Glenn D. Stockwell, Sr. to Leslie G. Templin

In this letter, Glen Stockwell outlines his reasons for opposing the construction of a dam on Tuttle Creek in North Central, Kansas. Mr Stockwell writes to Leslie Templin to provide background information about Public Law 566 that authorized the Department of Agriculture to enter into assistance agreements with small watersheds for the purpose of controlling soil erosion and floods.

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Glenn D. Stockwell, Sr. to Leslie G. Templin

Tuttle Creek

Nov. 1, 1955

Mr. Leslie G. Templin, Ex. Sec.
Commission on Town and Country Work
Baldwin, Kansas

Dear Mr. Templin:

In response to your letter of October 27 I will attempt to give you some information on Tuttle Creek and pose some questions that I hope will arouse your interest. I am grateful for the opportunity of being of assistance to your Commission. I will try to be as objective as I can, but I might as well admit, at the beginning, that most of my objectivity on the subject of Tuttle Creek dropped by the wayside during the past few years when I began to realize the sinister forces that were advocating the project.

I own no land in the reservoir area. I am a renter living on the perimeter of the reservoir area but some of the land I farm will be inundated. My community as such will be obliterated. I was educated at Kansas State College with a BS degree in Agriculture, majoring in economics and land use. I moved to this area from western Kansas and probably because I had but few emotional connections with the Blue Valley I did not engage in the opposition to Tuttle Creek previous to the1951 flood.

The Kansas river basin was visisted with a very disasterous flood during the month of July, 1951. I was in Manhattan and witnessed the destruction wrought by the Kansas River water entering the town from the south and west. As soon as the roads were open I traveled from one end of the basin to the other to observe the flood damage. I learned of the magnitude of the flood from personal observance. I learned that the Kansas river had crested from Kansas City to Tescott within a twenty four hour period. The river valley was full of water from one end to the other for days. The flood was no crest moving down stream sweeping out one town after another. After viewing this physical characteristic of the flood and checking with the U. S. Weather Bureau it was easy to determine that the storm waters had largely originated below the sites of the proposed reservoirs. The characteristics of the flood rendered all previous plans obsolete.

I was therefore appalled when General Pick, Then Chief of the Army Engineers, made the statement before a Senate Committee and before the press that if Tuttle Creek, Milford and Perry reservoirs had been built and in operation at the time of the flood that the flood could have been passed by the cities safely. That was a downright falsehood. I realized that the Corps of Engineers were preparing to implement their pre-flood plans even though the 1951 flood had shown that they were inadequate. I immediately wrote to newspapers that it was morally and criminally wrong to delude the flood suffers by promising flood protection by means of the pre-flood plans. Homes and businesses were rehabilitated in flood zones that have no possibility of receiving protection.

I attended a meeting in Kansas City that was called to discuss flood relief and rehabilitation. Instead it turned into an Army Engineer propaganda forum for Tuttle Creek dam. In vain I, and others, protested from the floor of the meeting that that dam or the entire system of proposed dams would not achieve protection for the Kansas river towns. We pleaded for a restudy of the problem in light of the data collected from the 1951 flood. We were hooted down as "crack-pots" and "nit-pickers".

I offered my services to my neighbors in the Blue Valley in an attempt

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to block construction of Tuttle Creek dam until a review could be secured and a sound flood protection plan worked out. I felt that flood control must be based upon more than mere hydraulic engineering design. The social and economic value should be considered and a plan worked out that would maximize the social value of the entire watershed.

During the controversy over Tuttle Creek we have posed several questions and have endeavored to secure factual answers. We feel that we were somewhat instrumental in securing the creation of the Missouri River Survey Commission and the Kansas Industrial Development board of Engineers. I suggest that you review the reports of those two commissions. "Missouri: Land and Water", the report of the federal Commission and "Flood Protection in the Kansas River Basin", the State report, Incidently both of these reports sustained our viewpoint that the proposed reservoirs would not have appreciatby lessened the 1951 flood. Bothe reports proposed that alternate plans be developed.

This disposes of my first premise that the proposed flood control dams would not give the protection popularly anticipated.

With my background in land use economics I have been particularly interested in the effect that Tuttle Creek dam would have on the agricultural production of the valley and surrounding area. I presented a paper before the Mid-Century Conference on Resources for the Future in Washington, D. C. A resume' of my remarks are on page 55 of the Report of the Conference. My paper was on "Competition of Reservoirs for Land Use." The Blue Valley is a rich, highly developed agricultural valley. The feed production of the valley is closely integrated with the native grass lands on the hills that stretch back several miles on each side of the valley. This integration of the valley feed and upland grass has resulted in a very stable and prosperous agricultural economy. I have never observed a better combination use of land resources than occur along the Blue River. The construction of Tuttle Creek dam will completely upset this integration. Approximately one third of the Class I land of the three-county area will lie in the reservoir. Although the reservoir will be operated as a dry reservoir and some of the land can be cultivated in some years, only a few thousand acres of cultivated land lie above the five year flooding frequency. The uncertainity of production on this flood subject land would be such that prudent men will not risk investment in livestock that must depend upon winter feed.

The valley is also a producer of surplus feed and supplies feed to upland farmers who are more subject to drought. The neighborhood is generally on a "shipping-out" basis on feed grains. The destruction of the valley production would place the area on a "shipping-in" basis. This higher feed cost would result in upland farmers farming their land more intensively in erosion-producing crops. Land would be forced out of grass and into cultivation in an attempt to secure a new balance between grass and feed. This premise can not be proved but I have received information that a graduate student at K. U. will do his doctorate work in investigating the land-use change necessitated by the reservoir.

The greatest ultimate loss will occur upstream from the reservoir. Elmer Peterson in his book "Big Dam Foolishness" emphasizes the danger of upstream sedimentation. Sediment is deposited from flowing water when it enters a body of still water like a lake or reservoir. This sediment is deposited at the head of a reservoir and soon fills the river channel above. The entire river valley will eventually be swamped out as the river seeks a new gradient. I have observed the Elephant Butte dam in New Mexico where the river has swamped out tens of thousands of irrigated lands above the reservoir for a distance of 50 miles. No one knows when or how soon this upstream sedimentation will occur but any engineer familiar with the process will admit that it is a major danger.

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soil and water conservation

I have previously pointed out how the loss of the valley production will force erodable land into cultivation as the farmers seek to find a new balance in their farming operation. The farmers of the area have returned considerable land to grass in recent years and soil surveys indicate that several thousand acres of the surrounding area should be returned to grass for the best land use. The construction of Tuttle Creek will reverse this process. Over two thirds of the three county area is in native grass and farm land is scarce in proportion.

Under Public Law 566 the Department of Agriculture was authorized to enter into assistance agreements with small watersheds for the purpose of controlling soil erosion and floods. The law is commonly known as the Hope-Aiken Watershed Act and provides that the local people must assume approximately 50% of the costs of the projects. In developing a watershed under a comprehensive plan, most of the on-the-land work and detention structures will be on the uplands that are subject to erosion. A lare share of the benefits will accrue to the creek and river valley people. Under the Kansas "Watershed Act", that we in the Blue Valley were instrumental in getting passed by the Kansas legislature, the Federal law was anticipated and a provision was made to form watershed districts having the power to tax. This tax could be assessed against the beneficiaries or the valley land and used to match the federal funds. Tuttle Creek will remove this tax base from the Blue River Watershed. Without this tax base there will be but little work done on the upstream water control program. Other valleys threatened with dams similar to Tuttle Creek will hesitate to place themselves under a tax burden because of the fear of losing their tax base. Public Law 566 which was hailed as the greatest forward step in soil and water management will become inoperative because of the threat of the big dams.

At any time there are only so many federal funds and resources to invest in resource developement. At the present time Congress is appropriating $50 for big dams to one dollar for on-the-land treatment. Our nation should endeavor to invest public funds into those types of resource developement that will return the greatest net return to the nation. We must seek a method of allocating funds for resource developement on a "functional" basis instead of on a "pork-barrel" basis subject to political log rolling. I consider Tuttle Creek a prime example of bad resource developement planning.

The pioneers from Germany and Sweden that settled the Blue Valley were in hopes of establishing permanent homes for their descendents. There are farms in the valley that are under the control of the fifth generation. The valley has worked out an unique land tenure system. The valley is prosperous but land is limited. A farmer can not expand horizontally but has to expand vertical by good management. The Kansas State College at Manhattan is nearby and surplus funds have been used for decades to educate the children. There are neighborhoods where 25% of the adults are college educated. Many children have left the valley to become teachers, doctors, ministers, and scientists. The ones who remain farm the old home place. There are many farms where the grand parents own the land, the son owns the machinery and livestock and the grandsons operate the farm. Each generation moves up one step on the ladder. The Blue Valley has, you might say, a unique culture. The properity and education enable the people to engage in civic affairs and furnish leadership. This quality has impressed me greatly during the four and one-half years that I have been their leader in the Tuttle Creek dam fight. The Valley works as a unit although the area extends over a distance of fifty miles. Generally in a situation like this the people become divided very early. Some want to sell out and leave, others become discouraged under pressure. The Blue Valley people have shown a spiritual unity and faith that is outstanding. The nation can hardly afford to lose a culture like this.

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Now a word as to the moral implications. "Moral" relates to the conduct of men as social beings, in relation to each other, and with reference to right and wrong. In my viewpoint Tuttle Creek is morally wrong (I admit that I may be prejudiced) because it contemplates the destruction of rich God-given resources without a corresponding benefit to society. The standards of judging the feasibility of a project should take into consideration the adverse social and economic effects on the same basis as the benefits are valued. If we are to consider intangible benefits then we should also consider intangible adverse effects. The expression commonly used by the proponents. "The greatest good to the greatest number" is a false shiboleth. It is false in its premise and false in its conclusion. The Blue Valley could feed 50,000 people for ever, while you can locate a city any where.

Tuttle Creek and similiar reservoirs located hundreds of miles from the area they are designed to protect are morally wrong because it places the burden of relocation and adjustment on people hundreds of miles from the area supposed to receive the benefits. If there were no alternate methods of achieving flood protection, then Tuttle Creek might be advisable, but alternate plans have been proposed by comptent reputable engineers. Funds for Tuttle Creek were secured by overwhelming political pressure from Kansas City. The secretary of the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee called it "Terrible vicious pressure" in a conversation with me. Tuttle Creek was not determined on its merits but by political intrigue. The sub-committee of both Houses of Congress heard our testimony and refused recommendation. Funds were secured at the request of Congressman Scrivner and Senator Schoeppel.

Tuttle Creek is morally wrong because the entire project has been promoted by a series of falsehoods. During the original hearings before Congress in 1938 the Chairman of the Flood Control Committee asked the Army Engineer who appeared before them, if any towns or villages would be inundated by Tuttle Creek dam. The Army Engineer replied that there would be no towns or villages inundated. This is a matter of printed record. Now we find that 9 or 10 towns will be flooded. General Pick at the time of the 1951 flood made his famous statement about the dams before congressional committees and that statement has never been retracted. As far as the official record goes, Congress is acting on the false advice of General Pick.

The second part of your letter brings up a problem that is staring the people in the face. We must readjust our communities in many ways. Schools, highways, mail routes, public services and utilities must be relocated and adjusted to serve those that remain on the perimeter. We still do not know the exact area that will be acquired by the government and so can not start formulating plans. We have no firm commitment from the government as to the time table to be followed in acquiring the land and when new services must be provided. Most of the people in the reservoir area must move away. There is no place for them unless they displace others. Those who move can not take their schools, churches, and community facilities with them.

In regard to churches, it seems to me that the state or regional conferences will have to help local churches with financial help during the transition period. Eventually the church building will be purchased by the government and generally those funds will accrue to the church at large and not to individual parishes. Many perimeter churches will suffer permanently. Their membership will be reduced by people leaving and often those leaving from the good valley farms are the main supporters of the churches. If the anticipated breakdown occurs in our agricultural economy, the perimeter area will become a rual slum. There will be no common community center. The area will be divided by tributary arms

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of the reservoir. There will be no native culture, there will be no prosperous growing church. A week ago seventeen churches participated with special services during the Blue Valley "Open House". In your studies please remember that this fate awaits scores of valleys in Kansas if the presently proposed program is completed. No other valley in the United States has made the fight that the Blue Valley had made and I doubt if any other will ever muster the courage and strength that they have shown.

As to references: I have mentioned the reports of the Missouri River Survey Commission and the Kansas Industrial Development Commission's reports. These reports deal with the engineering feasibility of the project and also treat somewhat of the economic and social aspects. If you do not have these reports available I can loan you copies from my files. I also can furnish a copy of the report of the Mid-Century Conference on Resources for the Future.

Dr. Kris Krisjanson, Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebr. has participated in studies of the impacts of reservoirs and might be able to give you suggestions. Dr. Wilfred Pine, Dept. of Agricultural Economics, Kansas State College, also has participated in these studies and might give suggestions. The College has published a phamphlet "Lessening the Impacts of Reservoirs".

The U. S. Bureau of Agricultural Economics made some studies but since the Bureau was broken up under the reorganization of the Dept. of Ag. I do not know where the men are stationed now. Dr. Krisjanson may be able to refer you to some of their work. I am personally acquainted with Dr. Krisjanson and Pine and you may mention that I referred you to them.

I understand that the University of Kansas is preparing for a study of the entire Missouri basin. The Department of Geography in its land use studies is interested. Dr. Walter Kollmorgen, Dept. of Geography might be able to refer you to material.

I had a copy of two theses written by A. E. Goedeken, Republican City, when he was taking work at Nebraska University. I have them under loan to Dr. Kollmorgan at the present time. These papers deal with the relocation problems experienced at the Harlan Dam. The church there moved to a new location with the town of Republican City. The project has been a failure so far. Membership of both town and church has fallen. The church is being helped, I believe, with funds from the Methodist Home Missionary fund.

I feel that we must develop alternate methods of preventing flood losses. Large reservoirs in our prairie plow lands will have a short life and future ages will still suffer floods. Under present policies with the federal government paying the entire costs of a reservoir, while requiring local sharing of cost on local protection works, makes the decision one of money instead of methods. Cities will always clamor for a federal dam rather than pay a part of the cost of the more sure protection afforded by local works or from relocating and zoning.

I am enclosing a copy of a presentation I made before the Public Works Committee last year. Please observe that I quote from an Army Engineer report of 1908 when the Army Engineers opposed a reservoir system for the Kansas River. Now they advocate such a system. The creeping socialism of federal hydro-power requires that dams be built at total federal expense so that the federal government can control the power (Tuttle Creek contains no power). These hydro-power dams are built under the guise of flood control. In order to get support for TVA, Columbia River, Upper Missouri River etc. power dams the other states were promised similiar construction programs. Support for Tuttle Creek comes mainly from the construction industry lobby. The people of the cities are indifferent otherwise they would demand more secure protection than is offered by the proposed programs.

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People occupy flood plains because of some inherent advantage. If they expect to enjoy those inherent values, they they should be willing and afford to assume some of the costs of their protection. Reduction of flood losses can be achieved by adjustments in human accupancy as well as by engineering structures. Occupancy adjustments can often be achieved at a far less public cost. But my observation is that cities are not interested in flood protection but in property value enhancement. They some times object to a levee because it would obscure the view or would create a psychological effect by letting people know that the area is subject to floods.

This letter seems long but a proper evaluation of Tuttle Creek dam requires a background consideration of the responsibility of society to provide protection to occupiers of flood plains. Some types of occupancy may be unwise use of land. If society is to provide protection then society should have the right to regulate or zone occupancy.

If the proposed reservoirs had been built in the Kansas basin prior to the 1951 flood there is no doubt but we would have had further encroachment on the flood plain and a greater flood damage when the flood occured. Unless we adopt some form of occupancy control we will simply create new flood hazards by building dams. No program can flood proof a valley. The river will always have a first mortgage on the flood plain.

I hope that I have presented some ideas and questions that you can develop. I hope that you grasp the idea that the questinn is greater than Tuttle Creek dam. Tuttle Creek is but the focus of the problem.

Sincerely yours,

Glenn D. Stockwell, Sr.

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