considered. Lincoln brought up the lack of protection for rural areas, and called Tuttle Creek "the most important work now under way." He called the flow-way plan "doubtful" because of extreme right-of-way costs prohibitive to local interests."¹³

Though Corps of Engineers proposals would require purchase of 464,000 acres of land, only 174,000 would be permanently out of production, the Colonel added.

Three days after the release of the KIDC report, the Missouri Basin Survey Commission announced its findings. It, too, called for a halt, at least temporarily, in construction of Tuttle Creek Dam. The Commission noted that

the present justification of Tuttle Creek and other similarly situated reservoirs must seriously be questioned. New general plans for flood protection for the Kansas Citys need to be worked out and the flood control benefits of the reservoirs should be realistically appraised before continuing with construction of Tuttle Creek.¹⁴

Tuttle Creek, of course, was incidental to the main point of the Commission's work which was to examine water management problems in the entire Missouri Basin. But the controversy surrounding it aptly epitomized the entire problem, and the Commission recognized this. It observed that

attention has been focused on two controversies over water-control projects now in construction -Tuttle Creek Dam in Kansas and more recently Oahe Dam in South Dakota...briefly, it has arrived at the conclusion that Oahe dam is an important part of the main stem plan. Its studies suggest that Tuttle Creek Dam, even when accom-

¹² Ibid.

¹³ In their final report, released in May, the KIDC engineers documented their \$200 million cost estimate with appraisals of all the affected floodplain property.

¹⁴ Missouri: Land and Water, The Report of the Missouri Basin Survey Commission (1953).

panied with other projected dams, may not provide the Kansas Citys with the protection they seem to expect.¹⁵

And the report mentioned the same basic difficulty of controlling floods with reservoirs in so large an area:

The basic difficulty that stands in the way of effective reservoir control for the Kansas Citys is the absence of suitable dam and reservoir sites close above the cities....On the Kansas River, there is an additional 31,000 square miles whose outflow is not now controlled; and this would be reduced to 9,500 square miles by the construction of the reservoirs now authorized. If all the additional reservoirs on small tributaries, as proposed by the Corps of Engineers after the 1951 flood, were also constructed, the uncontrolled watershed on the Kansas River above the Kansas Citys would be reduced to a minimum of 6,800 square miles.

Although the latter figure may seem relatively small, it should be remembered that a nearby watershed less than half as large produced a peak flood flow of 400,000 cubic feet per second in July, 1951. Obviously, the remaining minimum uncontrolled area of 6,500 square miles would still be capable of producing at the Kansas Citys a larger flood than that which occurred in 1951 when the peak flow was 510,000 cubic feet per second.¹⁶

In view of the lack of upstream storage facilities – or sites to build them on – the Commission made a proposal remarkably similar to that of the Kansas Board. It proposed raising levees and accepting the idea that only partial flood control is practical without establishing flood plain zoning.

Attacking the larger problem, the commission proposed a new central agency directing the resource development of the entire Missouri Basin. Not quite an MVA, it would be a five-man group with the responsibility for directing the activities of existing agencies dealing with water management. Three of the eleven members issued a minority report proposing that a supervisory body be created through interstate compact between the ten states of the basin and the United States.

With the issuing of the two reports, the anti-dam campaign caught fire. Three gambles in a row had paid off for the Blue Valley group. First, they had staked their future on the Miller-Cole election and won. Then they had committed themselves in advance to accepting the outcome of independent studies. Both had ruled for their side.

Now it was the pro-dammers' turn to run scared, and they did. The Blue Valley group pressed forward to score the final coup. On February 20, a form

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

letter went out to valley residents advising them of the resolutions pending in the legislature and warning that “a powerful opposition is working harder than ever. We must not relax our efforts. This could be the decisive action which could set the stage for final victory.”¹⁷

The recipients were urged to write their legislators as well as members of the committees considering the anti-Tuttle Creek resolutions.

On March 9, with the Blue Valley Belles swarming around the State House, the Kansas Senate passed a resolution

that we respectfully urge, request, and memorialize the Congress of the United States to take immediate action to halt the preliminary work now in progress for the construction of Tuttle Creek Dam on the Big Blue River in Kansas, until debatable issues have been resolved as recommended in the reports of the independent board of engineers of the governor of Kansas.¹⁸

This was a somewhat watered down version of the resolution first introduced in the House which went farther by asking Congress to rescind its 1938 authorization of the dam. However, on March 18, the house accepted the Senate version by vote of 87-7. The legislature’s action was taken amid a 700-letter and telegram appeal by the Missouri-Arkansas Basins Flood Control Association, whose out-of-state roots may have caused the campaign to backfire.

In Washington, the events in Kansas were not going unnoticed. When President Eisenhower submitted his budget on April 20 - the revision of Truman’s budget - the funds for continuing work on Tuttle Creek were omitted. This precipitated some of the bitterest verbal battles of the entire controversy, as pro-dam forces prepared to try to restore the cut in Congress and anti-dammers got ready to stop them. Tempers tended to grow short, and a number of minor sub-controversies ensued. Among them:

1. The Kansas Watersheds Association, irked because construction was still proceeding in the Valley – where a large hole had been gouged out of a hilltop to produce earth fill – urged an immediate halt to the project.
2. In Topeka, Walter Bryant, the CIO chairman, protested action of the city commission in contributing \$500 to a pressure group, the Mo-Ark Flood Control Association, and also providing expenses for Mayor George Schnellbacher to travel to Washington to testify for the pro-dam side. “Why should the tax money of all Topekans be used for this

¹⁷ Form letter from Blue Valley Study Association to its mailing list, Feb. 20, 1953.

¹⁸ Topeka Daily Capital, March 10, 1953, p. 1.

purpose when there are many Topeka citizens opposed to Tuttle Creek Dam? It is not fair," he said.

3. The Shawnee County Commission voted 2-1 to request Congress to continue the project.

On May 1, as the question again headed for the Senate and House subcommittees, Stockwell's group issued a jubilant note from Randolph to what by now had grown to a national mailing list. It listed members of all of the committees involved and warned that

the battle is not over and we must not relax our efforts. Now is the time for the big final push to stop appropriations and then proceed to get Tuttle Creek deauthorized and knocked out forever!

First of all, please write to your own Representatives and Senators in Washington. Kansas residents, be sure to write Senators Frank Carlson and Andrew Schoepel of your opposition to Tuttle Creek Dam...

On May 12, a subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee will hold hearings on the Tuttle Creek question. The big dam promoters will be attempting to get Tuttle Creek funds included in an appropriations bill...A Senate Appropriations subcommittee may hold a hearing on Tuttle Creek about the same time, so those who testify may appear before both groups while they are in Washington. Please write to these appropriations committees before May 12 if possible and ask that no funds be voted.¹⁹

A separate letter, signed by Leona Velen, whose success with the Eisenhower and Truman visits had earned her the permanent title of public relations chairman, went to members of other watershed organizations.

Meanwhile, renewed efforts were made to get a national watershed program into action as a big-dam substitute. On the morning after the President's budget announcement, Congressman Miller appeared before a House appropriations subcommittee to plead for funds for such a program. Back in the valley, a meeting was called at Winkler School to lay plans for organizing a watershed district for Fancy Creek under the new watershed law which the legislature had approved.

"Now it is up to us who have opposed Tuttle Creek to prove that we have something better," said the Manhattan Tribune. "The fight for the Blue Valley has gripped the attention of conservationists and others throughout the nation

¹⁹ "Taps for Tuttle Creek," mimeographed letter mailed by the Blue Valley Study Association at Randolph, Kan., May 1, 1953.

and even beyond our borders. If a watershed plan is successful here, the Blue Valley can be the bellwether for a program that will have a profound effect on agriculture throughout the world... Now, while we have the nation's attention, while the administration and the Congress are in a mood to strike out in a new direction, much can be done by moving swiftly."²⁰

The first shot in the Congressional battle was fired in the Senate subcommittee on May 6 by Brigadier General William E. Potter, division engineer of the Missouri River Division. The debate lasted for two weeks.

Potter's testimony, and other actions of the Army in this period, betrayed, in the eyes of Blue Valley residents, the engineers' claim that they were simply consultants to the Congress responding to the wishes of the public. General Potter dismissed the Miller election, the Kansas Board report, and the Missouri Basin Survey Commission findings with the simple observation, "There has been a good deal of discussion about the Tuttle Creek Dam." He called it "the key reservoir of this entire system," and claimed that it

would have held back one-third of the volume of water that went downstream. Its effect alone on the great rain storm between the 9th and 12th of July below Topeka would have caused a reduction of 75,000 cubic feet per second at Kansas City.²¹

When Potter repeated, the worn "small-but-vocal-minority" description of the anti-dam forces, Stockwell lost his patience. Potter made the statement in answer to a question as to whether there had been any changes in public sentiment toward the dam. His reply was:

A large segment of the population in Kansas and Missouri are very strongly in favor of the project and are working actively to insure that it is built. A small but very vocal minority spearheaded by the owners of some of the reservoir lands have vigorously opposed the dam. I would like to add that these are government-owned facilities such as a new office building which will require employment of a guard to prevent vandalism, at least initially.²²

²⁰ "Real Test Still Coming in Blue Valley," Manhattan Tribune, April 21, 1953, p. 1.

²¹ U.S., Congress, House, Hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations on Civil Functions, Department of the Army, 83d Cong., 1st Sess., p. 603. Potter's meaning here is not clear. Perhaps, as was often suggested, he meant that it was the key project in a political rather than an engineering sense, in that once it was built, resistance to other projects would weaken. Also, his technical data needs some interpreting. The volume of water that went downstream is not as significant as the rate at which it flowed at a given time. The 75,000 c.f.s. must be compared to the 510, 000 c.f.s. at which the Kaw crested at Kansas City. Therefore, while Tuttle Creek may have reduced the volume of water by one-third, it would have reduced the peak flow by no more than 15 per cent. However, Potter's statement apparently went unchallenged.

²² Ibid.

None of the anti-dam forces were present for this testimony, and they did not learn of it until the printed record was quoted in newspapers May 18. Stockwell wrote Potter a bitter reply:

General, I have at all times tried to avoid personalities in the Tuttle Creek controversy, but you seem to persist in showing your arrogance and acting as if you were a little tin god, divinely endowed. As a citizen of Kansas, I resent having a person of your ilk speak for my state... Ye Gods, is there no limit to your brazen effrontery?... You lower yourself into the slime of the gutter and place yourself outside of the pale of respectable society.²³

Stockwell could not even bring himself to add a "Yours truly." Instead, he typed, "You do not deserve a complimentary ending," before signing his name.

The anti-dam side was represented in Washington by farmers, small-town politicians, officials of farm and labor organizations, and university professors. Their testimony consisted of quotations from the KIDC and Missouri Basin Survey Commission reports, plus - and this was probably more to the point - reminders of Cole's upset. W. P. Lambertson, Cole's predecessor in the House seat, told the House committee that

Cole was defeated by about 4,000 votes. If it had not been for the Republicans pleading for him in spite of his attitude on the dam, in order to guarantee a Republican House, he would have been beaten by at least 10,000 more.²⁴

Throughout the hearings, a number of elected officials displayed varying signs of firmly applied pressure. The man in the most delicate spot was Senator Schoepfel, who was up for re-election in 1954. Like Senator Carlson, who would face the voters in 1956, he decided to avoid a stand for as long as possible. In the Senate hearings, he introduced both sides, but made no mention of the dam. Carlson observed that he would "have an opportunity to appear later. I want to yield all the time we can because these folks have come in."²⁵

Back in Kansas, Governor Arn, quoted by the Daily Capital in February as saying that he would make the KIDC engineers' recommendations his own, could not in May recall having made that statement. The question came up when the newspaper noted that the KIDC engineers were not appearing at the crucial hearings, and there was, in fact, no representative from the State of Kansas at all.

²³ Letter from Glenn D. Stockwell, Randolph, Kan., to Brig. Gen. William E. Potter, Missouri River Division Engineer, May 19, 1953.

²⁴ Hearings, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

²⁵ U.S., Congress, Senate, Hearings Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations on Civil Functions, Department of the Army, 83d Cong., 1st Sess., p. 691.

“If anyone wants to give a copy to the committee, I suppose they can just hand it to them,” said Arn of the KIDC report. “I don’t think any formal procedure is necessary.” And he declined to take a personal stand on Tuttle Creek Dam, except to say: ‘If Tuttle Creek Dam is a good thing, it certainly ought to be built. If it is not a good thing, it should not be built and the people’s money wasted on it.’²⁶

The pro-dam interests, now on the defensive, came up with a report of their own. It did not attempt to refute either the KIDC or Missouri Basin Commission reports, but instead attacked the old Blue River Study Association’s 1944 survey of agricultural losses which would be caused by completion of the reservoir.

Prepared by three Kansas City public officials at the request of the Missouri-Arkansas Basins Flood Control Association, it set the annual loss in agricultural production at just under \$400,000 as opposed to the \$6 million estimated in the nine-year-old valley report.²⁷ Surely an error of 15 times would have some bearing on the decision of people trying to arrive at an honest conclusion regarding the merits of Tuttle Creek,” said the Association in an accompanying press release.

Meanwhile, the dry-dam compromise, which was brought up every time one side or the other was in serious trouble, reared its head again. The on-again-off-again proposal had first been inserted in the original appropriation bill at the instance of Senator Schoeppel a mollification for anti-dam interests. Then, with the appropriation made, Colonel Lincoln had indicated that it was not necessarily permanent. In his campaign, a worried Congressman Cole had obtained new assurances from the Corps that the restriction was definite. Now, with the tide turning against the dam, the Corps issued, through the Flood Protection Planning Committee of Greater Kansas City, new assurances that it would keep the dam bone dry.

The chairman of the Committee, Willard J. Breidenthal, released a letter from Major General S. D. Sturgis, chief of engineers, in which the General explained that

there is no issue between this office and the field regarding the proposed method of operation of Tuttle Creek Reservoir. The project is to be operated as a dry dam, in accordance with the expressed will of Congress; and General Potter has had full and proper authority to make plans and arrangements on this basis.

²⁶ Topeka Daily Capital, May 11, 1953.

²⁷ A. H. Schumacher, Kimball L. Backus, and D. M. Peterson, Report on the Reduction in Agricultural Production in the Big Blue River Valley Attributable to Tuttle Creek Dam, Kansas City, Mo., April 14, 1953.

We have been somewhat concerned, as I know you have been as well, over the unwarranted criticism of Colonel Lincoln in this connection. The misunderstanding appears to have arisen out of a story attributed to him in the Topeka Daily Capital on 7 July, 1952. This story arose through unusual circumstances; but the point is that Colonel Lincoln corrected the next day the point of view attributed to him and has since made his position clear on numerous instances.

In any event, General Potter as division engineer has been available to anyone in the area who felt there was a question on Colonel Lincoln's position; and I am sure General Potter's position has been clear cut. I will appreciate anything you can do to assist in removing any remaining doubt in this important matter.²⁸

Throughout the month of May, 1953, hardly a day went by without Tuttle Creek being mentioned in the daily press. On May 13, pro-dam State Senator Arthur J. Stanley, Jr., of Kansas City, Kansas, gave the United States Senate committee a novel explanation for the anti-dam resolution of the legislature. "Those women from the Blue Valley came into Topeka and caused much confusion," he said.²⁹ On May 16, the Kansas State Federation of Labor took an opposite stand from its CIO cousin and petitioned Congress for the continuation of the project. On May 19, Anthony W. Smith, CIO assistant general counsel, testified before the Senate group and called Tuttle Creek "brutal and stupid." He stressed the point that members of his organization stood strongly to gain from flood control:

Our members are downstream people. We suffer from floods, not only loss of homes and household property, but also from closed plants and loss of wages. Our organization has been concerned with this problem for several years. We made studies, and reached the conclusion that the big dams are not the solution. We approve the Department of Agriculture's approach to the problem.³⁰

The first appropriations committee to act was that of the House, which reported out its civil functions bill on May 23 - without Tuttle Creek. Neither Schoeppel nor Carlson commented. The pressure groups on both sides continued their efforts and charges and counter-charges grew wilder. In Kansas City, John B. Gage, vice-chairman of the Flood Protection Planning Commit-

²⁸ Quoted in Topeka Daily Capital, May 13, 1953. It was not clear whether the General was implying that Colonel Lincoln's statement or the newspaper's reporting of it was incorrect. In either event, the implication was unjustified. The Colonel had been quoted as saying that the dry-dam decision was not irrevocable, and that in the future public opinion might dictate its operation with a conservation pool, i.e., as a "wet dam." Subsequent events proved this to be true, for on July 12, 1957, the Senate subcommittee which had inserted the restriction lifted it out again. By that time, drought was equaling the threat of flood as justification for the big dam, enabling those who favored it to tap new sources of support.

²⁹ Quoted by Clif Stratton, Topeka Daily Capital, May 14, 1953.

³⁰ Topeka Daily Capital, May 20, 1953.

tee, said at a business luncheon that Blue Valley farmers were a front for the “intellectual fringe of the CIO” and private utility groups, a curious combination. “The residents of the Blue Valley are just the front behind which the real fight has been waged by two groups, one on the extreme left and one on the extreme right.”³¹

In Topeka, Mayor Schnellbacher and CIO Chairman Walter Bryant reached agreement on one point: to back local works for Topeka without either of them changing his stand on Tuttle Creek. There were some technical problems here, however. The Corps of Engineers was working on plans for an elaborate local protection project including rerouting of one creek, new dikes, and a new bridge, none of which were consistent with the KIDC flow-ways plan. ‘The Schnellbacher-Bryant accord did not specify what kind of local works were supported.

In Washington, an Associated Press reporter asked Senators Schoeppel and Carlson what they intended to do about Tuttle Creek. Both Senators said they had not made up their minds. Both said they were seeking additional information on which to base a decision. Schoeppel wrote to Dean T. DeWitt Carr of the Kansas University School of Engineering for an evaluation of the KIDC report. Carr replied that “qualified members of my staff...give personal, wholehearted approval to the report.” Offering to provide a point-by-point analysis, he noted that

one point is fairly obvious. The time required to complete the 34 basic units proposed by the Corps of Engineers...because of the very magnitude of the undertaking will require many, many years. By contrast, the plan proposed by the Board of Engineers can be put into effect comparatively quickly. Moreover, the latter will give positive protection to every city and town and village at a relatively low cost, whereas the effectiveness of the reservoir system is doubtful at best.³²

Carlson turned to the Bureau of the Budget to find out how much it would cost to delay the project. The answer was that work could be called off in thirty days, and, if restarted, it would cost \$750,000 to get the project moving again. If existing contracts were completed, a restart would cost \$250,000.

Carlson still did not take a stand. Schoeppel said he would reserve comment until the Senate committee made its report.³³

The bill was reported out June 23. It contained no provision for Tuttle Creek. Asked if he would try to include it by amendment from the floor, Carlson said, “it would be my guess any attempt on the floor would be of little avail in view of the committee’s recommendations.”

³¹ Topeka Daily Capital, May 26, 1953.

³² Letter from T. DeWitt Carr to Andrew F. Schoeppel, June 16, 1953.

³³ Topeka Daily Capital, June 19, 1953.

Schoeppel echoed his comment on the following day. “I have no reason to believe,” he said, “that any effort to present an amendment to include the Tuttle Creek project would be successful in the Senate or in the House, and I shall not present any such amendment.

“Kansas needs flood control, and I have been for it. But until these conflicts are resolved within our state, I fear it will be seriously retarded.”³⁴ As existing contracts ran out, and with no money available for new ones, work on Tuttle Creek Dam ground slowly to a halt.

³⁴ Topeka Daily Capital, June 25, 1953.

CHAPTER VI

1953-1957: DROUGHT, ATTRITION, A LOST CAUSE

The year 1953 was turning out to be a fruitful one for the anti-dam interests in Kansas. While stalling the project in Washington, they had managed to get a watershed district law through the Kansas legislature, enabling them to move ahead with an alternate flood control plan. The 1953 law provided for the organization of units of local government along natural watershed boundaries by petition of 20 per cent of the affected landowners representing 25 per cent of the acreage. Governed by an elected board of directors, the districts would have power to levy taxes, issue bonds, condemn land, contract with individuals, corporations, and other watershed districts, and cooperate with federal agencies. Some preliminary meetings for this type of organization were held in 1953, but no decisive steps were taken. High cost of watershed treatment, the remaining uncertainty about the future of the valley, and the possibility of federal cost participation through pending legislation offered by Kansas Representative Clifford Hope tended to hold back immediate progress.¹

In the second half of 1953, there were new issues to face, including a new line of attack by the pro-dam forces. The 1951 flood was now two years old and the pressure for immediate flood protection was easing. But rainfall in 1952 and 1953 was below normal, and the fear of drought began to replace the dread of flood. One of the first indications of the new pro-dam strategy was a lengthy article which appeared in the Kansas City Star describing the water supply benefits of Fall River Reservoir, a Corps of Engineers project constructed on the Verdigris River in southern Kansas in 1949.

Like Tuttle Creek, the Fall River project had been designated as a dry dam with all but 27,000 of its 263,000 acre-foot capacity designated for flood control. Yet, said the Star, the dam was preventing water shortages in the downstream towns of Fredonia, Neodesha, Independence, Coffeyville, and Cherryvale. That section of Kansas, it said, was populated by “forward looking farmers and businessmen who banded together and fought unceasingly to

¹ Marcene Grimes, Government and Natural Resources in Kansas: Water (Lawrence, Kan., University of Kansas, 1957), pp. 15-16.

get Uncle Sam to throw a barrier across a river ...²

The article was circulated in a direct-mail campaign by the Missouri-Arkansas Basins Flood Control Association, which added its own ungrammatical observation: "Drought control can not be prevented, but its effect can be minimized. There are those who contend that rights of a few property owners in the reservoir area who are well paid is paramount to the rights of the many benefitted."

This led the Blue Valley residents to claim that their opponents were trying to claim mutually exclusive benefits. Their complaint had some justification. Official Corps of Engineers figures on the effects of Tuttle Creek in a 1951-type flood, as has been noted, were based on the assumption that the dam would have been barren of water before the flood producing rains. To keep the dam empty for floods would, of course, make storage for drought impossible, barring clairvoyance on the part of the operators.

Nevertheless, water supply began to rival flood control as an issue. As the dry weather continued, several small towns in the eastern third of the state - normally the wettest - began to experience water shortages. None of these were downstream from Tuttle Creek, but their plight added weight to the water supply argument.

Two new pressure groups were organized late in 1953. One of these, a coalition of the fourteen cities on the Kansas River, sought to establish a zone of agreement between the pro-dam and anti-dam forces in order to press for construction of local protection works. Pro-dam Mayor George Schnellbacher of Topeka was elected president and anti-dam Mayor Richard Rogers of Manhattan was vice-president. The group called itself the Kaw Valley Flood Committee, and agreed not to discuss the question of farm protection, but to concentrate instead on projects in the cities which would be useful with or without big dams.³

In September, 1953, the House Civil Functions Subcommittee toured the Kaw Valley to see the problem first hand. General Potter and other members of the Corps of Engineers tagged along. So did Stockwell. After the trip, Chairman Glenn R. Davis said that in his opinion, "Tuttle Creek Dam will have to be built before too long. I am sure that the measure will be considered by our committee again in the next session of Congress." Davis blamed three factors for the interruption in appropriations: the need to study controversial issues which had been raised; need for time to experiment with watershed programs; and a desire to wait for the final KIDC report (which had been re-

² John T. Alexander, "A Dam for Flood Control Saved an Area in Drought," The Kansas City Star, Oct. 11, 1953, pp. 1-2D.

³ Topeka Daily Capital, Aug. 7, 1953.

leased in May, shortly after the House bill was reported out.)⁴

The following week, Blue Valley leaders unveiled a new weapon in the campaign: a 26-minute documentary film titled “The Tuttle Creek Story.” Produced at a cost of \$15,000, it gave a hard-hitting presentation of the valley’s case. Colorful scenes of the valley’s quiet, pastoral life were included, followed by shots of Army engineers stalking Prussian-like over the hills in combat boots. The film ended with a plea for trial of watershed development as a substitute flood control measure. It was made available to church, civic, and educational groups after a premier performance in the Randolph High School auditorium. A parade and horse show were staged to help attract viewers and the film ran continuously from 4:00 P.M. until after midnight.

Another pressure group was organized the following month in Topeka. Called the Topeka Flood Control and Conservation Association, it recruited prominent pro-dam Topekans and affiliated with the Missouri-Arkansas Basins Flood Control Association. It listed early completion of the entire big-dam program in the Kansas Basin as its primary objective and decided to “procure and disseminate to the public accurate and trustworthy information” about big dams. For carrying out these aims, it set a budget of \$25,250, including \$7,500 for an executive director’s salary and a \$4,000 item for “moving pictures.” To raise the money, it drew up a schedule of dues calling for Topeka business firms to contribute \$100 to \$1,000 a year apiece.⁵ Not listed, but high on its unofficial program, was a plan to promote the election of a pro-dam Congressman to replace Miller.

A spirit of compromise flickered again early in 1954 and then died. Manhattan’s Richard Rogers presented a plan to the Kansas River Protection Committee for going ahead with those measures on which both sides could agree. The plan provided that:

1. Dikes and flow-ways protecting the cities would be designed and built by the Corps of Engineers.
2. The federal government would pay for rights of way where large areas would need to be condemned in highly developed districts.
3. The local protection plan would begin in small cities acting as pilot areas under national legislation similar to that which established pilot watershed projects.
4. If effective there, it would be expanded to the entire basin.
5. The program would be restricted to the Kansas Basin and need not become federal policy in other river basins (to ease possible Corps of Engineers opposition).⁶

⁴ Topeka Daily Capital, Sept. 10, 1953.

⁵ Minutes of the Topeka Flood Control and Conservation Association, Oct. 20, 1953.

⁶ Associated Press dispatch n47, Kansas TTS Circuit, 7:05 P.M., Jan. 20, 1954.

Rogers sought support for his compromise on the basis of his belief that the big-dam plan was no longer “politically nor economically feasible.” But the Corps of Engineers treated it coldly, and it got nowhere. Instead, the Corps began to tie local protection works to the Tuttle Creek issue and insisted that the former could not legitimately be built without assurance of the latter. In a move which Blue Valley leaders interpreted as an attempt to counter the Rogers plan, the Corps secured endorsement of eight of the fourteen-member cities to the old House Document 642 which had been submitted to the 81st Congress back in 1950. (This was the document which updated earlier Corps of Engineers’ reports on the Kansas Basin and called for authorization of Milford and Perry Reservoirs. It had been revised to provide for enlarging the flood storage of Tuttle Creek Reservoir.) The document included provision for local protection works for each of the eight cities, and this was their motivation for endorsing it. But the move frustrated efforts of the Blue Valley group to separate the problem of local works from the big-dam issue since both were contained in the single document.

The House Public Works Committee had scheduled hearings on the thirteen-year-old proposals as the Corps was pressing for authorization of other phases of the basin program. To counter the cities’ endorsement, the Blue Valley Study Association circularized its mailing list, calling for telegram and letters to be sent to the Committee.

Though Rogers’ compromise had failed, another was secretly being prepared by the Corps of Engineers. The Topeka Capital’s James Robinson learned of it from an unnamed “high ranking Army officer,” but could not get sufficiently firm details to report it. The plan would match the \$200 million cost of the flow-ways proposal by increasing local protection works, raising levees, and retaining Tuttle Creek and other large dams, but reducing the total number of reservoirs. The Army was

sitting on the plan and trying to figure out best time to spring it on Kansas public. Probably will wait until after this year’s Congressional election so as to escape being accused of trying to influence vote in first district where anti-dam Rep. Howard Miller will be up for re-election.’⁷

Meanwhile, the Blue Valley directed letter writing efforts to the support of the Hope-Aiken Bill. Supported by a variety of national pressure groups, including the CIO, the National Chamber of Commerce, and the National Association of Manufacturers, this bill provided aid to the anti-dam cause in a number of ways. Besides providing federal and financial assistance to local

⁷ Telegram from James L. Robinson to Jack Christie, National Affairs Editor, Engineering News Record, New York, Jan. 20, 1954. The plan was not made public until the summer of 1957.

watershed districts, it contained official recognition by Congress of the value of the Department of Agriculture's upstream land treatment program in overall flood control plans.

Before the year 1953 ended, word leaked out that the Blue Valley had won another round in the battle. The Eisenhower administration had again decided not to request funds for Tuttle Creek construction. According to Robinson, the Corps of Engineers had taken the initiative in killing the attempt for an appropriation. He interpreted the move in this way:

1. The same factors that killed it in 1953 would probably kill it again.
2. The Corps of Engineers had a Bureau of the Budget-imposed ceiling of \$60 million for the Missouri Basin in the coming year, and if Tuttle Creek were budgeted and then killed, the funds might be lost.
3. The delay in the project might take some pressure off Senator Schoepfel., who was up for re-election. Furthermore, it might weaken Miller's campaign.

While the dam issue remained an important political factor, the weather continued to exert its inexorable force on Kansas politics. It was a dry winter and General Potter took advantage of it at the December meeting of the Inter-Agency Committee by pointing out how other flood control projects were providing water supplies.

At Kanopolis Reservoir, on the Smoky Hill River, and Cedar Bluffs Reservoir, upstream from it, enough flood water had been held back in 1951 to prevent \$4,200,000 in flood damages, he said. Release of water in the subsequent drought years had maintained stream flow to the city of Salina, whose power plant was dependent on a minimum flow. "Had it not been for the release of water from Kanopolis conservation storage in the dry years of 1952 and 1953, there were occasions when this power plant would have suspended operations or only operated at partial load for as long as a week at a time," he said. "Now, mind you, that is just one of the benefits from one location which has accrued from maintenance of low water flows."

How would the Corps of Engineers be able to operate its reservoirs in anticipation of wet and dry periods? Even human fallibility was being ruled out, said the General. Electronic computers were being developed to "arrive at the best possible decisions in establishing the long-range and day-to-day manner of operation of the reservoirs." Given their reservoirs, he said, the Corps could insure a perpetually stable stream flow for the Kansas Basin.

The performance of these reservoirs has demonstrated that if any plan is worthy of the title "comprehensive" that storage reservoirs are a must. They actually provide an answer to our twin problems of flood and drought. For example, when and if all

the proposed reservoirs are built, the flow at Manhattan and Topeka will not fluctuate between 100 second-feet and one-half million second-feet.⁸

However, the Corps was not enthusiastic about efforts of some other branches of government to solve these same problems. The Hope-Aiken Bill, seen by the Blue Valley residents as a potential instrument of their salvation, was opposed by the chief of the Army Engineers, Major General S. D. Sturgis, who appeared before the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry in the following February. The federal financial and technical help to local watershed districts provided in the bill could be used for building upstream improvement structures, including dams of up to 5,000 acre-feet of floodwater detention capacity.

This was “substantial size” according to General Sturgis who pointed out that there was also “no limit to the number that might be constructed.” While he favored soil conservation, the Hope-Aiken plan would duplicate and divide authority already vested in the Corps of Engineers, he said. “The upstream and downstream reservoir system would come to be considered competitive, and even substitutive. This would not be in the best interest of the people of the basin as a whole.”⁹

Clif Stratton, covering the hearing for the Topeka Daily Capital, observed that during questioning by the Committee,, “one small cat jumped out of the bag.” It was the Army fear that upstream works might reduce the water flow so that the already narrow cost-benefit ratio of the big dams would dwindle to the point where they could no longer be economically justified.¹⁰

The Hope-Aiken Bill did, of course, pass, and Kansas’ first projects were approved before the year had ended. Both were in the Kansas Basin: Walnut Creek project on the Kansas-Nebraska line in the upper Delaware Valley, and North Otter Creek in the Blue Valley, near the upper edge of the reservoir line.

Another Blue Valley achievement in 1954 was the obtaining of one of five pilot watershed projects allotted the state by the Department of Agriculture. It was on Snipe Creek in Marshall County, just above the reservoir site.

Meanwhile, Senator Schoeppel had an ear cocked to the growing interest in water conservation. He wrote to General Sturgis asking for a new survey of Kansas water resources with special attention to the problems of storage. “Kansas,” he said, “deserves the most modern scientific thinking in water

⁸ “Operation of Existing Corps of Engineers Reservoirs,” speech by Brig. Gen. W. E. Potter, division engineer, Missouri River Division, to the Inter-Agency Committee, Topeka, Kan., Dec. 3, 1953.

⁹ “Statement of Chief of Engineers Before Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, U.S. Senate, on Bill S. 2549,” press release to the Topeka Daily Capital, Feb., 1954.

¹⁰ Clif Stratton, “Army Engineers Chief Stands Against Hope-Aiken Flood Bill,” Topeka Daily Capital, Feb. 8, 1954.

conservation.”¹¹

Though it had lost ground on Tuttle Creek, the Corps gained on another front when it obtained authorization of the House Document 642 proposals. Milford and Perry Dams were authorized after General Potter used both flood and drought benefits as arguing points. He contended that despite the new planning since the 1951 flood, the program in that 1950 document was still “basically sound and, together with projects already authorized, provides an adequate foundation for whatever degree of flood protection may ultimately be determined to be desirable.”¹² The only modifications he asked for were a reallocation of storage space in Perry Reservoir and in Tuttle Creek to provide more space for flood control, less space for conservation, and changes in some local protection works plus “additional elements to control additional tributaries.”¹³

In accepting his proposals, Congress turned a deaf ear to the pleas of William P. Edwards, Bigelow farmer and Blue Valley spokesman. Reciting the previous setbacks to the Tuttle Creek project and the big-dam principle, he asked Congress to “deny further authorization for large flood control dams, and to instruct the Engineers, or some other agency, to bring in for review and evaluation of Congress and the people of Kansas, a more acceptable, workable and practical approach to our flood control problem.”¹⁴

The year 1954 was turning into one of indecision with few important gains by either side. Though the big-dam principle was far from dead, as the Perry and Milford authorizations indicated, the immediate threat of Tuttle Creek was removed and some of the spark of the anti-dam crusade was gone with it. The approach of the 1954 Congressional election complicated the problem of maintaining organized pressure by introducing divisive forces into the anti-dam picture.

The election posed a dilemma for the Republican Party in Kansas. Tuttle Creek was an issue that would have to be faced at a time when few politicians were willing to risk a stand on either side. It was not clear whether a Republican opponent for Miller would fare better as a pro-dam or an anti-dam man. Miller, strong in 1952, would be stronger in 1954. No longer an unknown, he had made friends in both parties throughout the district. “Why, they think he is sort of a cross between Abe Lincoln and Will Rogers,” complained one Republican leader.

Some Republicans felt that Miller was certain to get all of the anti-dam vote, and the party’s only chance was to run a pro-dam man who could pick

¹¹ Quoted by Clif Stratton in a telegram to the Topeka Daily Capital, Feb. 6, 1954.

¹² “Summary Statement on the Kansas River Basin Plan,” press release issued by Brig. Gen. W. E. Potter, May, 1954, p. 4.

¹³ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁴ “Statement of William P. Edwards,” press release, May 11, 1954.

up enough margin in Topeka to carry the election. Others believed that Topeka could not offset the rural vote, and an anti-dam man was needed to capture votes that went to Miller in 1952. Party leaders could not agree, and the Issue was left to the rank-and-file to decide in the August primary.

There was a rush of claimants to the anti-dam position. Best known of these was William H. Avery, who had gained prominence in the state legislature and the Kansas Watersheds Association. His anti-dam stand had a strong personal basis, for his Clay County farm home was earmarked for inundation in the Milford Reservoir. The only pro-dam candidate was Doral F. Hawks, a Topeka lawyer. Miller was unopposed on the Democratic ballot. The Topeka State Journal, whose circulation was limited largely to the metropolitan area, backed Hawks. The Topeka Daily Capital, which had a large state circulation, backed no one.

Hawks carried Shawnee County by 4 to 1, but only one other county, Leavenworth, well removed from the controversy, gave him a majority. Avery won a substantial majority in his home, Clay County, as well as dam-conscious Marshall, Pottawatomie and Riley Counties. These gave him the nomination with a fairly narrow plurality: 22,077 votes to 19,952 for Hawks, 8,738 for Elmer Curtis, a retired radio commentator. No other candidate got a significant vote.

The nomination of Avery put the Blue Valley interests in a dilemma. Miller had proved a popular representative and had kept his promise to "stop Tuttle Creek." But inherent in his position was a basic conflict never quite suppressed in the minds of the grimly partisan Republicans in the district. Big dams were identified as the evil fruits of big government and the Democratic Party was the party of big government. Miller's stand, the reasoning went, could only be explained by the fact that he was not a true Democrat, but was really "non-political." The argument for supporting Avery in 1954 was that only through the Republican Party could the trend toward bigness in government - and in dams - be reversed. Miller had been helpful, it was argued, but his biggest contribution may have been merely getting elected, rather than anything he had done in office.

Officially, the Blue Valley Study Association decided to back Miller and the Blue Valley Belles again conducted motor caravans on his behalf. But the intense, backs-to-the-wall spirit of a losing cause was no longer there, nor was there a pro-dam villain to be opposed. As a result, the campaign lacked the zest of the 1952 effort. Avery's campaign was given a boost by Vice-President Richard M. Nixon, who was stumping the country to promote the election of a Republican Congress. Republican Blue Valley residents who traveled to Topeka to hear his speech on the State House steps interpreted some of his generalized statements as signs that if the valley showed its loyalty to the party, it would get sympathetic treatment from the Eisenhower ad-

ministration.

Though close for a general election, the 1954 decision went to Avery who won in all but two counties to defeat Miller by 56,079 votes to 47,165. Miller's only victories were in Marshall and Nemaha counties which, though normally Republican, constituted his home area. Avery's margin of 54.3 per cent of the vote, while decisive, was the lowest ever given a winning Republican in the district. The decision had been a hard one, and, in the light of what was to follow, Republican voters in the Blue Valley would long ponder whether it had been the right one.

In the Senatorial campaign, Schoepel's indecision had kept Tuttle Creek from becoming a clear-cut issue, and it was not raised by his Democratic opponent, George McGill, who lost by 90,000 out of a total of 600,000 votes. Schoepel campaigned in the Blue Valley, expressed his "friendship" with its residents sad his admiration for anti-dam Bill Avery, but avoided specific commitments.

In the new session of Congress, things seemed to be going well for the Blue Valley. President Eisenhower had again omitted funds for Tuttle Creek in the budget, but once again, the issue was fought out in committee. In the Senate, Senator Schoepel, with the election safely behind him, was no longer indecisive. Appearing before the Senate Public Works Subcommittee for the Committee on Appropriations, he stated flatly that "I am asking this committee this morning to provide funds for this project." In the ensuing discussion, he added, "I supported the Tuttle Creek project in the beginning," a statement that caused the Clay Center Dispatch to mutter editorially that he had passed up several splendid opportunities to inform the voters of this the previous fall. Senator Carlson, up for election in 1956, was less forthright. Avoiding mention of Tuttle Creek by name, he urged "serious consideration" to "this controversial project."¹⁵

The pro-dam group was represented by Topeka's Mayor Schnellbacher, Scott W. Kelsey, Jr., a Rossville farmer; John Fernstrom, vice president of the Topeka Flood Control and Conservation Association; Lew Paramore, of the North Topeka Drainage District; Emil Heck, president of the Kaw Basin Water Management Association, and others. They had a potent new weapon. The 1955 Kansas legislature, had departed from its firm anti-dam stand of two years before, and had passed, in its closing hours a new resolution petitioning Congress to

take what actions are necessary to assure continuance of surveys and planning and assure cooperation in the construction of projects in the State of Kansas that are

¹⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate, Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, Hearings, Civil Functions, 84th Congress, 1st session, pp. 769-782.

vital and necessary to the conservation of soil and water by the three agencies, namely the Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Soil Conservation Service of the USDA.¹⁶

The drought by now was four years old, and this had been the compelling motivation behind the new resolution. It did not mention Tuttle Creek, but each side read its own meaning into it. Farmer Edwards, one of only three spokesmen who appeared for the anti-dam side, had maneuvered the compromise, and gave the committee his interpretation of it. Basically, this was that it endorsed only projects that are “vital and necessary,” and Tuttle Creek to him was clearly neither. In fact, he said, the resolution had

nothing to do with Tuttle Creek. It reflects no change in the legislative sentiment toward this project as submitted by the independent engineers in 1953. The resolution specifically states that it is a soil and water conservation resolution, and for that reason it carried overwhelmingly. For anyone, gentlemen, to come before the committee and imply otherwise...would be to misrepresent the thinking of the legislature.¹⁷

Before the equivalent House subcommittee the following week, he reiterated the claim that the 1953 resolution “still stands as the expression of the legislative body of the state.”¹⁸

As in the Senate, the pro-dam group had a much larger delegation. This one was led by Representative Errett P. Scrivner of the Second District in Kansas, which included the Kansas City industrial area on the Kansas side of the Missouri River. He opened the pro-dam presentation with the observation that theirs seemed to be a losing battle. But he added that

you never win any fight by quitting and...I am not quitting now and I do not intend to quit fighting for funds for this project until Tuttle Creek is either completed or killed by Congress.¹⁹

Testimony was then presented from the same groups which had appeared before the Senate, along with resolutions from local pressure groups and city councils. Their arguments included reminders of the extreme damage done by the 1951 flood, the point that money already expended on Tuttle Creek would be wasted unless the project was completed, and the newer theme of drought protection. One piece of evidence they inserted in the record illustrates the

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 831.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ U.S., Congress, House, Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, Hearings, Public Works, 84th Cong., 1st Sess., 1955, p. 474.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 253.

skill of Kansas politicians in straddling the issue. It was a telegram from Governor Fred Hall:

The Kansas legislative session, 1955, memorialized Congress to continue surveys, planning, and assure cooperation in the construction of projects in the State of Kansas that are vital and necessary to the conservation of soil and water by these agencies, namely Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, Soil Conservation Service of the Department of Agriculture. I realize that economic welfare of the state of Kansas requires that definite and positive steps must be taken in order to solve the water problems of our state.²⁰

Unknown to the pro-dam group, Hall had sent precisely the same telegram to the opposition forces, and it was duly read into the record again as support for their presentation!²¹

The valley leaders, aware of the difficulty of getting an appropriation for an unbudgeted project, were confident, and their appearance was almost routine. Their confidence appeared justified when, in late May, the subcommittee submitted its public works budget to the full committee - without Tuttle Creek. The valley relaxed until the United Press moved the following dispatch from Washington at 3:46 P.M. on June 10:

Washington, June 10 - (UP) - The House Appropriations Committee in a surprise move voted today to provide \$7,500,000 (M) to resume construction on the controversial Tuttle Creek Dam on Kansas' Big Blue River.

...The action was a surprise because the funds were neither requested by the administration nor recommended by an appropriations subcommittee which reviewed the administration's money requests.

The committee added the \$7,500,000 to the bill drafted by the subcommittee on motion of Rep. Errett P. Scrivner (R-Kan.). Scrivner said it was approved by about a 2-1 margin.

The committee had acted because, as occasionally happens with public works projects, a member laid his personal prestige "on the line" to ask for it. It was a tribute to Congressman Scrivner, and time and chance had set the stage to make it possible.

Some of the circumstances:

A strong anti-dam Congressman, Republican John Tabor, was no longer chairman because it was a Democratic House. His anti-dam position had

²⁰ Ibid., p. 282.

²¹ Ibid., p. 476.

stemmed from a strong belief in economy and, as related by Congressman Avery, he had “an old friend and classmate - a retired Episcopal preacher in Blue Rapids - who had convinced him the dam was a bad thing.”

Democratic Chairman Cannon was less reluctant to spend money on public works. However he had favored postponing of Tuttle Creek in the past in order to free funds for local protection works in his home state. This year, having acquired those funds, he was ready to yield when fellow Missouri Democrat Richard Bolling, influential Rules Committee member, sought to line up his party’s votes in the Appropriations Committee for Tuttle Creek. It was reported that Cannon “just looked out the window when the vote was taken.”²²

Scrivner, though strong for Tuttle Creek from the beginning, had been under pressure from both sides. His feeling was that, “If you once make up your mind what the right thing to do is – you can do it. You may lose support someplace, but you get it somewhere else.” His success proved him right in this instance, although he tended to minimize the accomplishment.

“After so many years, if a man has done a half-way decent job, he has some support,” he said. He did not feel that Blue Valley pressure was a great obstacle. “Competition for cash,” not local opposition, had been the decisive factor in stalling the project, he said. Not even the results of the independent surveys were considered by him to have any appreciable significance.

“There aren’t any independent surveys,” he said. “There’s always a motivating force, always a weighted opinion someplace. You have to discount them.”²³

After the committee vote was taken and the action announced, Avery reacted to his senior colleague’s success with shock and genuine surprise.

“This action follows the same unorthodox pattern as did the original authorization and the initial appropriation,” he said. “My views as Congressman from the affected district were utterly disregarded, which, I am informed, is most unusual in normal Congressional procedure. Further, the Hon. Clarence Cannon, chairman of the full Appropriations Committee, had assured me by telephone as late as Tuesday, June 7, he would not favor an appropriation for Tuttle Creek Dam at this time.”

Avery resolved to make a last-ditch floor fight to eliminate the appropriation. “With the economy drive in Congress, and in view of righteousness, I cannot conceive that Congress would make a commitment that would eventually lead to a billion dollar expenditure on the Kansas River when it is unwanted by at least 75 per cent of the people in the area.”²⁴

Miller glumly predicted that Avery’s move would fail. “My defeat was

²² Interview with Representative William Avery, March, 1958.

²³ Interview with Representative Errett P. Scrivner, March, 1958.

²⁴ Notes of James Robinson of telephone interview from the Topeka Daily Capital, June 10, 1955.

taken to indicate the voters were more interested in politics than they were in preventing the dam," he said. "It looks as if Avery wasn't able to hold his own party together in the committee."

"He'll have the same situation on the floor because his own party is committed to Tuttle Creek. If he succeeds, he's going to have to do it with Democratic votes - and he's in an awfully poor position to ask for them."

On June 18, a Saturday, 500 Blue Valley residents gathered in the auditorium of Randolph High School.

"I guess Kansas City has had a group back there working all the time," Stockwell told the assembly. "I sure wish I had their bankroll."

A decision was made to send Stockwell, Edwards, Manhattan Mercury Editor William Colvin, Mrs. Elizabeth Longren of Randolph, and a KWA representative, Mrs. Helen Rohrer of Junction City, to Washington by air the next day. As many residents as could make the trip would follow by bus. Their plan: to visit as many Republican congressmen as possible.

"We expect to see if the Republican Party appreciates the fact that the First Congressional District gave it the only new seat in the House in last year's elections," said Stockwell.²⁵

Forty-two valley residents and seven other interested citizens boarded the bus on Sunday. Five chairs had to be set up in the aisle to accommodate them. "We left with a great deal of waving on both sides, but there was no ballyhoo," wrote Sara Deibert in her diary. "The faces of the people left behind were hopeful, but not over-confident. We all realized, especially now that we were actually charging to the battlefield, how desperate our situation had suddenly become."²⁶

The people on the bus came from all sections of the valley and many were strangers to each other, so paper and pins were passed around for name tags. The three-day trip was occupied in hymn singing, conversation, and studying anti-dam literature so that each member of the group would be able to cite the pertinent statistics. During a rest stop in Washington, Pennsylvania, the group purchased brown and yellow felt for making sunflower badges which were attached to carefully lettered name cards and the legend, "Stop Tuttle Creek Dam."

When the group arrived in Washington, Stockwell had already prepared each person's assignment. They were to split into ten groups and call on Congressmen. Each group was to cover all the offices on a given floor of one of the House Office Buildings. Any group which finished its floor before the end of the day was to go to the next floor

²⁵ Topeka Daily Capital, June 11, 1955.

²⁶ Sara Deibert, "Washington Log," p. 3.

and call again where another group had already been (pretending surprise when told others had preceded them). As Bill Edwards explained it, they wanted it to look like the “greatest organized disorganization” that ever hit Washington; they wanted the Congressmen to throw up their hands and say, “Great Scott: Did they send the whole valley?”²⁷

Congressman Avery introduced an amendment to strike the Tuttle Creek Appropriation, and it was debated on the floor on Friday, June 17, 1955. The Valley residents, watching from the gallery were

surprised at the confusion and the lack of interest in the proceedings; we were chagrined at the practically dissolute appearance of many of the Representatives; and we were appalled at the way they were throwing our money around. For most of us, that afternoon wiped away a long-cherished illusion of a conscientious Congress.²⁸

Avery spoke against the dam, talking himself “blue in the face,” as Stockwell described it. He told his colleagues that it was

more than just this dam you are deciding. There is a principle involved here, determining if a metropolitan area, through a government agency, shall have the unlimited right to exercise the right of eminent domain over the rights and the wishes of adjoining areas with your constituents paying the entire bill. Further, you are not voting basically for just one dam, but you are committing the policy of Congress to a program that no one knows what will be the limitations or cost. Lastly, you are voting on whether the wishes of a Congressman, elected to represent a district, will prevail over the demands of interests not in the district and mostly not even in the state.²⁹

Congressman Scrivner of Kansas and Congressman Bolling of Missouri spoke against the amendment. Scrivner recited the damages caused by the 1951 flood and read telegrams from his constituents with messages such as “I am a widow age 73 and in 1951 I lost my life’s savings,” or, “Our house and all we had went down the river in 1951.”³⁰

Bolling was more to the point. “Since 1951, the only concrete action which has been taken to mitigate the danger...has been the initiation of Tuttle Creek Dam,” he said.³¹

Avery related in his weekly newspaper column that he had lined up some Democratic support for his amendment, but it “vanished almost completely when Speaker Sam Rayburn walked onto the floor to support Representative

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁹ U.S., *Congressional Record*, 84th Cong., 1st Sess., 1955, CI, Part 7, p. 8533.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8534.

Bolling.” Republican leadership was on Avery’s side, but he lost about twenty votes from his side of the aisle, mostly those of members of the Appropriations Committee, and picked up only eight on the Democratic side. It was obvious that the voice vote was against the amendment, but he called for a teller vote anyway. The count against the amendment was 114-87.

The Blue Valley delegation

filed silently out of the gallery, down the austere hall, down the marble steps to the ground floor, down the outside steps, and along the sidewalk blindly toward the hotel. Nothing was said; nothing could be said. All that could be heard was the sharp clicking of heels on hard surface.

As soon as we reached the hotel, we assembled in room 312 for a meeting. For the moment, we were overwhelmed by our defeat, and a tense silence permeated the room. Quietly and sweetly, Mrs. Almquist expressed a wonderful faith: “I think the Lord is still on His throne. And each of us is still precious in His sight.” Mrs. Newman gave a prayer which said perfectly just what needed to be said at that moment.³²

After the initial shock, the valley residents still refused to accept defeat. “Our people are not beaten... Miracles have happened before and may again,” said Edwards in a call to the Topeka Daily Capital. Back in the valley, Ross Campbell, Editor of the Blue Valley News, said, “We’re going to sit tight and not give up until the water starts lapping at the door.”³³

Around the state, the press reaction was mixed, with most editors outside the valley taking some sort of stand against the dam. Particularly outspoken was Harry Valentine of the Clay Center Dispatch:

Another big bunch of money is to be poured into Tuttle Creek Dam and that brings this entire section of Kansas to one of its darkest times. Not only does it bring a possible doom for the wonderful Blue Valley, but may portend the coming years with a Milford Dam on the Republican and a similar doom for this wonderful valley... The strategy for the future needs considerable thought and study, but two things are sure. We must always keep an anti-dam Congressman representing this district, and we must elect anti-dam Senators from the state... Justice will eventually win, and win we must. Even though the hour and day are dark, we can change that.

The Coffeyville Journal, in southeastern Kansas and well removed from the controversy, observed that, “In this land of ours with greater and greater concentration of people in the cities, there is not much that can justify wiping out an entire large area of rural and small town life.” But in nearby Iola,

³² Deibert, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

³³ “Gloom Floods Blue Valley,” Topeka Daily Capital, June 17, 1955, p. 1.

Angelo Scott, Editor of the Register, held that “the tears of the Blue Valley hundreds must be matched against the tears of the Kaw Valley thousands in any dispassionate evaluation...”³⁴

“That’s real purty writin’,” snorted Oliver Maskill in an answering editorial in the Westmoreland Recorder, “but we’re afraid someone has been misleading brother Angelo...and the whole dad-blamed Congress of the United States.”

The first strongly anti-dam paper to admit that the battle was about over was the Manhattan Mercury, which wasted no time in calling for the area to swallow its bitterness and make the most of whatever opportunities might be involved in the development, even though it was “an unwanted foundling.”

Thus about to be born is bureaucracy’s bastard – but nevertheless a mouth to feed, so to speak, regardless of questionable parents.

The baby is on the Blue Valley area’s doorstep. Regardless of our feelings as to the conditions under which it was conceived, we cannot back away from our responsibilities. It is there for us to do the most with that we can.³⁵

In the closing days of June, the Valley leaders planned several last-ditch actions. A delegation attended the first meeting of the new Kansas Water Resources Board, a body organized to promote some coordination between the various agencies involved in the water problem, to ask it to take an anti-dam stand. “We just want you to ask Congress to withhold an appropriation for construction of Tuttle Creek Dam until you decide whether or not it should be built,” said the group’s spokesman, State Senator R. G. Thomson of Irving. The Board refused to intervene.³⁶

On June 29, Stockwell, still in Washington, issued a bitter statement hinting at economic reprisals by farmers against the urban areas:

The industrial and commercial interests of Kansas City, Topeka, and Lawrence are exerting terrific pressure in Washington for the Tuttle Creek Dam. There is an almost total disregard for the economic welfare of their agricultural trade areas. Evidently these cities have illusions of industrial prosperity, wholly divorced from the agricultural hinterlands.

When the people of Kansas once understand the nature of the pressure for the Tuttle Creek Dam, I feel there will be a natural revulsion away from those responsible for the situation.

³⁴ Quoted in the Topeka Daily Capital, June 26, 1955.

³⁵ An Editorial,” Manhattan Mercury, June 17, 1955, p. 1.

³⁶ Topeka Daily Capital, June 29, 1955.

Trade must rest on mutual good will and generally gravitates to those who show some regard for the welfare of the customer. The cities along the Kaw are destroying, at one blow, decades of favorable urban-rural relationships.

I wonder at the consequences?³⁷

The pro-dam interests pressed their advance. The State Chamber of Commerce sent a message to the Senate Appropriations Committee on June 30, urging that body not to be “swayed by the emotional appeal of a small but vociferous minority...” The Committee was not swayed, and the \$7.5 million appropriation was included in the bill it reported the following day. The bill was passed on July 6.

“Since we were unable to get either one of our senators to oppose it on the floor, it was a pretty hopeless situation,” said Stockwell from Washington.”³⁸

Still, the Blue Valley clung to the faint hope of a presidential veto of the entire Rivers and Harbors Appropriation Bill. Former Congressman Miller wired President Eisenhower urging him to “send it back to Congress demanding deletion of appropriation for construction of Tuttle Creek reservoir.” It would require “more courage than any decision you have been called upon to make in your long and brilliant career,” but “the American people would stand behind you,” he said.

Miller’s sentiments were echoed by his replacement, Representative Avery, who wangled a personal audience with the President through a coincidental ceremonial function: the presentation of a statement signed by Republican congressmen urging him to seek re-election in 1956.

The day would come when Eisenhower would veto a Rivers and Harbors Bill in protest to its excessive pork-barrel content. But this was not it. He signed the bill “with great reluctance” on July 15, although he complained about the fact that a total of 107 unbudgeted projects had been inserted by appropriation-hungry lawmakers. One month later, the Corps of Engineers set the date - September 20 - for opening of bids on the resumption of construction of Tuttle Creek Dam.

The Blue Valley staged one last big promotion. It was an “Open House” with guided tours, continuous showing of its film, a picnic, band concert, a speech by a disenchanted former employee of the Corps of Engineers, and a repetition of a practice that had become a valley custom in time of crisis: gathering on one of the highest hills to sing hymns while the setting sun painted changing patterns of light and shadow across the valley floor below.

“The latch key is out and the coffee pot is on,” said the promotion circu-

³⁷ Press release issued by Glenn Stockwell, June 29, 1955.

³⁸ Topeka Daily Capital, July 6, 1955.

lars. And hundreds of Kansans made the trip to see the valley on an October weekend. The oldest residents said it had never looked finer. The first frost had been followed by unseasonable warmth, and the yellow of elm leaves and the red of sumac were complimented with spring-like appearance of roses and apple blossoms. It would have been hard not to be opposed to Tuttle Creek Dam on that day.

Only when winter came, and, with it, the survey and construction crews of the corps of Engineers, did hope finally fade. Stockwell first publicly faced the valley's defeat in January, 1956, at a meeting of the Blue Valley Study Association in Randolph. He told his group that it had "neither the time nor the money" to fight a lost cause. "Tuttle Creek last year was a dead duck. Now it's in the construction stage," he said. "We have a decision to make. I do not feel we have the time or the money to oppose the moneyed interests downstream."

Stockwell proposed that the organization devote the remaining time before the valley population was dissipated to pressing for improved compensation for businessmen, subsistence payments for tenant farmers, and a government employment program for workers in the Valley. It was a hard speech to make, and hard to accept. Paul Jameson, an articulate farmer who had led many of the valley's letter writing campaigns, declared that the valley should continue to fight the dam, and he received a standing ovation.³⁹

But there was no more organized opposition. Some of the residents continued to write letters to congressmen and newspapers. Avery doggedly introduced an unsuccessful amendment in the next session of Congress which would have deleted the third Tuttle Creek appropriation. With the passage of another year, the government appraisers had worked their way far up the valley, and the opposition was scattered. In August, 1957, Avery conceded that the Corps of Engineers' big dam principle had won.

His concession was prompted by an ironic circumstance. The Senate appropriations committee included unbudgeted funds in its rivers and harbors bill for planning funds for Milford and Perry reservoirs. The former would wipe out Avery's own farm home near Wakefield, along with the entire town. Not included in the House bill, the item reached the House as part of a conference report and therefore was not subject to amendment. Avery was powerless to oppose it.

"I have opposed the projects for many years," he said. "But it now appears that they are to be built as well as all other proposed Army Engineer reservoirs in Kansas. It may still be objectionable to many people, but this...will probably finally decide the issue in Kansas."⁴⁰

³⁹ Topeka Daily Capital, Jan. 21, 1956.

⁴⁰ Topeka Daily Capital, Aug. 10, 1957, p 1.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The outcome, to borrow an expression from the political columnists, was inevitable. The anti-dam forces lacked the financial and numerical resources of their opponents, and they lacked the staying power. They were also unlucky. The caprice of the elements brought the 1951 flood which stimulated the pressure for the dam and the subsequent drought which created demands from new sources interested in water supply.

Moreover, with the dam authorized from the beginning of their fight, they faced the handicap of having the burden of proof always upon them. As Davis had said, it ought to have been the other way around: "Prudence and our natural indolence alike proclaim that the burden of proof in such issues as this rests upon those who would radically modify long-established customs and ways of life."¹

The pro-dam forces were able to make inroads into the cohesion of the opposition with the first land purchases in the valley during the false start of 1952. After the second start, land purchases thinned the opposition swiftly. More important were the losses of cohesion between the Blue Valley and its allied pressure groups.

Constant reinforcement was necessary, as Stockwell had noted. "In order to keep labor and farm groups in line, we had to keep visiting them," he said.

Another problem was failure to identify clearly the nature of the forces supporting the dam proposal. Congressman Avery pointed out that the main source of pro-dam pressure was the commercial interests in the downstream flood plains. This was not always clear to the anti-dam group, which tended to identify the Corps of Engineers as its main antagonist. "The Corps' role has been greatly exaggerated," said Avery. "It does not fight for projects. There are so many it can build, no one project is worth bothering about." But in concentrating their campaign on the Corps, the valley residents were fighting the only identifiable enemy they had.

Another problem was the tendency of the group to identify its problems in terms of pre-existing political attitudes • It was able to set aside party loyalty

¹ Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

for the critical 1952 election campaign. But over the long run the group's basic outlook did not change. Finding technical alternatives to the big-dam plan was simple compared to the more basic problem of getting politically feasible alternatives. To do so might have required massive restructuring of basic political viewpoints – a difficult if not impossible task, and there is no evidence that the valley group even considered it.

Despite the flurry of interest in watershed management programs and the KIDC engineers' utopian flowways proposal, politically feasible alternatives did not exist. Either plan or both in combination could have been accomplished quickly and efficiently only by a powerful basin-wide authority which could be superimposed over the individual authorities involved. This the Blue Valley was not prepared to support. Its people instinctively mistrusted any authority beyond the state level, although they did recognize the need for treating a river basin as a planning unit. Their efforts at achieving unity in planning were directed toward strengthening state authority in the water resources field, a rather hopeless gesture in view of the deep entrenchment of existing federal agencies.

It is pointless to speculate about what might have happened if Senator James E. Murray had ever been successful in attempting to establish a Missouri Valley Authority. It is significant that bills which he repeatedly introduced to do this never received Blue Valley support. Here, the established political values kept them from embracing a proposal which conceivably might have led to organized river basin development, which in turn might have led to a plan which did not include Tuttle Creek.

MVA, in the minds of the valley residents, was another manifestation of a too-powerful federal government which had given them Tuttle Creek in the first place. Congressman Avery spoke for the valley when he called the MVA proposal "an encroachment of the Federal government on state's rights."² This is the same epithet which the Blue Valley consistently applied to the dam.

It is true that local political tradition was shattered in the desperate weeks of the 1952 congressional campaign. But here was a clear-cut case of choosing between a man who had "betrayed" the valley and a man who would champion its cause • The longer range choices were not so clear. And even in this case, the underlying tradition reasserted itself once the issues became faintly blurred.

What, then, does the Tuttle Creek case tell us about latent political forces? It demonstrates for one thing that there can be inherent difficulties in awakening these forces and bringing their pressures to bear. At the same time it shows that they can be awakened.

² Interview with Representative William Avery, March, 1958.

In considering the behavior of the Tuttle Creek Dam opponents in this light, the question of their winning or losing is not material. Nor is the manner in which they played the game as significant as the fact that they played it at all. Once its equilibrium was disturbed, this politically indifferent community became an active pressure group. And although its cause was lost, the single instance of its ability to convert a congressional district from safe Republican to temporarily Democratic demonstrates the extent of power that can lie hidden in a seemingly apathetic segment of the political body.

One might attribute the fact that such cases are relatively uncommon to the awareness of these latent forces on the part of officeholders. Defeated Congressman Cole said that nothing could have changed his stand. But even he was forced to admit that his basic error was in underestimating the political resources of the valley and not seeking a way to come to terms with it.

In considering the significance of this case, it is tempting to classify it as a classic example of short-run political upheaval being overcome by the deeper, long-ranging trends. On the surface, it does exemplify this. Equilibrium has returned. The participants are scattered, and the naked valley with the rising water, being devoid of citizens, has attained maximum political entropy. Those who were organizing letter-writing campaigns and bus trips to Washington, wherever they are, though certainly not unchanged by the experience, may be assumed to have lapsed into their former low levels of participation in public affairs.

Yet, the mere existence of the capacity for participation which they demonstrated prevents us from separating the short-run upheaval from the long-run stability so nicely. Exercise of the capacity may be an ephemeral matter, but its existence is continuing and therefore interminably involved in the longer-ranging factors which govern the operation of the political system.

Viewed in this manner, the short-run upheaval does not contradict the over-all pattern. It merely invites attention to some of its components which are normally obscured.

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