

January 15, 1940

[Message to Congress - TVA]

FDR Speech File

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Jan 15/40

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

So much publicity has been given by the press and in other ways to the power development feature of the work of the Tennessee Valley Authority that it is fair to assume that many of our citizens hold a belief that the purpose ^{and even government officials} of the Act creating the Authority was primarily the development of electric power.

It is perhaps time to call attention to this utter fallacy.

The original legislation, based on my recommendation to the Congress in 1933, was intended -- in part as an experimental project -- to raise the standards of life by increasing social and economic advantages in a given area, in this case the whole of the watershed which runs into the Tennessee River and including portions of many States.

Part of this objective meant the elimination of very large annual damages to life and property as a result of floods, and, therefore, it was planned to build a series of dams in the Tennessee River and on some of its many tributaries. The building of such dams would, it was figured, reduce property damage which had

averaged \$20,000,000 a year for a long time. The building of such dams would also make possible the production of a large amount of electric power and would ^{4/30}afford barge navigation for many hundreds of miles up the river.

Furthermore, the original objective of the law included many other things, such as the planting of water-retaining forests near the headwaters of the many rivers and streams, the ^{terracing}~~controlling~~ of farm hillsides, the building of small check-dams, the development of fertilizer, the diversification of crops and other soil building methods, the improvement of highways and other forms of transportation, the bringing in of small industries, the extension of rural electric lines, and many other similar activities.

In other words, it is time that people should understand that power development was only a part -- and ultimately only a relatively small part -- of a great social and economic experiment in one of our major watersheds.

From time to time I have transmitted to the Congress special reports from the Tennessee Valley Authority relating to special subjects in the progress

of this great task. I am transmitting herewith the latest of these reports, a monograph on the "Recreation Development of the Tennessee River System." This summarizes "the results that have been accomplished through certain experiments and demonstrations in this field and contains specific conclusions and recommendations with respect to additional legislation on this subject." It is coming to be realized more and more that in the improvement of our American civilization we cannot stop at hospitals and schools any more than we can confine ourselves to strictly economic subjects. Recreation in its broad sense is a definite factor in the improvement of the bodies and minds of our future citizens.

I hope that this report, which is only one of many which the Tennessee Valley Authority has made from time to time will dispel any erroneous impression that the Tennessee Valley Authority's work is concerned principally with the mere development of electric power.

*The White House
January 15, 1940.*

RECORDS OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE
RECORD GROUP 16

MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT
OF JANUARY 15, 1960
RELATING TO
TVA RECREATION

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE
GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, 1965

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TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

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Furthermore, the original objective of the law included many other things, such as the planting of water-retaining forests near the headwaters of the many rivers and streams,

the terracing of farm hill-sides, the building of small check-dams, the development of fertilizer, the diversification of crops and other soil building methods, the improvement of highways and other forms of transportation, the bringing in of small industries, the extension of rural electric lines, and many other similar activities.

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- 3 -

Authority's work is concerned principally with the more development of electric power.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

THE WHITE HOUSE,

January 16, 1940.

NOTE: Report accompanied similar message to the House of Representatives.

January 15, 1940

CONFIDENTIAL: To be held in STRICT CONFIDENCE and no portion, synopsis or intimation to be published or given out until the READING of the President's Message has begun in the Senate or the House of Representatives. Extreme care must therefore be exercised to avoid premature publication.

STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

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FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

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January 15, 1940.

*Revised
Jan 11/1940*

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