SENATOR ROBERT S. KERR AND THE ARKANSAS NAVIGATION PROJECT

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PREFACE

If few felt neutral about Robert S. Kerr, perhaps an explanation lies in his ambitions and his achievements, both of which often matched the force of his energies. Among his richly varied activities in the Senate he moved to the fore of the movement to bring barge navigation to the Arkansas River, to connect the Sooner country with the navigable waterways of the Mississippi River system. Not until the Kerr forces were approaching success, and the audacity and the size of the navigation project became apparent, did the opposition begin to group up in earnest, too little and too late.

This study attempts an analysis of Kerr, his efforts in behalf of the navigation project, and the project itself, based on the writings, speeches, documents, and other sources. As the title indicates, the emphasis falls on the man and the task, though space is given to illustrating some of the support and opposition. In the dimension of time, the study centers on Kerr's later career in the Senate, chiefly in the later 1950's when the navigation program began to move. Some phases of the Arkansas River program antedated Kerr by many years, so I have sketched a few highlights of the early history. In location, the focus is Washington, where the deeds were done -- with due attention to developments in Oklahoma. In purpose, the author also hoped to assemble a basic narrative, to bring together some of the significant material on this subject.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: SUMMARY AND APPROACH

"Steamboats once paddled from the Mississippi up the Arkansas River all the way to Wichita, Kansas, where the 'Arkansaw' suddenly and mysteriously became the 'Arkansas.'"[1]

With such a touch of local color, Robert S. Kerr often began painting his favorite rainbow: If the freight of the Southwest rode the Arkansas before, then it could again. This time, instead of little shallow draft paddle-wheelers carrying the odds and ends of local commerce, great long diesel barge tows would ply between the dormant mineral riches of the Southwest and the matching elements of American industry in the river valleys of the North and East.[2] The crucial factor: This two-way traffic would move at cheap freight rates. Thus in the region of the Arkansas basin would rise a new industrial civilization to pale the biggest of the old oil booms.

Nor was navigation all. As governor and then as senator, Kerr worked for flood control, hydroelectric power, and water for industrial

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[1]Kerr's point, which will be repeated frequently in succeeding chapters, was that in navigation of the Arkansas he was proposing nothing radically new, merely to "restore" in essence a former means of transportation, for industry. The psychological advantage of this approach is obvious over an untried scheme and further for the nostalgia it evokes. Kerr, "The Arkansas Basin Project," an article in U. S. Congressional Record, 85th Cong., 2nd Sess., CIV, (March 21, 1958), Part 4, 4984-4985.

[2]E.g., eastern Oklahoma's high-grade coking coal and the iron ore of the upper Mississippi river valleys, hitherto kept apart by prohibitive railroad freight rates. This introductory chapter will leave development of this important theme in detail to later sections.

and human consumption. But in the rainbow of the Oklahoma prophet of water, navigation was the brightest and surest way to the pot of gold--not the black gold of the oil days but what Kerr called the "white gold" of the future: water. The precious liquid was to be dammed up and every ounce forced to earn its way downstream by work -- to the next dam. In all, a string of more than twenty dams would stretch across the states of Oklahoma and Arkansas, costing, with related improvements, about $1.2 billions. These dams would create a 500-mile "stairway of water" from the Mississippi River to Tulsa which the barges of industry could climb and descend, through locks, as they do in the older, better-watered industrial regions of the North and East.[3] This was the Kerr dream -- in which some critics saw not a pot of gold but pure Oklahoma pork barrel.

There had been good reasons for abandoning the Arkansas River as a navigable waterway in the early 1900's, for leaving it to become the last major tributary of the Mississippi to open permanently to navigation.[4] High in Colorado this river begins as a clear mountain stream. After crossing the plains of Kansas and Oklahoma it is almost squeezed off. It is burdened with salt, mud, and worst, silt. In the moist hills of eastern Oklahoma the river swells again, especially in the rainy months, but the silt remains.[5] Kerr recognized these formidable barriers to navigation -- siltation and marginal water supply -- writing as follows:

> Today the river in its natural condition is completely unsuited for continuous navigation, because of the extremely low flow during the dry periods, and as the result of a

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[3]Office of Senator Kerr, Fact Sheet on the Arkansas River Navigation Project and the Proposed Central Oklahoma Project (Washington: 1962), 2. Kerr, Land, Wood, and Water (New York: Fleet Publishing Co., 1960), 172. Hereafter cited as Land. The Wall Street Journal, May 13, 1960, 1, 4.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Kerr, Land, 26, 342.

> heavy sediment load which it desposits in the form of obstructive bars.[6]

The almost nonexistent river traffic in recent years further indicates the clogged channel of the Arkansas:

> The average length of haul of all traffic on the river was about four miles in 1953. The commerce consists of sand and gravel dredged from the river in the vicinity of Dardanelle, Little Rock, and Pine Bluff. A few logs are rafted on the lower river and occasionally construction equipment is moved between the mouth [on the Mississippi] and various upstream points.[7]

Senator Kerr held few illusions about the "magnitude of the job the Corps of Engineers have now undertaken on the Arkansas," but he expressed his unbounded confidence in their ability and in the "countless thousands" of supporters.[8] The Arkansas River development program, after some concerted agitation, received a tentative blessing, i.e., authorization, from Congress in 1946. Then the project was laid aside during the Korean War years and the succeeding Eisenhower era of "no new starts" in public works.[9]

To a freshman senator ambitious for his home state, at least two related influences were vital to success: committee posts and support from other members of Congress. Kerr's first moves after going to the Senate in 1949 included arranging for himself to be appointed to the Rivers and

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[6]Kerr, Fact Sheet on the Arkansas River Navigation Project, 2.

[7]U.S. President [Eisenhower], Arkansas-White-Red Basins Interagency Committee, Navigation, Part II, Sec. 4: A Report on the Conservation and Development of Water and Land Resources (23 vols., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1955), 7. The complete work is cited hereafter as the AWRBIAC Report.

[8]From the files of Don McBride, the chief aide whom Kerr called "the third senator from Oklahoma," now assistant to Senator A. S. Mike Monroney; letter, Washington, March 5, 1964, to the author. The comments are from a Kerr speech at Tulsa before the Arkansas Basin Development Association in 1960.

[9]The Daily Oklahoman, Oct. 19, 1963, 12.

Harbors subcommittee of the Public Works Committee in the Senate. This subcommittee, in charge of recommending public-works projects, served as a main base of Kerr's power as he moved up in seniority and rank during the ensuing years. It was in the second half of the 1950's that the appropriations, which made a live issue of the 1946 authorization for the navigation project, began to trickle in.[10] In 1955, after a congressional struggle, small appropriations were made for construction on three of the big key dams, Oologah on the Verdigris, Eufaula on the Canadian, and Dardanelle dam on the Arkansas downstream from Fort Smith. This broke the appropriations logjam, though Kerr and his allies returned to the fray in the following years to prevent slowdowns in appropriations.[11]

Kerr: Pork Barreler or Statesman?

On more fronts than navigation Kerr took the role of senatorial champion of Oklahoma and the Oklahomans. "The people of Oklahoma are against any combine they ain't in on," he said by way of illustration.[12] After Kerr became chairman of the Public Works Committee's subcommittee on Rivers and Harbors at the beginning of his second term in the Senate, he sat in a better place for carrying out his expressed ambitions for

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[10]"'Seaports' for Oklahoma," in U. S. News and World Report, LIV, No. 6 (Feb. 11, 1963), 67.

[11]Representative Ed Edmondson, speech, "America's New Frontier of the Sixties," St. Louis, referring to the battle in both houses; in Congressional Record, 86th Cong., 2nd Sess., CVI, (Feb. 17, 1960), Part 3, 2836.

[12]A friendly quote of Kerr in his presence in the Senate, by his traveling companion on a committee investigation, Senator Thomas H. Kuchel of California, in Congressional Record, 87th Cong., 1st Sess., CVIII, (May 21, 1961), Part 2, 1418; a like quote is in The Tulsa World, Sept. 23, 1962, 29. Kerr elaborates on his defend-Oklahoma views in an interview on "Meet the Press," N.B.C. Radio and Television (Washington: Lawrence Spivak, producer, Aug. 19, 1962), available in transcript, Vol. VI, No. 30 (Washington: Merkle Press, Inc.), 5, 6.

Oklahoma. By the last year of his life, 1962, his native state received ten percent of that year's Federal public works projects, according to one estimate.[13] How many of these projects were pork barrel is debatable. Pork barrel is defined as an unnecessary Federal project for local benefit, strictly speaking. Without arguing the necessity of the Arkansas River Navigation Project, one can say that it stands to benefit the people of the Arkansas basin more than those of other regions. For this and other land-wood-water projects, Robert S. Kerr repeatedly was given the main individual credit. During a biographical narration in his honor at an Oklahoma City appreciation dinner, N. B. C. commentators Chet Huntley and Frank McGee described Kerr as, among other things, "the most successful public works gold miner who ever stormed down Pennsylvania Avenue from Capitol Hill."[14] Kerr's power grew, too, with the water projects he achieved in Congress.[15] Yet in the conservation of water resources Kerr habitually evangelized for a nationwide effort, often enough that he earned from several the title, "The man with the long view."[16] A possible rationalization of these two divergent roles -- pork-barrel protectionist and statesman -- comes from "a Senate associate" assessing Kerr at the peak of his career: Kerr knew better than most men how to get what he wanted; he was

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[13] "Without King Kerr," The Economist (London), Jan. 12, 1963, 108.

[14] The Tulsa Tribune, June 11, 1962, 8.

[15] The Kansas City Star, Sept. 16, 1962, D-1, a full-page treatment based in part on personal-interview material.

[16] E.g., President Kennedy, before Kerr's death, quoted by Senator Monroney, in U. S. Congress, Joint Committee on Printing, Memorial Services Held in the Senate and House ... Together with Remarks Presented in Eulogy of Robert Samuel Kerr ... (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1963), 22. Cf. the remarks of J. Howard Edmondson, 25, and J. W. Fulbright, 44. Cited hereafter as Memorial Services.

> . . . a tough and unsentimental pragmatist; the sort of fellow who says, what works is fine; if it doesn't work, the hell with it. That has been his philosophy as a businessman and it has been his philosophy as a politician.[17]

Kerr's best-known document remains his book Land, Wood, and Water, a 1960 publication that carries his gospel of water from cover to cover. Its title came from Kerr's father, who himself had preached to young Kerr these three elements as the base of all prosperity. Land, wood, and water the father had sought in choosing a farm location in Indian Territory.[18] Bob Kerr remembered, and he used the natural triad as a slogan in his first senatorial campaign in 1948. His Republican opponent Ross Rizley converted Kerr's slogan to "Land, Wood, Wind, and Water" in the campaign;[19] but the Democratic vote was heavier. Kerr altered the slogan again in 1961 to "Land, Wood, Water, and Space," when he became chairman of the Senate Committee on Aeronautical and Space Sciences.[20]

Approach and Some Findings

Working largely with more or less primary sources offers frustration as well as satisfaction. One lacks the guidance of previous synthesis and historical interpretation. This calls for some caution in absorbing the judgments of contemporary writers. Nonetheless it is interesting to note that the periodicals, the newspapers, and Kerr's associates all provide more specific evidence on Kerr's activities in behalf of the Arkansas River Navigation Project than do the public documents consulted by the

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[17] Cabell Phillips, The New York Times, Oct. 10, 1962, 24.

[18] Kerr, Land, 13, 168.

[19] Ibid., 168.

[20] Ibid.

author. Kerr's efforts could be oral and intimate, unrecorded, as will be noted in later chapters.

This chapter the author has intended to serve as an introduction to the coming chapters on Kerr, the project, and its fate in Washington; a scenario that becomes rather complicated and which the author has tried to restrict in this opening chapter to only such material as seems necessary to prepare a reader for what follows. Among the findings that, one hopes, will emerge is that Kerr was a many-sided man -- the oil senator who had become an apostle of water conservation early in his public life, the Oklahoma protectionist who finally supported an important free-trade bill, the self-made success who went from log cabin to the top of the Senate, or perhaps a successful pork-barreler who thought to convert the oil-extractive economy of his state to that of an iron and steel industrial region: Pittsburgh-Detroit on the Arkansas.

Like Kerr himself, the literature on him and the project is varied, is often eloquent or voluble, and by sheer volume almost outweighs the opposition. His detractors at times even leaned on such superlatives as "audacious," "monstrous," and "outrageous" for the project. Some opinion by contemporaries at some distance from the immediate scene has been used; as much as possible, the investigation has sought the reports of eyewitnesses to Senator Kerr and to the project, in hopes of bringing together some of the public comments and appraisals by those in a position to describe the man and the run of events. As the title of the thesis indicates, the part that Kerr played in the Arkansas River Navigation Project appears large. The preponderance of evidence so indicates; but an attempt is made to include testimony to the contrary. Finally, this study may show that Kerr joined a movement of long standing, and through such potent weapons as committee power and appropriations, both for Oklahoma and for cooperating regions, helped to put it over.

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE OF ROBERT S. KERR

Personal Life

In sixty-six years Robert Samuel Kerr rose from a small-town background in Indian Territory to oil riches, to governor in 1943, to senator in 1949, and to a leading position in the Senate by the time of his death on New Year's Day, 1963.

Kerr's parents, William Samuel Kerr and Margaret Wright Kerr, were of Scotch-Irish and English ancestry. The senior Kerr had grown up in southwestern Missouri, had lost his father to Quantrill's raiders, and had moved to Ellis County, Texas. There he married, farmed, and in 1893 went to Indian Territory, returning for his family the next year. On a 160-acre lease of restricted Indian land in a wooded valley near Ada, the elder Kerr built a 14-foot-square log cabin.[1] There Bob Kerr, the oldest of five boys and the second of seven children, was born September 11, 1896.[2]

Kerr attended college at Oklahoma Baptist University and the University of Oklahoma, teaching in a country school to help pay his way. He

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[1] Otis Sullivant, "Robert S. Kerr; 'Realist in Politics'," in John Thomas Salter, ed., Public Men In and Out of Office, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946), 424-425. Marquis W. Childs, "The Big Boom from Oklahoma," The Saturday Evening Post, CCXXI (April 9, 1949), 23.

[2] Kerr, Biographical Sketch, for the Oklahoma Publishing Company, (June, 1957), 1-4. Daniel Seligman, "Senator Bob Kerr, the Oklahoma Gusher," in Fortune, LIX (March, 1959), 182. For biographical details please see Appendix.

left school, studied in a law office, served overseas as a second lieutenant with the artillery during World War I, passed the bar examinations and began practice.[3] The year 1925 is notable: Kerr scored in politics, being elected state commander of the American Legion, the youngest in the nation, and married Grayce Breene on December 26, 1925 (a first wife had died).[4]

From his father came Kerr's driving ambition. That farmer, rancher, merchant, and local politician had preached hard work at him. He had also advised young Kerr to enter politics only after he had made his money.[5] Kerr recalled another lesson from his father, who had read an account of the John D. Rockefeller method: become affiliated with men of great ability and then make it mutually beneficial.[6] But Kerr worked. "He literally clawed his way up from the bottom in all fields in which he achieved success," Representative Tom Steed of Oklahoma said in tribute.[7]

In morality, Kerr gave a stainless impression. The New York Times[8] summed up his personal character:

> A non-drinking, non-smoking Baptist who generally taught Sunday School and tithed regularly,[9] Senator Kerr was one of the most successful senators in looking out for his country, his state, and himself.

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[3]Kerr, 1-4.

[4]"Where the Death of Senator Kerr Will Be Felt," U. S. News and World Report, LIV (Jan. 14, 1963), 34. Sullivant, 425-426. Who's Who in America, 1960-1961, 1570.

[5]Sullivant, 415-416.

[6]Joseph Kraft, "'King' of the U. S. Senate; Robert S. Kerr Straddles the Old and New Frontiers," in The Saturday Evening Post, CCXXXVI (Jan. 5 1963), 26.

[7]Steed, "Remarks," in U. S. Congress, Memorial Services, 120-121.

[8]The New York Times, January 2, 1963, 4.

[9]He gave 30 percent of his income--"the deductible maximum," comments Seligman, 179. Cf. Fulbright in Memorial Services, 43.

He was less successful in keeping his health. Kerr was big, at 6-3 carrying 245 pounds.[10] A coronary occlusion or blocked heart artery stopped Robert S. Kerr on January 1, 1963. He was sitting on the edge of his bed talking, in a Washington hospital where he had been a patient two weeks with a respiratory ailment.[11]

The body remained in an Oklahoma City mausoleum for eleven months, then went to the completed burial site, a vault two miles south of Ada. The spot overlooks the restored cabin of his birth in Pecan Valley and is within view of the proposed Southwest Regional Water Pollution Control Laboratory, one of his projects.[12]

Business Career

In the business career of Robert S. Kerr, the main vehicle was his oil-company activities. Kerr was founder, and board chairman after 1954, of the $200-million Kerr-McGee Oil Industries, Inc., which had developed interests in oil and gas, potash, and uranium.[13] This empire originated in 1926 when Kerr took on some legal work for a small oil-drilling outfit. In 1929, he and the firm's drilling chief, a brother-in-law of Kerr, borrowed $30,000, bought out the local bankers who held the major share of the firm, bought two steam rigs, and set up headquarters in Oklahoma City as Anderson-Kerr Drilling Co. The company struck it rich in the

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[10] Current Biography, 1950, 299.

[11] The New York Times, January 2, 1963, 1.

[12] Francis Thetford, in The Daily Oklahoman, December 14, 1963, 1-2.

[13] The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, editorial, January 3, 1963. Kerr-McGee Oil Industries, Biographical Sketch; Robert S. Kerr (Oklahoma City: June, 1955), 1. For details of company interests, see also New York Times, January 2, 1963, 4; Senator Clinton Anderson, "Remarks," in Memorial Services, 49; and Seligman, 138.

Oklahoma City oil boom of the early 1930's. Anderson retired in 1936; the top geologist Dean A. McGee came in and rose until in 1946 it was Kerr-McGee.[14] Since both men were business expansionists, they and the families owned less than a third of the common stock after a few years of bringing in development capital. In 1959 the partners had $70 millions in long-term debts and were still expanding: the company controlled about a fourth of the nation's uranium reserves and was beginning an eight-year contract with the Atomic Energy Commission for $300 millions worth of the strategic material.[15] By the time he went to Washington, Kerr's wealth was estimated variously from one to ten million dollars.[16] It kept growing. In his later years Kerr was called the wealthiest man in the Senate.[17] His fortune was believed to be $35-50 millions.[18] Besides oil properties he may have owned more coal--in eastern Oklahoma and elsewhere --than any other individual.[19] On his death he left $16 millions in Kerr-McGee stock and about $20 millions in holdings at Poteau.[20]

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[14]"Highlights in the Life of Robert Samuel Kerr," in Kermac News; Robert S. Kerr Memorial Issue (Oklahoma City: Kerr-McGee Oil Industries, January, 1963), 10. Kerr-McGee, Biographical Sketch, 1. Seligman, 182-183.

[15]Seligman, 184.

[16]The New York Times, October 10, 1962, 24. Childs, 23.

[17]Seligman, 136. U. S. News and World Report, LIV, 34.

[18]William Tuohy and others, "Oklahoma's Kerr--The Man Who Really Runs the Senate," Newsweek, August 6, 1962, 16. The New York Times, October 10, 1962, 24; January 2, 1963, 4.

[19]Representative Carl Albert of Oklahoma, Memorial Services, 122.

[20]The Tulsa Tribune, January 7, 1963, 15, has some details on the Kerr estate, based partly on Oklahoma County Court records. Tuohy, 16. A later itemization is in The Daily Oklahoman, March 31, 1964, 1.

Kerr as Governor

From the governor's chair, 1943-1947, Kerr established a reputation for achieving legislation by persuasion instead of bulldozing, "in quiet, congenial conferences" with legislative leaders. He emphasized soil conservation and industrial development.[21] In fiscal matters he was considered a conservative. During his four-year term the state paid off $44 millions in debts and wound up with a $40 million surplus.[22]

His early support of Roosevelt's bid for a fourth term, coming from a conservative governor of a border state, helped Kerr's rise to national notice. He was chosen to give the keynote speech of the Democratic national convention in 1944, where his oratorical skill brought added notice. Commenting on Kerr's state record a few years later, Time magazine, a Kerr critic on several occasions, noted that as governor he had been "a good one."[23] His activities as governor will be discussed later in more detail.

Kerr in the Senate: General Activities

A sister publication, Life, gave grudging, posthumous credit to Kerr's public career. As governor and senator, Kerr "... tapped the Rivers and Harbors bill so repeatedly and successfully that a trip around his once half-arid prairie state is now known as a tour of 'Kerr's lakes.'"[24]

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[21]Sullivant, who was The Daily Oklahoman capitol reporter, 415, 421, 423. Current Biography, 1950, 298.

[22]Monroney, Memorial Services, 18.

[23]"Wildcatter," February 25, 1952, 24, 25. Sullivant, 416.

[24]Keith Wheeler and others, "Pork Barrel Outrage," in Life, August 16, 1963, 56. Time and Life are cited here and there as representative of the more vehement editorial opposition nationally; most of the other journals of news and opinion were less concerned.

In Kerr's first Senate campaign, 1948, he defeated Gomer Smith in a runoff primary for the Democratic nomination. He spoke more lightly on the color issue than Smith and presumably received most of the Negro vote, then some 70,000. Smith had lost also to Kerr in the 1942 gubernatorial race. In the fall, Kerr defeated former Representative Ross Rizley, the Republican candidate, in a bitter campaign, winning by about 170,000 votes.[25]

In the Senate, the Kerr personality soon became known. A contemporary observer in Washington called his voice "loud, colloquial and robust." Kerr was "one of the best rough-and-tumble debaters in the Senate."[26] He has been called the master of the insult, which he delivered in a good-natured, innocent manner.[27] Still his biblical training flavored his talk. In a fierce argument, Kerr might interrupt soothingly to remind that Jesus had said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."[28]

Kerr's rhetoric sometimes became involved, though seldom weak, and could obscure an issue handsomely, whether intentionally or not. In a 1962 broadcast interview, Cabell Phillips of The New York Times tried to get a clear answer:

> Phillips: Senator, may I switch to the Foreign Trade Bill and your personal relationship there. You have promised the President--indicated you are going to get that bill through without amendment, is that what you told him?

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[25]Childs, 119. Current Biography, 298.

[26]William S. White, "Democrats' 'Board of Directors'," in The New York Times Magazine, July 10, 1955, VI, 10-11.

[27]Seligman, 137.

[28]Monroney, 24. Cf. Seligman, 179.

> Senator Kerr: Oh, no. I told the President I was going to do all I could to get a bill out of committee and through the Senate that would be acceptable to him.
>
> Phillips: My impression of you over the years is that you have been more of a protectionist than a free trader, and your efforts on this bill do not seem quite consistent with your past record.
>
> Senator Kerr: You see, four years ago I was one of the authors of the so-called National Security Amendment in the Trade Bill, and under that certain improvements have been brought about and more can be brought about, and the present bill continues that amendment, and that makes the situation different from what it was before that amendment was in the bill and before it was working.[29]

Kerr's restless tongue earned for him the comment by Senator Albert Gore of Tennessee, that Kerr could appear authoritative on "the least amount of information."[30] However, the consensus among observers was that Kerr possessed a mind for detail,[31] e.g., finding discrepancies in tax bills, and a related capacity for prodigious effort in doing his homework. When a bill came up under his name, he tried to know more about it than anyone else.[32] Besides this he had intellect; in the opinion of an old Kerr foe, Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois, Kerr probably had the highest I. Q. in the Senate.[33] Douglas reportedly saw the rougher side of Kerr once, according to the ubiquitous Time.

> But Kerr could also be brutal: in a Senate committee meeting, he once goaded Illinois Democrat Paul Douglas into a fury, then challenged Douglas to a fist fight--even though Douglas has a crippled arm as a result of World War II wounds.[34]

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[29]Kerr, on "Meet the Press," N. B. C., Inc. (Washington: Lawrence Spivak, producer, August 19, 1962; transcript, VI, No. 30, Washington: Merkle Press, Inc., 1962), 8.

[30]Seligman, 137.

[31]Joseph E. Howell, a long-time political reporter formerly employed in Kerr's Washington office, in The Tulsa Tribune, January 3, 1963, 29.

[32]Seligman, 138. Senators Everett Dirksen and J. W. Fulbright, Memorial Services, 44, 68.

[33]Kraft, 26.

[34]"Death of a Senator," Time, LXXXI, No. 1 (Jan. 11, 1963), 23. No other source found mentions this in camera incident.

He could be generous. Twice he offered campaign contributions to Senator Margaret Smith of Maine, a Republican who showed no signs of relenting in her steadfast opposition to the oil depletion allowance, upon his hearing that oil millionaires and fellow Democrats were working for her defeat. He said he admired her outspokenness.[35]

Kerr himself had long been identified with the oil industry, partly as president of the Mid-Continent Oil & Gas Association in Oklahoma and Kansas, 1935-1941.[36] Then in the Senate:

> He vigorously fought against any change in the 27½ percent depletion allowance for the oil industry; he supported the exemption of independent natural gas producers from regulation by the Federal Power Commission; and he was a leader in the many battles and final victory over proposed Federal ownership of off-shore oil deposits.[37]

Kerr and Conservation: Legislation

Land, wood, and water are the fundamental elements of national strength. Kerr never ceased saying it.[38] He became a Senate expert on water. He was made chairman of the special Senate Select Committee on National Water Resources, created in 1959 to take inventory of national water resources, to determine needs for 1980, and to recommend solutions. The Committee's final report before disbanding in January, 1961, proposed a 20 year, $60 billion, federal-state program to meet water scarcities and floods.[39]

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[35]Senator Smith, Memorial Services, 70.

[36]Sullivant, 416. Seligman, 184.

[37]The New York Times, January 2, 1963, 4.

[38]E.g., U. S. Congressional Record, 87th Cong., 1st Sess., 1961, CVIII, Part 2, 1412.

[39]U. S. President, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, "Robert S. Kerr," (Washington: May, 1961), 2. Allan Cromley, Washington Bureau, Oklahoma City Times, January 30, 1961, 1.

Legislation credited to Kerr, as chairman of the Rivers and Harbors subcommittee of the Public Works Committee, includes the Water Supply Act of 1958, the Water Pollution Control Act (co-authored) providing grants to cities for sewage treatment and giving police powers to the Public Health Service, the Niagara Power Act, the TVA Financing Act to expand TVA capacity by revenue bonds, the Upstream Flood Control Act increasing the benefits of soil-conservation projects in the nation, and the Omnibus Rivers and Harbors Acts of 1958 and 1960. In addition, Kerr helped push the legislation for the Colorado Storage Project, the Delaware River Compact, and for the St. Lawrence Seaway.[40]

Politics and Government

Although Richard M. Nixon carried Oklahoma in 1960, the third straight time for a Republican presidential candidate, Robert Kerr defeated his own Republican opponent, B. Hayden Crawford, 472,929 to 385,316 votes, that year. Enough of the voters were satisfied still.[41] In the Senate his power had continued growing. By at least 1958 he was considered a first force because of his important committee seats, his energy, and his role as oil and gas champion.[42] When Lyndon Johnson went to the Vice Presidency in 1960, Kerr became "... in the resentful words of Senator Douglas, 'uncrowned king' of the Senate and certainly the first among those unruly sovereign powers, the chairmen of committees,"

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[40] U. S. Congressional Record, 86th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1960, CVI, Part 14, 18514, a summary by Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri. Senator Monroney, Memorial Services, 19, 20, 161.

[41] The New York Times, November 9, 1960, 25; November 13, 1960, 71.

[42] Ibid., January 2, 1963, 4.

said the London Economist.[43] Kerr was chairman of the Aeronautical and Space Sciences Committee, and was the ranking Democratic member on Finance and on Public Works. From these committees he shepherded through the Senate some important legislation, into the Kennedy period. Eventually Kerr became the man to see for lawmaking, whether one was a Southern Democrat or a New Frontiersman.[44] In 1952, Kerr had even sought the presidential nomination. His effort lasted through one roll call, perhaps because of his identification by some as an oil and gas lawmaker.[45]

Political Views: Liberal or Conservative?

By avoiding a down-the-line pathway on legislation, Kerr threw some doubt on attempts to label him. When he was still governor, he insisted on paying the state debt, but nationally he supported Roosevelt and the New Deal in 1940 and 1944--one of the few Oklahoma oilmen to do so. Kerr the pragmatist explained it this way: "The greatest security the oil business can have is the widespread ability of the average citizen to purchase the production of the oil industry."[46]

In national fiscal matters Kerr was liberal enough that one writer asserts that conservative businessmen and bankers talked Senator Harry Byrd out of retiring from the Senate in 1958. That left Kerr in the still-powerful, but number two, spot on the Finance Committee.[47] Despite

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[43] Economist, 108.

[44] U. S. News and World Report, LIV, 34.

[45] The Tulsa Tribune, January 2, 1963, 41. Seligman, 137. Joe Lastelic, Washington Bureau, Kansas City Star, September 16, 1962, D-1.

[46] Sullivant, 416, 418, 427.

[47] Seligman, 136.

his moneyed background, Kerr had acquired a reputation with some as a fiscal "spender," as an agrarian radical.[48] This might, or might not, have come from Kerr's father, a strong Bryan Democrat who had revered Bryan's cross-of-gold speech.[49] Not that Kerr was a starry-eyed liberal. He usually voted with Democratic moderates like Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson on the "liberal" questions. He stayed clear, if possible, on the issues such as segregation, Senator McCarthy, labor legislation, civil liberties, and aid to backward nations. Senator Monroney was closer to the northern liberals.[50] Again, on Medicare, Kerr declared his opposition to taxing the many to benefit "those who do not need it and who have made no contribution to provide it..." Again conservative, "I do not now, and I will not next year favor tax reduction disproportionate with reductions in expenditures..." especially as long as the government operated in the red.[51]

As for Kerr's appraisal of Kerr, he said it often enough: "I'm against any combine Oklahoma ain't in on."[52] Until he took Kennedy's foreign-trade bill under his wing, Kerr had a record of pushing hard for restrictive amendments on reciprocal-trade legislation in order to protect the Oklahoma oil, lead, zinc, and glass industries.[53] To criticism of his provincial protectionism as something beneath the national interest,

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[48]White, VI, 10-11; Tuohy, 16; Seligman, 138.

[49]Seligman, 136, 137.

[50]Ibid., 138.

[51]Kerr, "Meet the Press" transcript, 1962, 7.

[52]E.g., The Tulsa World, September 23, 1962, 29.

[53]Business Week, No. 1717 (July 28, 1962), 84. Seligman, 179. Kraft, 26.

Kerr commented, "If a man doesn't represent the viewpoint of his constituents, they will get rid of him and send somebody here that will." America, he repeated, is the sum of its individual economic interests, and the men in Congress represent those interests.[54] Under this philosophy, one might well conclude that the economic interest of Senator Kerr's constituency pointed to a natural concern for the development of the Arkansas River and in particular its potential for low-cost shipping of industrial goods in bulk.

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[54]Kerr, "Meet the Press", 5, 6.

CHAPTER III

COMPREHENSIVE PLANS OF DEVELOPMENT WITH THE ARKANSAS BASIN

The Kerr Plan and Multiple-Purpose, Basin-Wide Planning

A navigation project on any inland waterway, ideally, is a large fragment of a jigsaw picture called "comprehensive planning." Ideally--because coordinating the plans and efforts of the various governmental agencies that toil in the river basins of America can run into more obstacles than the number of sandbars in the Arkansas River; and because these public agencies are pursuing sometimes divergent goals which take in not only navigation but also the production of hydroelectric power, irrigation, municipal and industrial water supply, recreation, and wildlife. To further complicate river planning, navigation, like water, crosses state lines, and it can interfere in local purposes.[1]

The difficulties of coordinating water-development programs on a half-dozen such related, but often conflicting, fronts are troublesome, although the advantages of interlocking one conservation project into a neighboring development are apparent. By the time Kerr went to the Senate, he and many others had become convinced that comprehensive planning, whether by one controlling agency or by cooperating agencies, was the logical method of development.

Kerr made comprehensive river-basin planning the subject of his first bill in the Senate, in 1949. The bill led to the establishment of a federal

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[1] Albert L. Kraus, in The New York Times, March 25, 1962, III-1, 14, has an analysis of such conflicting goals.

and state interagency study committee on the Arkansas, White, and Red Rivers. These three rivers drain the great part of Kerr's home region.

This first Kerr bill called for setting up a coordinated committee of Federal agencies and of the states. Such a committee was to study and report on future needs in land and water resources of the Arkansas, White, and Red basins. This region, which Kerr liked to call "one of the last frontiers of America," lies in Oklahoma as well as in parts of Colorado, New Mexico, Kansas, Texas, Missouri, Arkansas, and Louisiana, comprising about 180,000,000 acres. The comprehensive, basin-wide method of planning, though not strictly original with Kerr, came to be called the "Kerr Plan."[2]

Although Kerr's other "great love" was the Red River, the Arkansas River dominated the Kerr Plan. For with its tributaries--the Grand, the Verdigris, the Cimarron, the North Canadian, and the Canadian--the Arkansas drains the panhandle and the northern half of Oklahoma, including, be it noted, the two biggest urban centers. The White River drains, hardly Kerr's Oklahoma, but the Ozarks and northern Arkansas before descending southeasterly almost to converge with the Arkansas River on the Mississippi. Kerr and others were working for development of the entire Arkansas-White-Red basins region, but this study is concerned chiefly with the Arkansas.

Kerr credits Don McBride, an engineer and a water authority with him since gubernatorial days, as helping Kerr to conclude that: "All of the Arkansas River and its tributaries and its basin must be looked on as one great unit," instead of dropping in a dam here and there.[3] Not that multiple-purpose planning was radically new. At least part of the Kerr

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[2]Kerr, "Water Needs of the Nation from 1980 to 2000," speech before the National Watershed Congress, Tucson, in Congressional Record, 87th Cong., 1st Sess., CVII, Part 5, (April 26, 1961), 6762. Kerr, Land, 343-345.

[3]Kerr, Land, 346.

Plan rested on a succession of detailed Corps of Engineers plans which were periodically revised and brought up to date, though Kerr did emphasize basin-wide planning. Indeed, Kerr as governor had endorsed such a plan in 1945. By that year, the Army Engineers had completed a five-year study of the water resources in the Arkansas Basin. The "Multiple Purpose Plan" which resulted was supported both by Oklahoma and Arkansas in an official plea to the Corps of Engineers' governing board, a plea which was a detailed argument for navigation of the Arkansas signed by the two governors. The Engineers' multiple-purpose plan recommended a " . . . comprehensive development program including flood control, navigation, irrigation and hydroelectric power."[4]

That was in the 1940's. Here, written in terms of comprehensive planning, is the latest available annual report of the Corps of Engineers on the Arkansas Basin project:

> Existing Project. The existing project provides for improvement of the Arkansas River and tributaries by construction of coordinated developments to serve navigation, produce hydroelectric power, afford additional flood control, and provide related benefits in connection with other activities such as recreation and wildlife propagation. . . .[5]

Comprehensive planning, it might appear, is here to stay.

The Kerr method, if not originated then popularized by Kerr, has been adopted in developing other American river basins. Other regions too have

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[4]Arkansas-Oklahoma Interstate Water Resources Committee, Additional Benefits in the Proposed Plan for Comprehensive Improvement of the Arkansas River Basin (Tulsa: States of Arkansas and Oklahoma, May, 1945), 6.

[5]U. S. Army, Corps of Engineers, Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers on Civil Works Activities (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1962), II, 872. The Oklahoma State University Library staff says the annual report is received about a year after the close of each fiscal year.

stressed dovetailing the various water projects.[6] Lyndon Johnson, who had co-sponsored Kerr's first bill to study the Arkansas-Red-White rivers, pushed through Congress in 1958 a similar study bill for seven Texas basins. Senator Richard B. Russell got similar legislation for Georgia streams. Eisenhower ordered a similar study in 1951 for six New England states.[7] Kerr is credited thus with having set a trend in federal-state cooperation and in basin-wide surveys and planning.[8] Kerr stressed the basin-wide idea

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[6]U. S. President, N. A. S. A., Robert S. Kerr, 2.

It is worth noting here that one scholarly voice dissents from the chorus of credit given Kerr's first bill as the specific pattern. The Kerr bill, Senate Bill 1576, with H. R. 4331 as a companion bill, was to create a "U. S. Commission on the Arkansas-White-Red River Basins." In the Public Works Committee hearings, Kerr argued for basin-wide planning by coordinated federal-state agencies and groups. But neither bill passed, points out Robert H. Pealy, in Comprehensive River Basin Planning: The Arkansas-White-Red Basins Inter-Agency Committee Experience (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1959), 1, 2, 9, 12. Dr. Pealy concedes that the Kerr bill did lead to the 1950 formation of the Arkansas-White-Red interagency committee, which ultimately spent five years drawing up a comprehensive plan of development for the three river basins. But, he indicated, leading to and providing are two different ideas. If I interpret Pealy correctly, his only real disagreement is not that Kerr led comprehensive planning but that control of planning was allowed to be centralized in the subsequent act of 1950: Instead of joint, interagency control, the Chief of Army Engineers was put in charge; he merely had to coordinate the planning with other Federal and state agencies. Senator Kerr spends little time on the distinctions. "My first bill when I went to the U. S. Senate in 1949 created the Interagency Study Commission of these [Arkansas, White, and Red] basins." The law provided for "a broad-scale study of the multiple uses of the land and water resources of a river basin." (Kerr, "Water Needs of the Nation From 1980 to 2000," 6762. See also Kerr, Land, 353.) Other testimony for Kerr as the direct progenitor of basin planning includes the N.A.S.A. statement above--issued after Kerr became Senate space-committee chairman--which says Kerr's bill established the interagency committee for study of the three rivers. "This action resulted in the first comprehensive plan for the conservation, development, and utilization of the region's natural resources," N. A. S. A. said. Put in simpler terms, the Kerr resolution "made possible" the basin-wide project of navigation (Jack Cleland, Washington Bureau, The Tulsa World, May 27, 1962, II-1, 18).

[7]Walter C. Hornaday, Chief, Washington Bureau, The Dallas Morning News, Sept. 1, 1958, II-1.

[8]Vice President Lyndon Johnson, in his revised introduction to the 1963 edition of Kerr's Land, Wood, and Water, 7. Senator Monroney, Memorial Services, 19.

in one of his last speeches, at the first annual meeting of the new "Arkansas Basin Development Association in Kansas." He said Oklahoma could not have a complete soil and water program without similar programs on the upper watersheds in Kansas. Nor could the Arkansas River become a major navigable stream until it and its tributaries were brought under control, both in Kansas and Oklahoma.[9]

In May, 1950, the Arkansas-White-Red Basins Interagency Committee was organized. Out of its five-year-long study was eventually to come an interconnected chain of proposals on water development for the coming twenty-five years, among which was navigation of the Arkansas. On this interagency group sat representatives of the eight states mentioned, as well as representatives of the following Federal agencies dealing with water: the Army Engineers, the Federal Power Commission, and the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, Commerce, Labor, and Health-Education-Welfare.[10]

The group spent not only five years but also about $8 millions before issuing its final report on possible projects, some looking to the year 2000. The various component groups labored and studied. Finally, in July, 1955, the interagency group reported: in twenty-three volumes.[11] From various sources had come many of the long-range proposals. For example, the Arkansas River navigation plan, authorized by the River and Harbor Act of 1946, was picked up and dropped into the interagency committee's 1955

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[9] The Daily Oklahoman, Dec. 2, 1962, 21.

[10] Ibid., July 31, 1955, B-1. Pealy, 1.

[11] Washington Bureau, The Daily Oklahoman, July 31, 1955, B-1, also says that this comprehensive report was Kerr's legislative descendant; it resulted from the study " . . . by an interagency committee provided for in a 1949 law--Kerr's first piece of legislation when he came to Congress."

report, with some changes.[12] The Engineers' multipurpose plan was not to go to waste.[13]

The general provisions of this massive report, intended to serve as a guide for future projects, included such multipurpose aims as " . . . an integrated system of projects to serve navigation, develop hydroelectric power, stabilize the river banks, provide flood control, and other related benefits."[14] Some of the projects for these three river basins had been authorized in earlier years but all were "fully integrated" into the 1980 plan of development. (The total future share for Oklahoma was to be about $2 billions.)[15] And, Kerr says, this road map to future public-works development included in modified form the Kerr Plan.[16]

Besides soil-conservation and reservoir projects, the Arkansas-White-Red Basins Interagency Committee's report recommended projects for irrigation, drainage, more hydroelectric power, and navigation. This intertwined guideline to the future, in all, recommended $1.85 billions worth of natural-resource development projects for Oklahoma. The total included $837 millions in new "land, wood, and water" projects;[17] and of these, the overwhelming keynote was water. There were to be fifty new multiple-

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[12]U. S. President (Eisenhower), Arkansas-White-Red Basins Interagency Committee, Navigation, 8.

[13]A review of the interagency committee's progress is contained in its final resolution, in U. S. Senate, AWRBIAC, Development of Water and Land Resources of the Arkansas, White, and Red River Basins, Senate Document No. 13 (85th Cong., 1st Sess., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1957), xxxiii-ff.

[14]U. S., AWRBIAC Report, Part I: A Report on the Conservation and Development of Water and Land Resources, 65.

[15]Seligman, 180.

[16]Kerr, Land, 351.

[17]Ibid.

purpose reservoirs (including thirty-eight industrial and municipal water supplies) costing $716,347,000 of the $837 millions. Senator Kerr, to whom it fell to announce the results of the massive interagency study, said that part of the proposed cost would be borne by local participation and part by revenue features such as drainage, hydroelectric power, and the sale of water. Perhaps to soothe the suffering taxpayer, Kerr pointed out that the recommendations in this comprehensive plan were based on the expected tripling of Oklahoma's needs in power and water by 1980.[18]

Besides the Arkansas navigation project, the interagency report of 1955 outlined a navigation plan for the Red River, extending up from the Mississippi to the vicinity of Texarkana and Lone Star, Texas; but this was lagging behind the Arkansas effort. The comprehensive report listed $78 millions in finished Oklahoma projects on the Red River, compared with $201 millions in finished Oklahoma projects on the Arkansas River; and, in authorized projects, $85 millions for Oklahoma on the Red River and $540.5 millions for Oklahoma on the Arkansas River.[19] Nevertheless, with the Arkansas navigation program under way, Kerr had the Corps of Engineers busy on the task of developing the Red River navigation plan. The Overton-Red River Waterway had been authorized, and this would be extended up to the Denison dam and onto Lake Texoma.[20] Kerr was bent on bringing water and barges to the 7 million people of the Arkansas-White-Red basins.

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[18] The Daily Oklahoman, July 31, 1955, B-1.

[19] Ibid.

[20] The Fort Worth Star-Telegram, May 16, 1962, 8, has an editorial expressing alarm on behalf of a Texas pet project, the Trinity River, in the light of Kerr's efforts in behalf of the Red River. The Tulsa Tribune, Sept. 6, 1960, 34, on the other hand, expresses editorial satisfaction with the progress being made on the Arkansas.

CHAPTER IV

THE ARKANSAS RIVER AND NAVIGATION: SUMMARY TO 1950

The River, Its Past and Present

From its rise in the central-Colorado Rockies to its mouth on the Mississippi, the Arkansas River cuts a southeasterly path about 1,460 miles long.[1] The task of the Army Engineers lies in making navigable the last 500 miles, from Catoosa--at Tulsa's east doorstep--downstream, across eastern Oklahoma, across the state of Arkansas, to the Mississippi. The lower end of the river is the logical one for such an undertaking. It has more rainfall, and not until the Verdigris and the Grand rivers pour into the Arkansas near Muskogee does the river look very much like one--except in flood time. Up in the western basin of the Arkansas River the climate is merely subhumid, with an average annual precipitation of 30 inches; but in the eastern part, especially below Muskogee, the moisture reaches 55 inches a year.[2]

The path of the river, after leaving Dodge City, first loops up to Great Bend, Kansas, almost to the northernmost edge of the river's watershed, then resumes a southeasterly course, flowing past Hutchinson, Wichita, and Arkansas City, Kansas, to Tulsa, Muskogee, Fort Smith, Little Rock, and Pine Bluff, and on to the mouth. In the lower basin below the Keystone Dam

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[1]U. S. Department of War, Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers, 1943, II, 744.

[2]U. S., AWRBIAC Report, Part I, 58; Part II, Sec. 4, 11.

this river drains some 38,617 square miles: the Osage Plains of southeastern Kansas and northeastern Oklahoma, southwestern Missouri, the Boston and Ouachita mountains, and northwest and central Arkansas.[3] Economic activity of the Arkansas basin has emphasized oil and other minerals, diversified farming such as small grain and livestock in the northern-Oklahoma part and, moving downstream, varying to general farming, to cotton and finally to rice in the eastern end of the basin.[4]

How deep, or shallow, is the Arkansas? In 1945, the natural depth below Fort Smith to the mouth was 3 feet for four months of the year and shallower than 3 feet for the remaining, dryer season.[5] Ten years later, the massive interagency report found about the same: In the stretch between the Mississippi and Little Rock, vessels drawing 4 feet could go upstream from February to July, but from August on, the draft limit was 2 feet. Actually, the "controlling depth" for vessels, dictated by sandbars, gravel, and other obstructions, was much shallower: about 2 feet below Little Rock in the low-water season, about 1 foot from there up to Muskogee, and about 6 inches in controlling depth from Muskogee up to Tulsa during low-water season.[6] Underscoring the virgin character of the Arkansas for navigation, the interagency committee of federal and state representatives reported: "There are no dependable depths on the Arkansas River upstream of Fort Smith or on any tributaries of the Arkansas River."[7] The answer to the problem of depth is to be found in great reservoirs, upstream.

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[3]U. S., AWRBIAC Report, I, 58.

[4]Ibid.

[5]U. S., Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers, 1945, II, 789.

[6]U. S., AWRBIAC Report, Part II, Sec. 4, 11.

[7]Ibid., 7.

The slow rate of fall in the riverbed is another problem. The river drops 2.2 feet a mile in the 66-mile section from Tulsa to Muskogee and about .9 foot from there to Little Rock. Below Little Rock the river meanders across the great broad alluvial basin of the Mississippi, where the soft, caving banks have long caused trouble.[8]

Existing traffic on the Arkansas in the 1955 survey report was almost entirely "local movements of sand, gravel, and rock" on the eastern part of the river. Port facilities consisted mainly of a paved bank at Little Rock, a few log slips, and some sand derricks.[9] The Army Engineers had been doing only odd jobs on the river within memory of all. As early as 1832, improvements had been made as far upstream as Wichita, but most of that was snagging and other temporary work.[10] Even down below Pine Bluff, no permanent improvements had been made since 1902, the Chief of Engineers noted in 1943. The engineers commented on the need for continual snagging operations there, due to "caving banks and shifting channels."[11]

Early History of Navigation on the Arkansas River

Robert S. Kerr liked to remind everyone that, once before, the Arkansas had floated a bustling river traffic of steamboats and flat barges. Indeed, fur traders in the 1820's were shipping their catch down the Arkansas and Red rivers to New Orleans or up to St. Louis.[12] Not

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[8]Ibid., 11.

[9]Ibid., I, 60; II-4, 6. 7.

[10]Ibid., II-4, 6.

[11]Annual Report, 745.

[12]Grant Foreman, A History of Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1945), 7.

long after the barges came the steamboats.[13] In his book Kerr tells of his boyhood fascination with the tales of history and of local old-timers about the 19th-Century traffic of steamboats on the Arkansas, developing with the new military outposts and the removed Indian tribes. Kerr has this summary of the steam traffic beginning when the first steamboat nosed into the Arkansas:

> After the first steamboat, the "Comet," entered the Arkansas from the Mississippi in 1820, river travel developed upstream toward Fort Gibson. The commodious "Facility," in 1829, brought its most famous passenger, Sam Houston, who had dramatically resigned as Governor of Tennessee, to live among the Cherokees. In the 1870's as the cattle industry flourished, the steam packets went as far as Arkansas City, Kansas. During the greater part of the nineteenth century, the Arkansas River became a main highway of the Indian Territory. . . .[14]

The first steamboat to make it across the state of Arkansas up to Fort Smith was the Robert Thompson in about mid-April of 1822. After Fort Gibson was established in 1824 on the Grand (Neosho) River, upstream from the Arkansas, small steamboats were pushing up into Oklahoma.[15] From as far upstream as the mouth of the Verdigris on the Arkansas, Colonel A. P. Chouteau, the trader with the Osages, on April 2, 1824, sent a barge loaded with 38,757 pounds of furs and skins down the Arkansas to New Orleans.[16] The usual head of navigation, however, was Fort Smith until the late 1820's, when the forks of the Arkansas were so designated; and in April, 1827, three steamboats, the Velocipede, the Scioto, and the

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[13] Muriel H. Wright, "Early Navigation and Commerce Along the Arkansas and Red Rivers in Oklahoma," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, VIII, No. 1 (March, 1930), 69.

[14] Kerr, Land, 147-49.

[15] Wright, 69.

[16] Foreman, 7.

Catawba, reached Fort Gibson with goods for that post. Then in 1828, the big steamboat Facility brought 300 Creek women and children to new homes in the West.[17] The paddlewheelers began thrashing the waters of the Arkansas regularly, when the water was up. During the year 1833, seventeen steamboats moored at the Fort Gibson landing.[18] In the 1840's and 1850's, steamboat navigation of the Arkansas River rose and thrived in Oklahoma. But even with the peak of river traffic at midcentury Kerr notes this cloud:

> . . . as much as $5 million worth of merchandise was shipped into Oklahoma river towns . . . supplies ranging from nails to furniture, as well as new settlers, and returned with furs, pecans, cotton, and other crops. During the dry season, steamboats would be stuck at Little Rock waiting for the water to rise in Oklahoma. The people would have to wait for weeks for mail and merchandise.[19]

In the late 1860's, river traffic began to decline. The waterway doldrums became general in the Mississippi Valley in the postwar years, while the railroads gained in traffic. The locomotives rolled into Indian Territory in the early 1870's. Yet in these fading years of river travel the steamboats kept trying to breast this lazy tributary of the Mississippi.[20] One such ambitious attempt even aimed as far north as Arkansas City; it is recorded as follows by T. M. Finney, an early-day resident of the Kaw Agency on the river.

> On July 8, 1885, the steamer, 'The Kansas Millers' passed by Kaw Agency on her trial trip up the Arkansas River from Fort Smith to Arkansas City. The writer,

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[17]Wright, 70-72.

[18]Foreman, Fort Gibson; A Brief History, No. 1 in the Historic Oklahoma Series (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1936), 11, 15.

[19]Kerr, Land, 150-151. See also Wright, 72.

[20]Wright, 71. See also U. S. Senate, Select Committee on National Water Resources, Water Resources Activities in the United States: Future Needs for Navigation, Committee Print No. 11, 86th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1960, 1, a section prepared by the Department of the Army.

> together with a group of Kaw Indians viewed with wonder and amazement the unusual scene of the first steamboat to ascend the river this far, and the Indians mounted on ponies, followed it on shore for miles.
>
> On her return down the river, the steamer unloaded a shipment of 2,000 lbs of flour consigned to me for Searing and Mead, millers of Arkansas City. It was unloaded some distance from the agency, below the mouth of Beaver Creek, and was freighted to the store.

But the promoters of that steamer decided that the Arkansas River ran too shallow in its upper reach there. Thus the first attempt of the boat became its last.[21] There were later, spasmodic efforts to keep the waterways going but the victory of the railroads was virtually complete in most parts of the Mississippi Valley by about 1900.[22] Among the occasional efforts in the early part of this century was that of Muskogee boosters, who shortly after 1900 put a steamboat on the Arkansas between Fort Smith and Muskogee; it carried 35,000 tons of freight in sixteen months. In 1908 another steamboat worked the route. But railroads--and the river itself--remained potent adversaries to navigation, Kerr says. The rails retrieved much of their straying business by cutting rates; and the river kept filling up with sand and gravel. The steamboats disappeared. The idea of navigation remained, tantalizingly.[23]

A feasibility study on navigation of the Arkansas, made some 35 years ago, found three obstacles, which are summarized in a recent article:

> After the Arkansas River leaves Kansas conditions are favorable for navigation provided three engineering feats could be accomplished. The first was the construction of reservoirs to permit a steady and ample supply of water,

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[21] Frank F. Finney, "The Kaw Indians and Their Indian Territory Agency," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, XXXV, No. 4 (Winter, 1957-58), 419-420.

[22] U. S. Senate, Committee Print No. 11, 1.

[23] Kerr, Land, 173.

> the second was construction of locks to raise the loads to the proper elevation level, and the third was the construction of jetties and revetments to control the vagaries of the channel of the old and meandering stream.[24]

It is precisely these three old problems that the Arkansas River Navigation Project seeks to solve, as will be shown.

The Navigation Movement in Recent Decades

The recent history of the navigation program begins in the 1930's. Under the Flood Control Act of 1938, Congress adopted a general comprehensive plan of flood control and other purposes for the Arkansas Basin. The original appropriation authorized was $21 millions.[25] Flood control was the chief aim of this act, but through this measure the Corps of Engineers received the first appropriation for a preliminary study on navigation of the Arkansas. For this milestone Kerr gives credit to Newton Graham, the Tulsa river leader, Graham's associates, and to Senator Elmer Thomas, who was on the Senate Appropriations Committee. With later amendments the 1938 act was to become the legislative base for Keystone, Oologah, Pensacola, Markham Ferry, Fort Gibson, Tenkiller Ferry, Wister, Canton, and Heyburn dams on the Arkansas and its tributaries.[26]

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[24]Glen R. Ames, "Bound for Oklahoma--The Frontier Dream of a Navigational Arkansas River Will Soon Become a Reality," in American Scene, IV, No. 1 (Tulsa: Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Spring, 1961), 3-4. It was then that one of a succession of such booster organizations in eastern Oklahoma was organized, the Arkansas Basin Development Association, apparently not a direct progenitor of the present group of that name now headquartered in Tulsa.

[25]U.S., Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers, 1962, II, 906.

[26]Corps of Engineers, Southwest Division, Water Resources Development in Oklahoma (Dallas: 1955), in Cong. Rec., 84th Cong., 2nd Sess., CII, Part 2, (Feb. 16, 1956), 2729. Also significant, says Kerr, is the 1936 Flood Control Act, because under this "Magna Charta for the upstream tributaries of the Mississippi" were begun the Fort Supply and Great Salt Plains dams in 1938. These were to prove helpful to navigation by holding back the silt and regulating the flow. Land, 178-179.

Another milestone was made in 1943. Tulsa District Engineer Col. Francis J. Wilson signed a favorable report on multiple-purpose development including navigation of the Arkansas River. Colonel Wilson, who had come to the new Corps District Office at Tulsa in 1942, first had to be sold on the idea. Kerr says he was, by Newt Graham and others. After retirement, Colonel Wilson even became executive vice-president of the Arkansas Basin Development Association.[27]

Too in 1943 came the great flood of the Arkansas, which quickened Robert S. Kerr's interest in conservation. As governor, he was overseeing the task of mopping up. By then, the Army Engineers had on tap a plan to control the Arkansas River and open it to barge navigation; perhaps this is where Kerr conceived the idea of combining navigation with flood-control projects. Or, more pragmatically, one source suggests: "What amazed him, he said, was that here was a ready made issue which no one in politics was using and which he could make his exclusively."[28] Kerr himself discusses his navigation dream in terms of opportunity--the opportunity to "open new frontiers in this generation" by "extending our system of inland waterways with their low-cost water transportation." More specifically, Kerr was impressed with the vital role that inland waterways had assumed during World War II in the dangers of coastal shipping. He observed also the 2,500 new industries grown up on the Ohio River after the war.[29]

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[27]Kerr, Land, 179-180.

[28]Joseph E. Howell, who formerly was a member of Kerr's Washington staff, Tulsa Tribune, Jan. 3, 1963, 29; however I found this statement nowhere else. "Seaports for Oklahoma," U. S. News and World Report, LIV, No. 6 (Feb. 11, 1963), 67.

[29]Kerr, Land, 147, 151-152, 154.

Late in 1943, Governors Bob Kerr and Ben Laney of Arkansas set up an official interstate committee to work toward reopening the Arkansas.[30] This Arkansas-Oklahoma Special Interstate Water Resources Committee included as the Oklahoma members, Newton R. Graham, Tulsa, chairman, who was also chairman of the Arkansas Basin Flood Control Association, Don McBride, Oklahoma City, chairman of the Oklahoma Planning and Resources Board, and T. Elmer Harbour, Muskogee, director of the Arkansas association.[31]

Formation of this interstate committee "mobilized the strength of the two states, putting Washington on notice, and uniting the two Congressional delegations of Oklahoma and Arkansas," says Kerr. The committee acted as a focus of energy for the movement during the crucial hearings in Congress, 1945-1946.[32] As part of its work the committee put together a detailed publication arguing for the potential value of navigation. It was based on the Army Engineers' five-year study of the Arkansas Basin which had resulted in the comprehensive plan of development including flood control, irrigation, hydro power, and navigation.[33] In this brief for navigation aimed at the higher echelons of the Corps of Engineers, the Arkansas-Oklahoma committee pointed out:

> As a region we are framed by unfavorable transportation features of which only one, the Rocky Mountains on the west of us, is not manmade. On the north we have an improved Missouri River, on the east an improved Mississippi, on the south the Inter-coastal [sic] Canal and an enormous coastwise and export ocean traffic through the improved Gulf ports and harbors. Then, too, we face a Trinity River

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[30] Ibid., 180-181.

[31] Arkansas-Oklahoma Interstate Water Resources Committee, 6. 7. Kerr, Land, 180-181.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Arkansas-Oklahoma Committee, 6, 12 ff.

> improvement that has been approved on the south. The loyal interests of these surrounding regions, your investigations, and the approval of Congress in each instance have created this situation. We ask for equality of treatment.[34]

The combined forces of flood control and navigation finally saw some results. Kerr summarizes the 1946 congressional acceptance of the multi-purpose plan for the Arkansas:

> At long last, Congress began to move. Before the end of 1946, the two Houses completed action for authorization of a nine-foot /deep/ navigation channel up the Arkansas and /branching off up/ the Verdigris to Catoosa, Okla., just 15 miles east of Tulsa. The multiple-purpose program, with thirty dams, provided for flood control, a vast new source of hydroelectric power, fine lakes for recreation, water supply for communities and industry, and countless other benefits.[35]

This was the 1946 River and Harbor Act. It thus authorized the coordinated, multiple-purpose plan of development for the Arkansas River. Congress had given its blessing for the broad endeavor. But "authorization" of a project and actual appropriations for construction are different. Work on the navigation phase could not begin without construction money. For now, the Arkansas navigation project was on the approved list of possibilities.[36]

Bob Kerr's first bill in the Senate led to the creation of the Arkansas-White-Red Basins Interagency Committee. This gathering of Federal and state agencies dipped into previous, multiple-purpose plans of basin development, revised them, and formulating others, came up with a new, basin-wide plan for soil and water development in the region. In

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[34]Ibid., 10.

[35]Kerr, Land, 181.

[36]U. S. Army, Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers, 1962, II, 873. Kerr, Land, 169. See also Congressional Record, 84th Cong., 2nd Sess., CII, Part 2 (Feb. 16, 1956), 2729.

the plan was the navigation project.[37]

The Corps of Engineers' multipurpose plan changed somewhat as it went along in the 1940's and 1950's, but the basic shape remained: navigation, hydro power, water supply, and flood control. In 1950, the Flood Control and River & Harbor Acts modified the plan, replacing three dams with the single Keystone Dam. But remaining in the comprehensive plan, awaiting its turn, was the navigation channel.[38]

Why, in Kerr's goals, did the Arkansas River and eastern Oklahoma come first--instead of the Canadian, the Red, or other rivers?

> Both as Governor and Senator, I was as interested in navigation for central Oklahoma as eastern Oklahoma. The Arkansas River, however, became the starting point because of its geographical position, plus the advantage of /Tulsa river-development leader Newton/ Graham's leadership.[39]

It is unlikely that Senator Kerr meant to stop with the Arkansas. He had predicted in 1945 that within "a reasonable time":

> In my opinion, the day will come when the Red River will be navigable up to Lake Texoma and on Lake Texoma. My opinion is that the day will come when the Arkansas River will be navigable to and above Tulsa, and in my opinion the day will come when navigation will be made available to central Oklahoma, certainly as far west as Oklahoma City.[40]

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[37] U. S., AWRBIAC Report, Part II, Sec. 4, 5, 8. The 1946 version of the multipurpose plan is contained in House Document 758, 79th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1946. Monroney, Memorial Services, 18.

[38] U. S., AWRBIAC Report, Part II, Sec. 4, 5, 8.

[39] Kerr, Land, 177.

[40] The Daily Oklahoman, October 18, 1945, 13.

CHAPTER V

THE SYSTEM OF NAVIGATION

General Functions

The chief method of guaranteeing a nine-foot depth in the Arkansas barge channel is a "stairway of water," a succession of about eighteen long pools--or steps--up the 500-mile route to Catoosa, near Tulsa. Each of these pools has two features: a dam to impound the water, and a lift-lock to raise and lower barge tows to the next pool, as on other navigable waterways.[1] One of the stronger national voices of editorial opposition, Time magazine, tersely inscribed one of its illustrations: "18 locks for a 420-foot drop from Catoosa to the Mississippi River."[2]

Besides this navigation equipment, the system includes nine multiple-purpose dams as part of the comprehensive plan of the Army Engineers, in addition to dams built previously. Some of the dams stand upstream from the channel, catching silt, generating electricity, or feeding water into the navigation channel in dry season. Four of the multiple-purpose dams straddle the navigation channel. Of these, some are the combination type of lock-and-dam built primarily for navigation, while others are the large multiple-purpose dams, which not only help to keep filled the navigation channel but back up large reservoirs and generate hydroelectric power.

The completion date of the navigation aspect of the multipurpose plan

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[1]Col. Howard W. Penney, head of the Tulsa District Corps of Engineers, interview, in The Tulsa World, March 6, 1960, III, 1.

[2]"Rivers: Competition for the Catfish," Time, LXXX, (Oct. 12, 1962), 26.

has varied in recent years, first set at 1975, then moved up to 1970, and, most recently, set back at least to 1971. On the construction schedule the big dams came before the navigation channel. The work of dredging the channel had to wait until the river itself was harnessed. This job falls to the big upstream dams--Oologah, Keystone, Eufaula, and Fort Gibson--which, besides their other purposes, are a must for navigation. Their function in navigation is to help keep the water level of the channel at a minimum nine-foot depth during the dry season. They also collect silt which would block the channel with sandbars.[3] Besides these upstream dams a combination navigation and power dam at Dardanelle, Arkansas, had to precede the channel work. Kerr wrote that the big multiple-purpose reservoirs came first "Since the navigation development must be built essentially as a unit under a well-planned and continuing construction schedule."[4] In all, there are to be eleven main dams, four of them on the main stem and seven upstream,[5] though some are primarily for purposes other than as aids to navigation.

Although doubts have arisen as political winds shifted, eventual completion seems assured. The government has made firm commitments to carry out most phases of the navigation project (See Chapter VIII.)

The Facilities: Ports, Channel, and Dams

Among the major ports planned is Catoosa, Oklahoma, in territorial days the wild, western end of the Frisco Railroad for a while. Today it

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[3]U. S., AWRBIAC Report, Part II, Sec. 4, 10. Colonel Penney, The Tulsa World, March 6, 1960, III, 1.

[4]Kerr, article, "The Arkansas Basin Project," in Congressional Record, 85th Cong., 2nd Sess. 1958, CIV, Part 4, (March 21, 1958), 4984-4985.

[5]"'Seaports' for Oklahoma," U. S. News and World Report, LIV, No. 6 (Feb. 11, 1963), 66-69.

is largely a commuters' town of people who work in Tulsa, twelve miles to the west.[6] Catoosa, with a population of about 638, today is the western end of the Arkansas River Navigation Project. Why Catoosa on the Verdigris, instead of Tulsa on the Arkansas? There are good reasons. Catoosa has been the proposed head of navigation at least since the river plans of the mid-1940's.[7] Expense -- public and private -- was the main factor. To run the channel all the way up the Arkansas to Tulsa would have taken eight more navigation locks, because Tulsa sits ninety-one feet higher in elevation than Catoosa.[8] Trying to build a port in Tulsa on the river also would have brought "difficult and expensive relocation problems," the federal-state interagency committee found.[9] A Tulsa port would have been prohibitively expensive, said an Arkansas Basin Development Association leader, adding that property on the Catoosa side of Tulsa would be "cheaper to develop."[10]

Other ports planned include Muskogee, Sallisaw, Oklahoma, and Fort Smith-Van Buren, and Little Rock, Arkansas.[11] Muskogee is one of the bigger developments, with a $5-million harbor near the confluence of the Arkansas, the Grand, and the Verdigris rivers. This 500-acre project with a mile-long shoreline, for which Senator Kerr broke ground in 1962, is scheduled for completion with the navigation channel itself.[12]

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[6] The Wall Street Journal, May 13, 1960, 4.

[7] Arkansas-Oklahoma Committee, 51.

[8] U. S., AWRBIAC Report, Part II, Sec. 4, 17.

[9] Ibid.

[10] The Tulsa World, December 17, 1959, 44, and August 17, 1960, II, 1, 34.

[11] The Oklahoma City Times, Sept. 19, 1962, Red Streak edition, 6.

[12] Ibid., Sept. 19, 6, and Sept. 22, 1962, 1. Kerr, Land, 173.

The navigation pools, situated where necessary, are each fifteen to thirty miles long.[13] This requires a lot of water, a commodity not always plentiful in the Southwest--unlike the existing bargeways in many other parts of the country. The answer lies in strategic use of the water on hand. To float the barges of the Arkansas will take an estimated $1\frac{1}{2}$ million acre-feet a year, to be supplied both by the natural flow and by the systematic release of water at the various multiple-purpose dams. Though not all these are integral parts of the navigation system, their output of water will help swell the Arkansas: Pensacola, Fort Gibson, Tenkiller, Oologah, Keystone, Markham Ferry, and Eufaula. Big Keystone, fifteen miles upstream from Tulsa "will materially alter the seasonal flow of the river downstream of the dam."[14] In good time, the Arkansas Basin will have more than 8 million acre-feet of water impounded.[15]

The designated navigation route leaves the river channel at several points between the Mississippi and Catoosa. This route has undergone several minor changes in the years since it was fitted into the comprehensive plan of development. On the latest route, the navigation channel would travel from the mouth of the White River on the Mississippi, up about nine miles to the mouth of Wild Goose Bayou, from there along a land cut, called the "Arkansas Post route," to the Arkansas River at a point forty-two miles above the Mississippi, thence up the Arkansas to the Verdigris, and fifty-two miles up the Verdigris to Catoosa at Tulsa's east door.[16] The Verdigris section also will include several land cuts where

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[13]U. S., Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers, 1962, II, 872-873.

[14]U. S., AWRBIAC Report, Part I, 65; Part II, Sec. 4, 8, 11.

[15]Representative Ed Edmondson, speech, inserted in Congressional Record, 84th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1956, CII, Part 2, (Feb. 14, 1956), 2571.

[16]Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers, 1962, II, 872.

necessary.[17] The actual distance from Catoosa to the Mississippi River will be 450 to 465 miles.[18]

The invisible channel in the bed of the river will be a pathway dredged and snagged to nine feet deep. Dredges will keep this underwater path 250 feet wide in the Arkansas and White rivers and 150 feet wide in the Verdigris.[19] Construction is progressive, moving upriver so that the sections nearest the Mississippi will open first, e.g., up to Little Rock by 1968, Fort Smith by 1969, and open to Tulsa by 1970 or 1971.[20]

Other river work includes channel rectification, which is accomplished through stabilizing the crumbly banks of the Arkansas. The stretch between Muskogee and Fort Smith has proved troublesome, but the Engineers think they have solved the problem. For five years at a cost of $6 millions the Engineers experimented with pile dikes. Stakes were driven into the river bed where the stream bulged out of its normal channel. Silt accumulated against these dikes of wood and rocks, effectively girdling up the river banks, in the opinion of the Engineers and an outside expert.[21]

The multiple-purpose dams related to the navigation project fall in one or more of three categories, besides navigation: flood control, hydroelectric power, and water supply. The big three are in Oklahoma: Keystone on the Arkansas River, for water supply, flood control, and power; Oologah on the Verdigris above Catoosa, for flood control, navigation, and power;

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[17]Corps of Engineers, Water Resources Development in Oklahoma, 2729.

[18]AWRBIAC Report, Part I, 65. The New York Times, March 13, 1961, 24.

[19]U. S., Annual Report, 872. The New York Times, March 13, 1961, 24.

[20]"Rivers; Competition for the Catfish," Time, LXXX (Oct. 12, 1962), 26. "'Seaports' for Oklahoma," U. S. News and World Report, LIV, No. 6 (Feb. 11, 1963), 68.

[21]Office of Senator Kerr, Fact Sheet on the Arkansas River Navigation Project, 2. Kerr, Land, 183.

and Eufaula on the Canadian, for flood control, navigation, and power. Water from the state-built Markham Ferry Dam on the Grand River will also help the navigation needs. Other big dams, going down stream on the Arkansas, are Webbers Falls, for navigation; Short Mountain, for navigation and power; Ozark, for navigation; and Dardanelle, for navigation and power. At some of these, the plans left room for additional features.[22]

A fourth, and less emphasized, purpose of upstream dams is catching the silt, to prevent the formation of so many sandbars downstream. The big three dams in Oklahoma all perform this function. Their useful life as silt-catchers is estimated at fifty years. Beyond that they will continue to serve as water supplies, as power-generating sources, and, their main purpose, as storage containers for navigation water.[23] Because of their vital upstream jobs, these dams were the first to begin rising. There could be no navigation until silt was stopped and water was stored.[24] The $35-million Oologah dam started first, was finished first.[25] Keystone and Eufaula were nearing completion in 1964.

The combined surface area of the Oklahoma big dams, including the state-owned Markham Ferry, is about 163,000 acres.[26] In capacity, Keystone, stretching 4,570 feet across the Arkansas valley, can store 1.9

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[22]U. S. Senate, Development of Water and Land Resources, Sen. Doc. 13, 87.

[23]The Wall Street Journal, May 13, 1964, 1, 4. Kerr, "Arkansas Basin Project," Congressional Record, 85th Cong., 2nd Sess., CIV, Part 4 (March 21, 1958), 4984-4985.

[24]Representative Carl Albert in Congressional Record, 84th Cong., 2nd Sess., CII, Part 7 (May 22, 1956), 8716. The Daily Oklahoman, July 31, 1955, B-1, mentions the interagency report's "top priority" for the three dams.

[25]The Tulsa Tribune, Dec. 29, 1960, 7.

[26]Annual report of the president, Arkansas Basin Development Association, in Ibid., March 13, 1964, 33.

million acre-feet of water; Eufaula, backing up the Canadian into the valleys of the Deep Fork, North Canadian, and Canadian, can hold 3.2 million acre-feet, and Oologah, a 4,000-foot earth-filled dam, one million acre-feet.[27] Eufaula, with its vital silt-stopping function, was a must for navigation.[28] This dam, twenty-seven miles upstream from the Arkansas River, was begun with ceremonies by Senator Bob Kerr. His widow, at an informal ceremony six years later, in February, 1964, signaled for the gates to close and begin filling the Eufaula reservoir. Thus the last big tributary of the Arkansas--the Canadian--was brought under control. Construction of the navigation locks and dams on the Arkansas could begin.[29]

The lock-and-dam series of "stairsteps" will make a slack-water channel of the lower Arkansas and Verdigris rivers, much like the upper Mississippi.[30] The Corps of Engineers several times has reduced the number of these combination lock-and-dams on the channel. In 1960, the number was cut from twenty-three to twenty.[31] It has since been reduced to eighteen.[32] Six of these are in Oklahoma. These eighteen locks and dams consist of three navigation locks and dams on the Verdigris River, and on the Arkansas, eleven navigation locks and dams, one navigation dam, and navigation and hydroelectric dams at Webbers Falls, Short

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[27]The Wall Street Journal, 1, 4.

[28]Albert, 8716.

[29]The Daily Oklahoman, Feb. 11, 11, and Feb. 22, 1964, 1.

[30]The New York Times, March 13, 1961, 24.

[31]Brigadier General William Whipple, Division Engineer, speech, at Tulsa, Oklahoma, in Congressional Record, 86th Cong., 2nd Sess., CVI, (March 14, 1960), A2252-A2254.

[32]Annual report of the president, Arkansas Basin Development Association, The Tulsa Tribune, March 13, 1964, 33.

Mountain, Ozark, and Dardanelle, all on the Arkansas.[33] Each of the locks in the system will be 600 feet long, to handle the modern long barge tows. Locks in the Ohio River system are 400 feet long but are being lengthened.[34] Among the major navigation dams, the Short Mountain lock and dam near Sallisaw, a $108-million project on the main stem of the Arkansas, has been given the name "Robert S. Kerr Lock and Dam." Construction began in 1964.[35]

Extensions from the Arkansas Project

The Arkansas River Navigation Project was to be the first, but not the only, such undertaking considered for Oklahoma. It was to be a part of a general increase in Sooner-state inland waterways.[36] Various groups were working to get the navigation project extended up the Arkansas as far as Arkansas City and also into Kansas, while others had proposed an extension to Oklahoma City up the Canadian, the North Canadian, or other routes.[37]

The upper-Arkansas proposals were dropped after the comprehensive investigation of the interagency committee in 1955. As far upstream as Arkansas City the river could be made navigable with the help of "a moderate amount of storage," but the interagency study found that local opinion -- usually an important element in such investigations -- was divided, so

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[33]U. S., Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers, 1962, II, 872. The Oklahoma City Times, Sept. 19, 1962, 6.

[34]"'Seaports' for Oklahoma," U.S. News and World Report, LIV, No. 6. (Feb. 11, 1963), 68. The Tulsa Tribune, Dec. 29, 1960, 7.

[35]The Daily Oklahoman, Dec. 13, 1963, 1; Feb. 11, 1963, 11, and Feb. 29, 1964, 15.

[36]Seligman, 180.

[37]U. S., AWRBIAC Report, Part II, Sec. 4, 10.

the idea was laid away.[38] There was even less prospect for a navigation program in Kansas. The survey found insufficient water for navigation above Hutchinson, expensive farmlands from Hutchinson down to Arkansas City, and a general local preoccupation with flood-control and water-supply projects which would conflict with navigation plans. The Kansas idea was dropped.[39]

On the Oklahoma City extension, local sentiment seemed stronger for navigation. The Engineers had developed a plan for navigation 120 miles beyond the Arkansas, to a point near Oklahoma City.[40] This became the Central Oklahoma Project, a proposed $550-million extension from Webbers Falls to the Eufaula Reservoir, up a barge canal to the new Norman Reservoir, and on to a point near Oklahoma City. The main digging job on the Central Oklahoma Project would be a ninety-foot wide canal running one hundred miles beyond Eufaula Reservoir. This nine-foot deep canal seemed to be the last of several possible ways that had been considered for bringing navigation to the grain section of Oklahoma. Senator Kerr hoped to get it authorized in 1964 and finished in 1970, along with the Arkansas project.[41] Kerr even thought in terms of a network of barge canals for central and eastern Oklahoma.[42]

For several years the Canadian River was the most discussed route. But problems multiplied. This route was 165 miles long, and it jumped from one stream to another. Moreover, the route would have required

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[38]Ibid., 16, 17.

[39]U. S., AWRBIAC Report, Part II, Sec. 4, 16, 17, 55.

[40]Ibid., 10. "'Seaports' for Oklahoma," U. S. News and World Report, LIV, No. 6. (Feb. 11, 1963), 66-67.

[41]Office of Senator Kerr, Fact Sheet on the Arkansas River Navigation Project, 3.

[42]The Daily Oklahoman, May 8, 1962, 7.

fourteen locks and dams, for a total lift of 707 feet. Other adverse factors: the water flow in the Canadian River is even more erratic than that of the Arkansas, varying from brief highs to long periods of low or zero flows. If the proposed route stayed entirely with the Canadian, instead of switching streams, the distance would be 213 miles from Oklahoma City to the channel mouth on the Arkansas River just below Webbers Falls. The controlling depth of the Canadian was reported to average about six inches during the low season. And this, the "most favorable route" of six considered in the engineering studies, would have cost more than $750 millions.

A 1950 public hearing on the Central Oklahoma Project, then based on the Canadian River route, found some favorable opinion among local groups. But the federal-state interagency committee reported that federal and chamber of commerce studies found "a general lack of active interest" in a Canadian River project. Railroad interests spoke against it. A limited investigation could not find enough prospective freight-rate savings to justify it. In summary, the committee of federal and state representatives concluded that the improvement would be costly, a high lift would be required, navigation water was scarce in that area, local shippers were uninterested, and potential traffic seemed slim -- according to the admittedly limited information on the potential at the time.[43] "Responsible local interests were informed of the results of the studies and concurred in their termination by both federal and local agencies."[44]

The Canadian project had been dropped, but Kerr presumably still thought of central Oklahoma.[45] In his book published in 1960, he insisted

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[43] U. S., AWRBIAC Report, Part II, Sec. 4, 11-15, 19-20, 56.

[44] Ibid., 19.

that navigation, not its route, was the main thing. Some groups had assumed that the Canadian River would be the route of the project, he said. "I actually did not specify any route into the interior of the state."[46] In 1959, Kerr had said he hoped to get the Central Oklahoma Project authorized by 1963 or 1964, after the big new reservoirs had filled. By then, he said, the project would be no larger an undertaking than the remainder of the Arkansas project.[47] Oklahoma's chairman of the Public Works subcommittee on Rivers and Harbors kept trying. Studies by the Engineers were continuing.[48] Kerr expected a survey to start in 1960. In that year, the Army Engineers noted that a canalized waterway to Oklahoma City was among projects that had attracted widespread public interest.[49] In 1962 Kerr said he hoped to get the Central Oklahoma Project -- the extension via the Eufaula reservoir and a canal -- authorized in 1964. This would allow simultaneous completion with the Arkansas project.[50]

The plan as of December, 1963, proposed a navigation channel from Lake Eufaula up Deep Fork Creek to northeast of Oklahoma City.[51] That was the route in 1964 when the $400-million project ran into another slowdown: As an extension of the Arkansas job, the Central Oklahoma Project could begin only when the Arkansas project was finished, which then appeared to be about 1971. The Deep Fork route seemed to offer enough navigation water,

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[46]Kerr, Land, 177.

[47]Kerr, address, "Oklahoma's Future Waterborne," Oklahoma City, in Congressional Record, 86th Cong., 1st Sess., 1959, CV, Part 10 (July 2, 1959), 12641.

[48]The Daily Oklahoman, May 14, 1959, 17. Whipple, A2252-A2254.

[49]U. S. Senate, Select Committee, National Water Resources, Water Resources in the United States, Committee Print No. 11, 27. Whipple, A2252-A2254.

[50]The Daily Oklahoman, Jan. 19, 1962, 2.

[51]Ibid., Dec. 13, 1963, 1.

the route was cheaper than others, and local interest had been rising, but the Engineers saw a long campaign ahead,[52] possibly one as long as the Arkansas River Navigation Project.

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[52]Colonel John W. Morris, Chief Engineer, Tulsa District, address at Oklahoma City, The Daily Oklahoman, March 27, 1964, 9.

CHAPTER VI

GENERAL SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION IN THE SENATE PERIOD

The Cast of Characters: Some Groups and Individuals

The Arkansas Navigation Project, like Senator Kerr himself, was a topic of some controversy. It approached the dramatic at times, the farcical at others. Before looking into the arguments and the general struggle centering on Washington, it might be well to name a few of the protagonists.

Besides opposing regional elements in Congress, Kerr and his co-workers were confronted during the presidency of Dwight Eisenhower with an administration pledged to economy. Outside Congress but fighting on the congressional front were the railroads. They bitterly fought a project that would benefit the barge lines.[1] National editorial opposition included Time and Life, which with some other periodicals apparently became interested only in the late 1950's. In Oklahoma, the lineup was roughly predictable, especially westward of the project. Kerr said that in his early years in the Senate, he "found more opposition in Oklahoma to my plans for bringing river navigation there than I found in Washington,"[2] possibly a facetious remark but close to the truth. Spokesmen for rural groups in western Oklahoma opposed the navigation project, but in later years many switched to supporting the Oklahoma City extension.[3] Likewise the Oklahoma

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[1] The Wall Street Journal, May 13, 1960, 4.

[2] Address, Wichita, The Daily Oklahoman, Nov. 28, 1962, 13, about two weeks before Kerr entered the hospital.

[3] The Wall Street Journal, May 13, 1960, 4.

City newspapers.

An early leader on the supporting side was Newton R. Graham, the original "Admiral of the Arkansas." This nickname later was hung on Kerr. The Tulsa banker had become interested in navigation of the Arkansas from Clarence B. Douglas, Tulsa Chamber of Commerce secretary in the World War I era, who had caught the spirit from previous evangelists of the river. When Douglas moved on, Newton Graham gradually became the leader. After the 1938 congressional approval of an appropriation for the first feasibility study, it was Graham who raised a $10,000 fund for a survey trying to prove a better cost-benefit ratio than the Army Engineers had found. In 1939, the Tulsan worked to get a Corps of Engineers district office established in Tulsa, as part of his strategy.[5] Of Newton Graham, Kerr says:

> Whenever a new president or governor took office, Newt called on him and appealed for support of the Arkansas program. That was how I came under the influence and tutelage of this remarkable man after 1942.[6]

The close association between Governor Kerr and the Tulsa river leader was partly brought about by their mutual associate, Don McBride, who had served in two previous Oklahoma gubernatorial administrations. McBride, long a water devotee, had become somewhat of an authority on water conservation: A professional engineer, he had worked on numerous projects, had served under Governor Marland on the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, had served as a chief member of the Arkansas-Oklahoma committee on navigation, and was to stay close to Kerr and the cause of water till Kerr's

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[4]Kerr, Land, 174-175.

[5]Ibid., 179-180.

[6]Ibid., 175.

death, after which Senator A. S. Mike Monroney engaged McBride's services as water expert.[7]

Kerr had help from congressional colleagues. A recent writer summarizes:

> Such legislative leaders as Senator Bob Kerr and Mike Monroney and Representatives Page Belcher, Ed Edmondson, Carl Albert, and Tom Steed, together with the earlier work of Senator Elmer Thomas and Representative Wesley Disney, are to be honored and remembered for the invaluable work they have done in behalf of this project.[8]

Once convinced, the Army Engineers too were potent allies. By 1961, Lieutenant General E. C. Itschner himself, chief of the Corps of Engineers, spoke in favor of the navigation plan at a Tulsa meeting.[9]

Kerr says that "the combined forces for flood control and navigation" were principally responsible for persuading Congress to approve the comprehensive plan of development for the Arkansas in 1946.[10] Group efforts included members of the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, who for nearly a half century worked to reopen the Arkansas to navigation. Among the leaders of this organization was Newton Graham, working for comprehensive development of the Arkansas River.[11] The Arkansas Basin Development Association, Inc., headquartered in Tulsa, was the latest of a succession of citizens' groups over some fifty years.[12] It was reorganized in 1955 and

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[7]The Daily Oklahoman, Dec. 13, 1963, 1. Kerr, Land, 175, 176, 178.

[8]Glen R. Ames, "Bound for Oklahoma--The Frontier Dream of a Navigational Arkansas River Will Soon Become a Reality," American Scene, IV, No. 1 (Tulsa: Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Spring, 1961), 3-4.

[9]The New York Times, March 13, 1961, 24.

[10]Kerr, Land, 167.

[11]Ibid., 170, 174.

[12]Ibid., 173.

Francis J. Wilson, a retired Corps colonel, was employed as executive vice-president.[13] Besides this important group, the following organizations sent speakers in support of the project to a rally sponsored by the Arkansas River Boosters Committee, held near Muskogee in late 1963: the Oklahoma Young Democrats, Oklahoma's Farmers Union, the Lake Oologah Association, the Association of Electric Co-ops, the AFL-CIO, the Oklahoma Retail Merchants Association, and a speaker representing the Arkansas Basin Development Association in Arkansas.[14]

One lone railroad organization was supporting the project. This was made up of three allied lines serving the Oklahoma region -- the only railroads with general offices in the Sooner State. The three lines were the Kansas, Oklahoma, and Gulf; the Midland Valley; and the Oklahoma City-Ada-Atoka. Robert H. Lomax, Muskogee, president of the three lines, thought he would lose business to the barges at first but that the overall rise in Oklahoma industry and the port-to-depot freight business would "help us more than make it up." An interesting note: Charles E. Ingersoll, the board chairman of the three railway lines, was a cousin of Captain A. C. Ingersoll, president of the Federal Barge Lines. He told Arkansas Basin supporters they would see no "family scrap," however.[15]

There was one other industrial supporter: Private power, which often opposes public hydroelectric power. But Representative Brooks Hays of Arkansas, talking about the Dardanelle dam, declared that "the

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[13] The Daily Oklahoman, Dec. 2, 1962, 21.

[14] Ibid., Oct. 21, 1963, 1.

[15] The Wall Street Journal, May 13, 1964, 4. Charles Ingersoll, Address, inserted by Kerr in Congressional Record, 86th Cong., 2nd Sess., CVI (March 17, 1960), A2378.

representatives of the great private utilities in our part of the country have given it their endorsement and have urged its construction." He included the head of the Arkansas Power and Light Company in his statement.[16]

Perhaps united, or pressure-group, action is a key. Kerr told some water workers with similar ambitions in 1961:

> Ten years ago, these pioneer watermen ... were pressing the Congress for leadership and cooperation. They sought and got community backing. They hired experts. They raised money. They joined the National Rivers and Harbors Congress. They belonged to the National Reclamation Association. They joined hands with other water conservationists throughout the land. And Oklahoma moved.[17]

General Arguments

Senator Robert S. Kerr wrote admiringly of the St. Lawrence Seaway, finished in 1959, comparing it to the Great Pyramids, the Panama Canal, and the Suez Canal. The St. Lawrence, with a twenty-seven foot channel, or three times as deep as that of the Arkansas project, connects the nation's waterways to the Atlantic. It "will mean the greatest impetus yet to inland water traffic," said Kerr. This man-made canal lifts ships 550 feet, compared with about 425 on the Arkansas climb. The St. Lawrence has seven new locks and eight rebuilt ones. The lifting equipment of the Arkansas is to be about eighteen locks, though some of these are built in with other features of the multiple-purpose project. The cost of the St. Lawrence Seaway was about $1 billion.[18] The cost of the Arkansas project when complete is to be about $1.2 billions, including some of the

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[16]U. S., Congressional Record, 84th Cong., 2nd Sess., CII, (Feb. 16, 1956), Part 2, 2730.

[17]Kerr, Address, Wabash Valley Association, Mount Carmel, Ill., in Congressional Record, 87th Cong., 1st Sess., CVII, (April 20, 1961), Part 5, 6534.

[18]Kerr, Land, 154-156.

multipurpose functions. On the St. Lawrence, Senator Kerr indicates the economic motive brought about its construction. That project, hung up since Hoover's 1932 treaty with Canada, came off high center in 1954. Kerr says:

> The real breakthrough for . . . construction resulted from a series of fortuitous events. The famous Mesabi mines of Minnesota were running low, and the U. S. iron and steel industry faced a growing crisis. Suddenly came the news of iron ore discovered in Labrador. It could be readily available to the sprawling plants on the Great Lakes if only the transportation bottleneck between Montreal and Lake Erie could be cleared by a deep navigable channel.
>
> This situation mobilized the needed political power for a favorable decision . . . .[19]

Perhaps the St. Lawrence and the Arkansas projects are merely parts of the general expansion of inland waterways that occurred in the post-war years. One should hesitate at analogies. The economic motive on the Arkansas project seems more general, less specific, than on the St. Lawrence; more regional, less local. Yet as Senator Kerr orated on the key issue of freight rates:

> Oklahoma's future, waterborne, will see the great transition from a high plateau of discriminatory freight costs to a position as favorable for transportation as any area in the Nation.
>
> Our land-locked Oklahoma, through water conservation and navigation, will see the growth of industry beyond anything we can now imagine. Our industrial production, ever growing, will move competitively, waterborne, to the teeming markets of the Nation.[20]

The railroads understandably opposed the navigation program. When one cost estimate for navigation was $650 millions, the Association for

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[19]Ibid., 155-156. See also Richard B. Morris, Encyclopedia of American History (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 460.

[20]Kerr, Address, Oklahoma Press Association, Tulsa, in U. S. Congressional Record, 86th Cong., 1st Sess., CV, (July 2, 1959), Part 10, 12642.

American Railroads

> . . . sent an expert to tell Congress that for the same money they could build 'a double-tracked, fully signaled and fully equipped modern railroad' over the same route and operate it forever free of charge to shippers and passengers.[21]

No idle threat was the Arkansas project to the railroads. The main purpose of the navigation project is not odd-lot consumer shipping but large bulk cargo, though the channel is open to small craft, too.[22] This capacity for hauling great bulk, including industrial raw materials, directly competes with rail shipping. The general arguments also took in the entire comprehensive plan of development, criticizing it as heartily as the navigation project. A former Hoover Commission member and Wyoming governor, in an article attacking Federal pork barrel, described the Arkansas development program as a

> . . . vast project embracing all elements ofpork-barrel-logrolling politics. It is the hydra-headed proposal to develop the Arkansas River basin for navigation, hydro-electricity, flood control and numerous other purposes, including recreation, municipal and industrial water supply, draining, soil conservation -- in short, the works.

The author, Governor Leslie Miller, also warned that the 1955 interagency report on the Arkansas-White-Red basins contained proposals that, if all carried out, would cost $5 billions.[23] In mitigation of the cost, Senator John L. McClellan of Arkansas said the $1.2 billions will be matched by the increased earnings of the people in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas

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[21] Wheeler, 20-27.

[22] Colonel Howard W. Penney, The Tulsa World, March 6, 1960, III, 1.

[23] Miller, as told to Sidney Shalett, "It All Comes Out of Your Pocket," The Saturday Evening Post, CCXXX, No. 28 (Jan. 11, 1958), 70. A reply by Senator Allen Ellender of the Appropriations Committee is in Congressional Record, 85th Cong., 2nd Sess., CIV, (Jan. 11, 1958), Part 3, 3376.

by 1980, he said. "This growth will spread throughout the economy and benefit every state."[24] Never least is the argument that one region is as entitled to help as another. In the words of Colonel Francis J. Wilson, executive vice-president of the Arkansas Basin Development Association, Tulsa:

> The federal government spent money to develop the Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi rivers. I don't see why the Arkansas should be an exception. The federal government participates in highway construction so why not the Arkansas River?[25]

Industrialization of Oklahoma had for long been a strong talking point. In 1945, the Arkansas-Oklahoma committee set up by the two governors saw a water boom: "Couple navigation with the present movement of decentralization and the future will bring vast new tonnage to the river."[26] Senator Kerr never tired of predicting the coming industrialization of Oklahoma. Inland seaports in his native state would be "an irresistible magnet" drawing manufacturing in the lower Mississippi valley on the scale of the automobile industry.[27] In more restrained language, the 1955 comprehensive report of the Arkansas-White-Red Basins Interagency Committee had said something similar.

> Large petroleum refineries, fields of high quality coal and an extensive agricultural area would contribute considerable downstream traffic. Inbound traffic would service the oil-field production areas, refining centers, and manufacturing and agricultural activities in the region.[28]

The Corps of Engineers, once sold on the project, helped with estimates of the potential economic benefits of the navigation project. These

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[24]The Tulsa Tribune, Oct. 19, 1963, 14.

[25]The Tulsa World, Aug. 17, 1960, II, 1, 34.

[26]Arkansas-Oklahoma Interstate Water Resources Committee, 10.

[27]The Daily Oklahoman, May 8, 1962, 7.

[28]U. S., AWRBIAC Report, Part II, Sec. 4, 9.

were of value in offsetting criticism of the $1.2 billion outlay, and naturally have come in for criticism on their own, for estimated figures associated with such a project are elusive. For the feasibility of the navigation project, the Engineers had applied the fifty-year yardstick and found it measured up. To be authorized by Congress, a project must be shown to pay itself off within fifty years, including both the original and subsequent operating costs.[29]

A vital point of the discussion to be covered is just how much of the cost load is borne locally and how much comes out of the federal purse. A critical, economic study of the Arkansas project declared that only "about two per cent of the total cost will be borne by Oklahoma and Arkansas taxpayers, while the major portion of the benefits accrue to those states."[30]

Some of the cost is to be borne locally. Local interests must provide the ports for the navigation project; and they must pay the increased costs of maintaining the relocated highway, rail, and utility routes.[31] As part of the "benefits" to offset the cost, hydroelectric power is to be sold. On one occasion, answering of a question from Senator Kerr, the chief of the Southwestern Power Administration declared that electric power would pay for half the cost of the Arkansas development.[32]

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[29]Kerr, Land, 301.

[30]Cecil B. Haver, W. B. Back, and L. A. Sjaastad, An Economic Analysis of the Navigation Proposal for the Arkansas River and Its Tributaries (Chicago: Cecil B. Haver & Associates, 1959), 3. This detailed investigation was done on a grant from the Association of American Railroads; its findings are discussed in the following pages.

[31]U. S. Army, Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers, 1962, II, 873.

[32]Douglas G. Wright, at an Arkansas Basin Development Association meeting, Tulsa, The Tulsa Tribune, March 12, 1960, 1, 5. Colonel Howard Penney, The Tulsa World, March 6, 1960, III, 1.

Another aspect of cost is inflation. In 1960, an Army Engineers official, Brigadier General William Whipple, speaking of the $1.2 billions and the remaining parts of the project, said, "We still have a long way to go, and construction costs climb 3 to 4 percent every year."[33] The subject of inflation was to turn up again, e.g., in 1964 as an argument against the "false economy" in a year's delay of the project. Avoiding the predictive issue of whether the Arkansas project will, or will not, ultimately pay itself out, one may safely say that Federal money will pay the initial bills.[34]

The most detailed critical analysis was prepared under the sponsorship of the Association of American Railroads by Cecil B. Haver, W. B. Back, and L. A. Sjaastad, three university economists, on a consultant basis. Haver and Sjaastad were University of Chicago faculty members and Back was at Oklahoma State University. The study, published as An Economic Analysis of the Navigation Proposal for the Arkansas River and Its Tributaries (see the preceding footnote), saw little economic potential in the project. This adverse report included such general conclusions as that "the Arkansas project is not worthwhile; that even if it were to be constructed, it would be in the best interests of the economy to leave it unused."[35] Financed by the railroads on the basis of "complete freedom" of study,[36] the analysis seems to rest chiefly on the disputed question of traffic estimates. The economists differ drastically with the Army Engineers on the expected shipping tonnage of the Arkansas; and it is on

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[33]He also was speaking at the Arkansas Basin Development Association meeting; The Tulsa Tribune, March 12, 1960, 1, 5.

[34]The Wall Street Journal, May 13, 1964, 4.

[35]Haver, Back, and Sjaastad, 52.

[36]Ibid., i.

their own estimates of the potential tonnage that the economists base their conclusions against the project's feasibility.[37] They raise some strong points, which will be dealt with in more detail. Among their equally strong conclusions is the following:

> Our analysis indicates that the navigation proposals for the Arkansas River to Catoosa, Oklahoma, do not represent 'good' investment for this country at this time. The Arkansas navigation project proposal should be withdrawn and not be reconsidered until economic conditions suggest a re-evaluation. Not one dollar of this nation's limited funds available for water resources development should be spent on this project until the proposal is thoroughly restudied by the Corps and/or others.[38]

Not the least of local editorial opposition to the project was the Oklahoma City newspaper organization, The Daily Oklahoman and The Oklahoma City Times. One of its editorialists, Elmer Peterson, for some time had pleaded the cause of the small, upstream dams, versus the giant downstream dams. Against big dams he wrote a book of polemic.[39] The newspaper

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[37]Ibid., 51, 52. See especially iii and table, v.

[38]Ibid., 53. Economic studies of the Arkansas navigation project, most of them concluding that it will at least benefit the Arkansas River valley, are discussed in these and the following pages of this chapter. Included are the opinions of such diverse elements as the Arkansas-White-Red Basins Interagency Committee; various officials of the Corps of Engineers, the Southwestern Power Administration, the U. S. Bureau of Mines; the Arkansas-Oklahoma interstate committee of 1945; the Association of American Railroads; three Oklahoma-based railways; the Arkansas Basin Development Association; and individuals such as Kerr's former aide and water expert Don McBride, Representative Carl Albert of Oklahoma and Senator John L. McClellan of Arkansas, a few officials of prospective new industries, and the economists discussed in the paragraphs below. The author himself has concluded that the impartiality of many of the economic analyses of benefits or drawbacks tends to vary with the political or economic distance of the authors or speakers from Senator Kerr and the navigation supporters; for example, the Corps of Engineers, the traditional builders of the river, came to consistently favor the project, once convinced it was practicable. Railroads nationally found much wrong with the project, yet the three Oklahoma-based railways supported it as economically beneficial to not only the state but to themselves.

[39]Elmer T. Peterson, Big Dam Foolishness: The Problem of Modern Flood Control and Water Storage (New York: Devin-Adair Co., 1954), passim.

apparently even opposed or distrusted the idea of an Oklahoma City extension. An example is an editorial cartoon by James Lange depicting an oceangoing steamship half aground in the little North Canadian River, looming above the prairie.[40] Again, R. G. Miller, homespun state columnist, devoted a Sunday-magazine article to lampooning the Verdigris leg of the Arkansas project. The occasion was the construction of a new bridge over the Verdigris, built with provisions for raising it later, for water traffic. Assuming erroneously, as had others, that navigation meant ocean liners, he illustrated the long article with a photo of such a ship superimposed on the water beneath the Verdigris bridge. The tone was incredulous.

> At the moment, only a few weeks after seasons of heavy rainfall, there is barely enough water in the Verdigris to float a 14-foot rowboat. Even then, the boatman would have to pull the boat across shallow, rocky shoals in places . . . .[41]

Although it may signify little, the newspaper had warmed to the idea in later years, when an extension to Oklahoma City became a distinct possibility. The annexation of a possible port area near Luther, Oklahoma, "safeguards the economic future of Oklahoma City and this region by putting within the city limits the possible site of a port for a barge canal."[42] That was only the latest sign of changed sentiment in Oklahoma City. In 1955, Kerr discovered some new-found support for navigation in the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, after that group was asked to approve a proposed combination aqueduct and navigable canal from southeastern Oklahoma to Oklahoma City, with an extension connecting the canal

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[40] The Daily Oklahoman, June 18, 1951. Kerr comments on this cartoon, in Ibid., June 19, 1951.

[41] The Daily Oklahoman Magazine, July 24, 1955, 17.

[42] The Oklahoma City Times, March 19, 1964, editorial, 38.

to the Arkansas River.[43] Kerr was the main speaker in 1962 at a special water forum sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and water leaders. Delegations from forty-three towns attended.[44] A few weeks later, as evidence of good will toward Kerr, about 600 Oklahoma City civic and industrial leaders attended an appreciation dinner for Kerr "for his achievements," as E. K. Gaylord, president of the Oklahoma Publishing Company and the dinner chairman, put it.[45]

Thus some of the general viewpoints that framed the dispute. Some of these should be examined more closely, as follows.

Kerr and Others: Some Benefits of the Project

High on the list of supposed benefits is the industrial growth that is supposed to follow a navigable water route into a state. Major General E. C. Itschner, chief of Engineers, summarized the possibilities at a dinner of Arkansas valley leaders in 1956. The Ohio River valley, he pointed out, had prospered on a three-point base: coal, cheap water-transportation, and an abundant supply of water. The Arkansas valley has not only these but also valuable oil, bauxite, and chemicals, he said.

> Once waterway transportation is available for the hauling of bauxite and pig metal and fuels, once hydro-power is available near at hand to back-stop the low-cost power advantage inherent in the coal resource and the easily available natural gas, once water-supply possibilities are developed to the fullest possible extent, the Arkansas Basin will possess the physical attributes needed for truly great expansion.[46]

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[43]Ibid., March 11, 1955, 20.

[44]The Daily Oklahoman, May 8, 1962, 7.

[45]"Kerr's Activities Linked with Opubco," in Cuff Stuff (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Publishing Co., January, 1963), 10, 11. The Tulsa Tribune, June 11, 1962, 8.

[46]Kerr, Land, 183-184.

Waterways even stimulate business for the railroads, asserted Charles E. Ingersoll, board chairman for the three Oklahoma-based railways favoring the project.[47] In luring industry to a region, besides cheap barge transportation, the important considerations are hydroelectric power and ample industrial water.[48] For example, Ohio Rubber Company was planning a new plant at Fort Smith because of the prospect of navigation, its president said.[49]

Don McBride, the long-time water authority and Kerr associate, said in 1964 that thirty-eight industries were planning locations on the Arkansas River, to employ 35,000 people.[50]

The possibilities of industrial development carried special meaning for interested citizens of the oil areas of Oklahoma. Stray hints of a sick oil industry in Oklahoma have been found here and there. After an early boom a shakeout in refineries took place in the mid-continent region between 1926 and 1941, according to the Arkansas-Oklahoma interstate committee's plea for navigation, published in 1945. "Well managed companies" junked a total of fifty-eight refineries in that region during the period. An improved Arkansas River would have saved these plants, the committee indicated. Reflecting the belief that competing transportation would force rail rates downward, the committee stated:

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[47]Ingersoll, Address, Kerr, in Congressional Record, 86th Cong., 2nd Sess., CIV, (March 17, 1960), A2378.

[48]The Wall Street Journal, May 13, 1960, 4.

[49]The Tulsa Tribune, March 12, 1960, 1, 5.

[50]McBride, letter, Washington, March 5, 1964, 3, to the author. He mentions these figures in pointing out the related drawbacks to a budgetary delay on the project that seemed likely in 1964. McBride is now on the senatorial staff of A. S. Mike Monroney in Washington as, among other offices, Monroney's advisor on water projects.

> Had it not been for the building of gasoline pipelines to the north with resulting rail cost readjustments in the direction of the lines, the plant loss would have been even greater.[51]

In more recent years, as oil companies explored abroad and after the Suez crisis, a definite slump was weighing on Tulsa, the "Oil Capital of the World." Some oil companies were moving out, while new industry was ignoring the area.[52]

Tulsa boosters were wooing new industry, and some came, particularly the space industries. Kerr was optimistic about Tulsa's chances of eventually becoming the "space capital" of the future.[53] As several multimillion-dollar plants began to locate near Catoosa,[54] ultimately to employ more than 10,000 workers,[55] Kerr confidently predicted a strong position for Oklahoma in the Gulf-coast space industry.[56] The giant rockets and other machinery of space exploration could be built or assembled at Tulsa and cheaply floated downstream to the Gulf.[57] Besides the expected savings in shipping costs, the project was expected to boost the economy of the poorer regions of eastern Oklahoma and the Ozarks of western Arkansas.[58] Kerr had insisted the project would benefit the

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[51]Arkansas-Oklahoma Interstate Water Resources Committee, 87.

[52]The Wall Street Journal, May 13, 1960, 4.

[53]"Two Giants [Oklahoma City and Tulsa] Rising in the Southwest," U. S. News and World Report, LIV, No. 6, (Feb. 11, 1963), 69. See also Washington Bureau, The Tulsa World, May 27, 1962, II, 1.

[54]The New York Times, Oct. 10, 1962, 24. See also The Tulsa World, May 27, 1962, II, 1.

[55]"'Seaports' for Oklahoma," U. S. News and World Report, LIV, No. 6 (Feb. 11, 1963), 66-69.

[56]The Daily Oklahoman, May 8, 1962, 7.

[57]"Two Giants [Oklahoma City and Tulsa] Rising in the Southwest," U. S. News and World Report, LIV, No. 6 (Feb. 11, 1963), 69.

[58]"Rivers; Competition for Catfish," Time, LXXX, (Oct. 12, 1962), 27.

entire river basin containing parts of seven states and eight million people.[59]

We enter now into a factor that at least rivals the space-industry potential: the traditional basic industry of coal-iron-steel. Senator Kerr evidently had some big ambitions in this field for Oklahoma. Talking to Oklahoma City civic leaders in May, 1962, he foresaw the state's first steel mill coming to Oklahoma City, one relying on eastern-Oklahoma coal fields and on cheap transportation for both its raw materials and the product. This, another speaker said, in a time when steel companies would build no more new mills in the old regions. Senator Kerr explained: "It is cheaper to bring iron ore to the market where coal and cheap transportation are than to take both ore and coking materials to present plants."[60] The president of the prospective new rubber-company plant at Fort Smith agreed. The high-grade coking coal of this region, combined with ore shipped in by barge, would offer a firm foundation for an Oklahoma steel industry.[61] These large deposits of high-quality coal in eastern Oklahoma and western Arkansas were relatively untapped. They were being shipped in fairly small quantities by rail, mostly to steel mills in the West at a high price, said the Oklahoma railroad executive, Charles Ingersoll. Navigation, though it wouldn't help the rails directly, would send coal into the lower-Mississippi markets, he added.[62] To put it clearly, railroad shipping rates were limiting the market for

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[59]"'Seaports' for Oklahoma," U. S. News and World Report, LIV, No. 6 (Feb. 11, 1963), 66.

[60]The Daily Oklahoman, May 8, 1962, 7.

[61]The Tulsa Tribune, March 12, 1960, 5.

[62]Ingersoll, Address, Kerr, in Congressional Record, 86th Cong., 2nd Sess., CIV, (March 17, 1960), A2378.

Oklahoma coal pretty close to Oklahoma, declared Colonel Francis J. Wilson, the former Corps of Engineers officer now with the Arkansas Basin Development Association. He said there were fifty-five million tons of reserves in coking coal. This alone would make the Arkansas Navigation Project worthwhile.[63]

More significant, the United States Government owned more than 1½ billion tons of high-quality coal under eastern Oklahoma. This could be mined and sold, with cheaper transportation rates, Kerr's office said.[64] Kerr summed it up: "The Federal Government owns enough coal adjacent to the navigable Arkansas to receive an increased royalty through low-cost water navigation rates in the next fifty years to pay for this entire navigation project."[65] There was coal next to the Eufaula reservoir, located near the center of Oklahoma's once thriving coal industry.[66]

Among Senator Kerr's own varied holdings that ranged from cattle to timber to oil to uranium to broadcasting stock, there also was a huge quantity of eastern-Oklahoma coal.[67] A comment here might be that Kerr believed it impossible to find a senator whose private interests could be completely divorced from those of his home state.[68]

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[63] The Wall Street Journal, May 13, 1960, 4.

[64] Office of Senator Kerr, Fact Sheet on the Arkansas River Navigation Project, 2. This fourteen-page compilation was issued two years after Colonel Wilson's statement.

[65] Kerr, Land, 303.

[66] U. S., AWRBIAC Report, Part II, Sec. 4, 19.

[67] Seligman, 138, estimated it at one hundred million tons in 1959. Representative Carl Albert, in Memorial Services, 122, thought Kerr owned more coal than any other man.

[68] For example, see Kerr's various remarks on conflict of interest in Chapter II, passim.

The Arkansas basin has not only "the greatest coal reserve in the midcontinental area," but in the basin and its tributaries are "some of the greatest oil fields in all the world," Representative Carl Albert of Oklahoma commented.[69] The region of the Arkansas River waterway has an estimated seventy-five trillion cubic feet of natural gas and five billion barrels of oil. In all, the U. S. Bureau of Mines estimated that the lower basins of the Arkansas-White-Red rivers hold more than sixty commercially produceable minerals in the three states involved: Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Missouri. In 1960, ninety-six percent of U. S. bauxite (aluminum ore) was being mined in central Arkansas.[70] It is to reach these minerals that modern tank and open barges would push up the Arkansas River.

Pivotal in the discussion of industrial growth is the related issue of freight rates. The leaders of the Arkansas River Navigation Project spoke often of forcing down, or undercutting, the rates of the railroads in this region. Kerr commented:

> Because of its background as Indian Territory, to the south of transcontinental routes, Tulsa did not develop as a hub of transportation; it became isolated on a freight rate plateau which discouraged industry and penalized the whole economy . . . .[71]

As early as 1938, Newton R. Graham, Tulsa banker and navigation leader, was trying to enlist the support of Oklahoma City. He told business leaders there that "Oklahoma sits on the highest freight rate hump in the nation, and only a navigable waterway can liquidate it." Graham argued that the Arkansas project would bring down the freight rates for Oklahoma

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[69] Congressional Record, 84th Cong., 2nd Sess., CII, (Feb. 16, 1956), Part 2, 2730.

[70] The Wall Street Journal, May 13, 1960, 4.

[71] Kerr, Land, 175.

City and western Oklahoma too. But he conceded that the toughest job at hand was convincing those two sections of the possibilities.[72] Graham kept talking. Shortly after the 1938 congressional approval of a first preliminary study by the Engineers, he said at Fort Smith:

> If the Arkansas is made navigable, eighty per cent of the travel still will move by rail, but it will move by water rates . . . . Fort Smith coal lost its Mississippi markets when the Ohio River was opened for navigation . . . . The transportation handicap also cost Oklahoma fifty per cent of its gasoline refining capacity since 1925.[73]

Again a complaint of high railway charges: In 1945, the joint Oklahoma and Arkansas committee arguing for navigation declared that railway rates bore more heavily on this region than on almost any other part of the United States: ". . . the southwest freight region is now and has always been on the highest basic commodity freight cost plane in the Union . . . ."[74] A decade later, Representative Carl Albert was still saying it: "One of the chief deterrents to development of these resources [oil, gas, and coal] to date has been the high cost of transportation."[75] Senator Kerr, who says in his book that both as governor and senator he was trying to help all of Oklahoma and not just the eastern part, comments on Newton Graham's efforts at Tulsa:

> As 'Oil Capital of the World,' Tulsa was feeling keenly the pinch of freight rates. Buyers and sellers in the petroleum industry faced mounting competition from rivals benefited by navigation. Transportation costs for heavy oil field machinery cramped profitable operations. Refining capacity was being drained away from the land-locked

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[72] Ibid., 177.

[73] Ibid., 178-179. See also Arkansas-Oklahoma Interstate Water Resources Committee, Ibid.

[74] Arkansas-Oklahoma Interstate Water Resources Committee, 8, 10.

[75] Congressional Record, 84th Cong., 2nd Sess., CII, Part 7 (May 22, 1956), 8716.

> midcontinent to sites on waterways. Industry was decentralizing into the hinterland, toward the south, but Oklahoma was not getting a substantial share.[76]

Newton Graham, Kerr continued, preached at his fellow Tulsans:

> Did you know that the reason the Texas Company closed its million-dollar salt plant in Tulsa was because it could not ship its production to a consuming public in competition with the other salt makers? . . . We are talking about making Tulsa the jumping off place for water rates for a territory so vast that it reaches deep into Colorado . . . .[77]

Fertilizer, too, is an important item. The farm-state Oklahoma has paid fairly high prices for superphosphate fertilizer shipped in by rail, said Ingersoll, the Oklahoma railman. With navigation, the raw materials for this fertilizer -- phosphate rock and sulphur from the Gulf coast area -- can move into Oklahoma in bulk, to be mixed here more cheaply and shipped relatively short distances by rail.[78]

The use of river-barge shipping was booming nationwide, Kerr said in 1960, because of the rising costs of other forms of transportation. Barge traffic, from 1946 to 1957, had climbed 7.8 billion ton-miles a year. This increase in freight, Kerr said in imagery remindful of the American railroads' criticism of the project, was equivalent to adding a new 2,600-mile railroad every year -- running full steam.[79] With 4,000 to 6,000-horsepower diesel barges becoming common, barges on the big waterways could carry as much freight as ninety-three railroad cars

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[76]Kerr, Land, 176.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Ingersoll, Address, Kerr, in Congressional Record, 86th Cong., 2nd Sess., CIV, (March 17, 1960), A2378. See also The Tulsa Tribune, July 18, 1957, 12.

almost a mile long, said the Army Engineers.[80]

Several times Senator Kerr quoted the Engineers' 1954 estimate that the Arkansas River would have carried 13.2 million tons of traffic that year, if operating, at a saving of $73 millions. This, he said, was almost four percent more traffic than the Tennessee River had in 1957.[81]

Barge traffic would bring about "water-compelled rates" from the railroads, said Ingersoll.[82] At the same time the railroads would not get hurt, said the Arkansas-Oklahoma Committee. The committee cited evidence purportedly showing that railroads near waterways earn more than railroads located inland from waterways.[83] The consumer would benefit by the following predicted reductions in price: commercial fertilizer down from $10 to $2.50 a ton average on freight, wheat down 13¢ a bushel, and newsprint down $4 a ton.[84] So the argument went. Similar benefits were claimed on goods exported from Oklahoma: wheat shipped from Tulsa to New Orleans would drop from $17 to about $4 a ton in freight charges. In the basic industries, eastern Oklahoma coal could ship to Pittsburgh at about $6 a ton instead of $15 a ton; and Pittsburgh steel would come to Tulsa for $10 a ton less than its current $23 charge.[85]

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[80]U. S. Senate, Select Committee, Water Resources, 13, 17, 18.

[81]Kerr, Address, Oklahoma City, in Congressional Record, 86th Cong., 1st Sess., CV, Part 10 (July 2, 1959), 12642. The Oklahoma City Times, June 12, 1959, 11.

[82]Ingersoll, Address, Kerr, in Congressional Record, 86th Cong., 2nd Sess., CIV, (March 17, 1960), A2378.

[83]Arkansas-Oklahoma Interstate Water Resources Committee, 88.

[84]The Wall Street Journal, May 13, 1960, 4. "'Seaports' for Oklahoma," U. S. News and World Report, LIV, No. 6 (Feb. 11, 1963), 66-69. Kerr, Land, 302.

[85]Office of Senator Kerr, Fact Sheet on the Arkansas River Navigation Project, 2.

In 1960, the Engineers estimated the cost/benefit ratio -- the economic justification for a project such as the Arkansas -- at 1.1 to 1.[86] This ratio is a changing figure, and one subject to varying interpretation. In the mid-1940's before Congress, Newton Graham asserted that the public benefits would be $1.97 per dollar invested.[87] In 1945, the Arkansas-Oklahoma Committee of the two governors challenged the Engineers' ratio of 1 to 1.08 in construction costs vs. benefits.[88] Senator Kerr's book cites a 1957 Engineers' estimate for the over-all Arkansas River program as $1.40 in benefits for every dollar of cost.[89] The Arkansas Basin Development Association called it $1.20 in 1960, on value per taxpayer's dollar.[90]

With all these ratios the economic analysts Haver, Back, and Sjaastad disagreed. Instead, they found benefit-cost ratios for the navigation features of the program would range from .09 to 1, to .17 to 1.[91]

Some Costs and Drawbacks

A survey of available literature indicates that perhaps the Haver, Back, and Sjaastad study is the most carefully detailed critical examination of the Arkansas River Navigation Project. Besides the remarks earlier in this chapter, the economic study came to such conclusions as these:

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[86] The Tulsa World, March 6, 1960, III, 1.

[87] Kerr, Land, 181.

[88] Arkansas-Oklahoma Interstate Water Resources Committee, 7.

[89] Kerr, Land, 301.

[90] The Tulsa World, Aug. 17, 1960, II, 1, 34.

[91] Haver, Back, and Sjaastad, iii, iv.

> If the U. S. builds this navigation project, the annual operation and maintenance costs would be greater than expected traffic savings, therefore, it would be in the interest of the nation to leave the project unused . . . . Our recommendation is that the Arkansas project, particularly its navigation features, be deauthorized until such time change in economic conditions suggest the need for a re-study, as there is no evidence of a justified navigation development for this stream.[92]

Haver and associates disagreed with the Corps of Engineers both on possible tonnage and on the benefit-cost ratio, as mentioned above. They analyzed, among other factors, the potential tonnage in farm goods, oil, iron, steel, and coal traffic.[93] In finding the project uneconomical, the authors were considering the criteria of national economic efficiency, says Dr. W. B. Back, a former professor of agricultural economics at Oklahoma State University and now a government economist. In considering the project from the national viewpoint, some admittedly uncertain assumptions about the future must be made, Dr. Back says. In a few words, the economists were thinking of the national benefit, while the good pork barreler must think only in terms of "local costs and local benefits," the economist comments today.[94]

When the economic study was released, the Association of American Railroads agreed in general with its findings. It still does. Says Charles D. Curran, director of waterway analysis: "It has been our conclusion, based on our studies and our analyses of Corps of Engineers studies, that the project is not now and never has been economically justified."[95]

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[92]Ibid.

[93]Ibid.

[94]Back, letter, Washington, March 2, 1964, to the author.

[95]Curran, letter, Washington, March 6, 1964, to the author.

The three economists questioned whether a navigable waterway really makes so much difference any more to the growth of an area.

> Undoubtedly, the location of early economic development in this country was influenced by water for individual uses and transportation. A pertinent question, however, is: Does the relative rate of economic growth among localities in this country bear any relation to the present public expenditures for navigation development?

For their answer, they compare population and industrial growth of U. S. cities, with and without navigation, in the period 1940 to 1954. They conclude that navigation had nothing to do with the recent growth of these cities.[96]

A much-chewed bone of contention is the potential shipping tonnage. In 1957, the Army Engineers predicted a total of 13.2 million tons a year in barge shipping. Among other categories, the Arkansas would carry 3.39 million tons of oil and petroleum products and 1.49 million tons of other goods from the Tulsa-Muskogee area.[97] The Engineers also predicted 3.7 million tons of iron and steel products and 1.3 million tons of coal a year would be shipped on the Arkansas.[98] Not 13.2 million tons but only 1.9 million tons came the later deflating estimate of Haver, Back, and Sjaastad.[99] The Association of American Railroads did not diverge far from that conclusion and the rails centered their opposition on the Engineers' estimate.[100]

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[96]Haver, Back, and Sjaastad, 8, and table 9.

[97]The Tulsa Tribune, July 18, 1957, 1, 12.

[98]Office of Senator Kerr, Fact Sheet on the Arkansas River Navigation Project, 2.

[99]Haver, Back, and Sjaastad, iii and table v.

[100]The Wall Street Journal, May 13, 1960, 4. Ingersoll, Address, Kerr, in Congressional Record, 86th Cong., 2nd Sess., CIV, (March 17, 1960), A2378, cites figures purporting to show that Corps of Engineers predictions of traffic tonnage all were exceeded within a few years on the Upper Mississippi Waterway project, the Gulf Intra-Coastal Project, and the Illinois Waterways.

The economists, conceding that Oklahoma and Arkansas coal is strategically located near the Arkansas River, questioned whether its bulk could be shipped elsewhere competitively. It could not, in significant quantities, they said, because of such factors as distance.[101]

Yet the matter of bulk itself is significant, in the view of the Oklahoma rail executive Charles E. Ingersoll. He said in 1960 that most barge shipping consists of huge volumes of industrial raw materials and fuels delivered to one point. The comparatively small products of a manufacturing plant will move by rail, truck, or plane, he argued, and stimulate these competing industries. Since barge shipping does not easily lend itself to small-lot shipping, the factories consuming large quantities of raw materials and fuels would be the main customers for barge shipping, while their finished product will go out by rail. Ingersoll cited increased revenues of railroads in the Ohio and Mississippi valleys as evidence that the rails in waterway regions were doing better than the national average in railway revenues.[102]

Even in Oklahoma's best-known bulk export, the economists, Haver and associates, found "no significant barge traffic in crude oil" likely on the Arkansas River project, or, at best, "savings so small as to be negligible." They based this on the greater mile distances by water than by rail and highway, and, further, on the belief that barges cannot compete with pipelines.[103] As for iron and steel, the economists say that no more than ten percent of the consumption of Oklahoma and Arkansas would

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[101]Haver, Back, and Sjaastad, 38, 41, 44.

[102]Ingersoll, Address, Kerr, in Congressional Record, 86th Cong., 2nd Sess., CIV, (March 17, 1960), A2378.

[103]Haver, Back, and Sjaastad, 23 and table, 80. That is on crude oil; on refined oil I cannot understand their conclusions: 29, 30.

come up the river.[104]

Figuring large on the negative side of the ledger are always the cost estimates. This is a painful topic to the conscientious taxpayer. Engineers discuss it, but in muted tones. The estimated Federal cost of the improvements on the Arkansas River and tributaries, centering on navigation features, was precisely $1,201,850,000 in July, 1962.[105] There has been a little confusion about the cost of the navigation project itself, as apart from other purposes in the Arkansas River program. Not counting the power development, the Arkansas River Navigation Project was estimated at $864.2 millions in 1961.[106] The year before, the estimate was $855.5 millions.[107] These navigation tables omit the hydroelectric features. This means not counting the big-three dams, which cost about $286.6 millions. (However, part of these dams should be considered as navigational, for they stop the silt and store water to float barges in dry season.) The individual costs of these three big Oklahoma dams are: Oologah, $39.8 millions; Eufaula, $120 millions; and Keystone, $127 millions.[108]

The cost breakdown on the $1.2 billions includes, as Time lamented, bank stabilization of the Arkansas River. "To shore up the sandy, crumbling banks of the Arkansas, the project will spend $118.5 million alone on dikes and retaining walls."[109] The $1.2-billion total is "more than

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[104]Ibid., 37.

[105]U. S. Army, Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers, 1962, II, 872-873.

[106]Ibid., 1961, II, 863.

[107]Ibid., 792-793.

[108]Ibid., 1962, II, 872-873.

[109]"Rivers; Competition for Catfish," Time, LXXX, (Oct. 12, 1962), 27. See also Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers, 1962, II, 872-873.

either the Panama Canal or the St. Lawrence Seaway" and this on a project that started out at $435 millions in estimated cost.[110] The biggest single category is the navigation locks and dams at $449 millions. There are about eighteen of them, costing $13 millions to $48 millions each.[111]

Besides the three multiple-purpose dams mentioned and the $118 millions in bank stabilization, the cost for the bigger dams in 1962 was as follows: Dardanelle lock and dam, $84 millions; Short Mountain lock and dam (later named for Senator Kerr), $106 millions; Webbers Falls lock and dam on the Arkansas, $63.2 millions; and Ozark lock and dam, $36.3 millions. Not included is Markham Ferry, built largely by the state of Oklahoma.[112]

One caution to keep in mind when prowling the engineers' reports is their terminology. This caused no problem on the figures above. But the student of history should stay alert to the meaning of ordinary words that change their coloration in the context of engineering inventories of projects. For example, the Arkansas River Navigation Project is considered an improvement of an existing project, up to the point where the Grand River joins the Arkansas, because a waterway had been authorized to that point once before, in 1902. The Engineers concede that since little traffic had developed, the project is, in effect, a new waterway. And, "The upstream sixty-three miles of the project underway follows the unimproved Verdigris River to Catoosa, and this portion is considered a new

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[110] Wheeler, 56. The authors do not say how old this estimate was nor how many features it included. The St. Lawrence Seaway cost about $1 billion; the original construction cost of the Panama Canal was about $366 millions, with which inflation since then should be considered.

[111] U. S., Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers, 1962, II, 872-873.

[112] Ibid.

waterway for the purpose of this report."[113]

Finally, one of the functional criticisms of the big multiple-purpose dams on the Arkansas channel and the tributaries is the life of the dams, or, more precisely, their duration as silt-stoppers. The dams are designed to catch a fifty-year load of silt before the other uses of the dam are impaired. Also expected to help stop the silt are the bank-stabilization and upstream programs, said Colonel Francis J. Wilson, former Corps of Engineers officer and later an official with the Arkansas Basin Development Association.[114]

Brigadier General William Whipple, Southwest Division Engineer, discussed this problem of silt-clogged channels.

> During the last year and a half we have devoted a tremendous engineering effort to solving the problem as to how best to create navigation by locks and dams on a river that carries a great natural silt load. We knew this could be done; but it had never been before; and we did not know the best way to do it.

So, the Engineers worked out a new idea, he said:

> . . . simply the spacing of [the navigation] dams farther apart, with variable-width regulated channels between the dams, to provide equal sediment-carrying capacity throughout the entire length of the navigation pools.

This method eliminated three locks and dams between Dardanelle and the downstream end of the river; it would take 5,000 fewer acres of land; and "there will be a net construction savings on this account of $37 million."[115]

Kerr replied this way to criticism of the multipurpose dams, as silt

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[113]U. S. Senate, Select Committee on National Water Resources, Water Resources Activities in the United States, 23.

[114]The Tulsa World, Aug. 17, 1960, II, 1, 34.

[115]Address, Arkansas Basin Development Association, Tulsa, in Congressional Record, 86th Cong., 2nd Sess., CVI (March 14, 1960), A2254.

traps that soon become useless: ". . . no claims are made that it will survive for all time. Just about everything that man builds is temporary, as is man himself." Storage space for a fifty-year accumulation of silt is provided in a big dam. When the silt-control section fills up, "the dam can still be operated for its original purposes, for an indefinite period."[116]

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[116]Kerr, Land, 108.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE SENATE: THE LATER EFFORTS OF KERR AND OTHERS

The Appropriations Drouth of the Early 1950's

A few months before his death Robert S. Kerr was introduced on a radio and television program as follows: "He has been described by political observers as the most powerful member of the United States Senate." A few minutes later, Kerr's political power was mentioned again. Senator Kerr then demurred: "let me say that there is no man who is the most powerful of any in the Senate. No man in the Senate controls but one vote, and that is his own, and he doesn't always do that."[1]

In spite of this humorous contention that senatorial power had a diffuse quality, Kerr amassed influence in the Senate. One contemporary observer, who says Kerr moved toward the top by about 1961, says the Oklahoman's power rested chiefly on his number-two position on two key committees. These were the potent Committee on Public Works and the Committee on Finance. The Public Works Committee dispenses such pork barrel funds as those for government buildings, federal highways, flood control, dams and other conservation projects -- all of which are dear to the hearts of United States senators. The Finance Committee, also important, decides

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[1]Kerr, Interview, on "Meet the Press," Aug. 19, 1962, National Broadcasting Co. (Washington: Lawrence Spivak, producer); transcript, Vol. VI, No. 30 (Washington: Merkle Press, Inc.), 1, 4.

on all tax and revenue lawmaking. Not only had Kerr scaled these twin pinnacles of influence, but he became chairman of the Aeronautics and Space Committee, which besides legislation also deals with facilities and contracts in its field. Still other aids to Kerr were the presence of the former Kerr oil executive James E. Webb as director of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Kerr's close ties with the oil and gas industry, and his assumption of some power in lieu of the "passiveness" of Majority Leader Mike Mansfield of Montana.[2]

The assumption is that Senator Kerr put this power to use in converting the Arkansas River plan to a going project. Others, before, during, and after, helped Kerr. There existed a legislative base on which to build. Legislation of 1938 had provided a general plan of flood control and other purposes for the Arkansas Basin. Amendments in 1946 and later acts broadened the original plan for controlling the Arkansas. The parallel movements of flood control and navigation finally got together, as has been noted. In the Flood Control Act of 1960, previous laws were combined into a single plan of multiple-purpose development of the Arkansas.[3] Kerr sponsored, with the Arkansas delegation, laws giving congressional consent to Oklahoma, Kansas, and Arkansas for interstate compacts on the development and control of the Arkansas River -- in the important year of 1955.[4]

In the years before Bob Kerr went to the Senate, the total amount of money that had been spent by the Corps of Engineers on Oklahoma water resources was $63,245,000. Then between his election in 1948 and his

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[2]Cabell Phillips, The New York Times, Oct. 10, 1962, 24.

[3]U. S. Army, Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers, 1962, II, 873.

[4]U. S., Statutes at Large, LXIX, 192, 778.

death, the Engineers spent some $312,000,000 on Oklahoma water projects. This is the observation of an onlooker discussing Kerr's power.[5]

Kerr says he went to work right away in 1949, but the Korean War shelved public works in 1950. Afterward, the Eisenhower administration blocked the way to appropriations for the Arkansas navigation project with the executive budget-order in late 1952 which restricted expenditures.[6] Senator J. W. Fulbright of Arkansas, speaking of the key Dardenelle project, a part of the navigation and multipurpose plans, recalled the first construction money appropriated, $1.1 millions in 1949; but President Truman suspended that appropriation under wartime emergency powers. Except for routine [or "emergency," in Army language] necessary work on bank stabilization and levees, the project remained dormant.[7]

At any rate, none of the dams directly relating to the Arkansas River Navigation Project had been built by 1955, although some of the multiple-purpose units were done and others were under construction.[8] That was in 1955.

The navigation project had long been "authorized." But authorization was not appropriations. The money that had been dribbled out from time to time on the navigation aspect of the Arkansas River program was mostly planning and survey money. In 1955, Senator Kerr became chairman of the Rivers and Harbors subcommittee of the Public Works Committee. Appropriations came faster. In 1956, they tripled, and again in 1960.

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[5] The New York Times, Oct. 10, 1962, 24.

[6] Kerr, Land, 182.

[7] Fulbright was arguing for a $1-million appropriation, to allow work to begin on the Dardanelle project, in Congressional Record, 84th Cong., 1st Sess., CI, Part 8 (July 5, 1955), 9877.

[8] U. S., AWRBIAC Report, Part I, 66.

By 1962, the Arkansas River Navigation Project was getting more than $100 millions a year. The completion date on the project was moved up three years, to 1970.[9]

In 1955 and again in 1956, President Eisenhower had left the navigation money out of the budget. Both years, Kerr got the money restored in floor amendments, according to one critical account. Kerr was "in a position to trade favors." The sequence of the appropriations battles had run its course past the point of abandonment, though in 1959, President Eisenhower twice vetoed a public-works bill that included $39 millions of navigation money; Congress overrode him.[10]

Somebody in Congress was accelerating the appropriations for the Arkansas Basin. Senator John L. McClellan of Arkansas said that in 1962 and 1963 the region got about twelve percent of the entire rivers and harbors budgets, which averaged about $850 millions a year.[11]

By mid-1962, about a third of the $1.2 billions had been appropriated by Congress.[12] Later in the year, Kerr expressed his optimism about the project: "if the good Lord is willing I expect to ride in the first river boat that comes not only to Tulsa, but also to Oklahoma City."[13] Senator Kerr died; and in spite of a friendship developing between Monroney and Edmondson with President Johnson, the Arkansas River navigation program faced a decline in appropriations.[14]

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[9]"'Seaports' for Oklahoma," U. S. News and World Report, LIV, No. 6 (Feb. 11, 1963), 67.

[10]Wheeler, 58.

[11]The Daily Oklahoman, Oct. 19, 1963, 12. Kerr died Jan. 1, 1963. The budget normally goes to the end of a fiscal year, June 30.

[12]Office of Senator Kerr, Fact Sheet on the Arkansas River Navigation Project, 2. See also Oklahoma City Times, Sept. 19, 6; Sept. 22, 1962, 1.

[13]The Daily Oklahoman, Nov. 28, 1962, 13.

[14]Ibid., Feb. 2, 1962, 14.

Committees: Whence Come Many Blessings

On the assumption that Senator Kerr exercised much of the leverage that finally propelled appropriations to the Arkansas, the following pages will examine some of the possible sources of that leverage. In point of time, appropriations rose in fairly close simultaneity to the rise of Senator Kerr. A year before Kerr died, his staff member, Don McBride, totaled up the current Corps of Engineers projects in the states of Oklahoma and Arkansas, projects under construction, authorized, or approved. There were $1.4 billions worth in completed costs, of which $834 millions were in Oklahoma. Congress had actually appropriated $252 millions, of which $169 millions was money for Oklahoma projects.[15]

On the navigation project, almost half the money value of the project was under construction by early 1962. Navigation works begun represented $468 millions of the 1.2-billion estimate.[16] In the general nationwide field of public works, rivers and harbors received about $1 billion of the $5-billion public-works appropriations in 1962.[17]

Senator Kerr's power had grown. Looking back, Senator Fulbright of Arkansas commented:

> Bob Kerr did not have great seniority in the Senate but his vital interest in the processes and his deep convictions on many points led to his having influence far beyond that to be expected from one of his tenure.[18]

After Kerr got Kennedy's medical-care bill defeated, Newsweek called Kerr "the man who really runs the U. S. Senate," not Majority Leader Mike

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[15]Ibid., Jan. 19, 1962, 2.

[16]The Tulsa Tribune, Dec. 29, 1960, 7.

[17]Wheeler, 55.

[18]U. S. Congress, Memorial Services, 44.

Mansfield or Assistant Majority Leader Hubert Humphrey. "His sponsorship of a measure is practically a guarantee of passage; his opposition, the kiss of death."[19]

One of Kerr's first moves after election was to become assigned to the Rivers and Harbors subcommittee of the Public Works Committee. In 1955 -- a significant date -- when he began his second six-year term, he became chairman of this subcommittee. This put him close to the Federal purse. Other senators had to bargain. Support widened for Kerr's Arkansas project.[20]

Kerr, also an ex officio member of the Appropriations Committee for public works, became the man to see for approval of projects in the senators' home states. As Rivers and Harbors subcommittee chairman, he accumulated many political credits. "Every two years this subcommittee produces a bill that, in one way or another, puts dozens of Senators in the debt of the Senator from Oklahoma," said one writer.

One critic, unidentified, was blunter: "He turns everything he touches into pork."[22] Yet one of the committees on which Kerr served was the Joint Committee on Reduction of Non-Essential Federal Expenditures.[23]

By 1962, in the vital business of committee seats, Kerr had reached his peak. He was acting-chairman of Public Works and as such sat also on the public-works subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee.[24] His

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[19]Tuohy, 15.

[20]"'Seaports' for Oklahoma," U. S. News and World Report, LIV, No. 6 (Feb. 11, 1963), 67.

[21]Kraft, 27. "Death of a Senator," Time, LXXXI, No. 1 (Jan. 11, 1963) 23. Kerr, Land, 14, 15.

[22]Tuohy, 15.

[23]Brownson, Congressional Staff Directory, 119.

[24]National Aeronautics and Space Administration, "Robert S. Kerr," 2. The Tulsa World, Sept. 23, 1962, II, 1.

Rivers and Harbors subcommittee authorized the projects, while the public-works subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee voted funds for such projects. With Kerr on the appropriations panel sat Senator A. S. Mike Monroney.[25]

Kerr had come of committee age in the significant year of 1955. Specifically, he had worked up to ranking Democratic member of the Public Works Committee, which was chaired by Senator Dennis Chavez of New Mexico. And on Finance, he sat beneath only Chairman Harry F. Byrd and Walter F. George of Georgia. He had become a member of the nine-man Democratic Policy Committee of the Senate. Chaired by Lyndon Johnson, that committee generally laid out the strategy for Democratic senators to follow in important issues.[26] He was also the second ranking Democratic senator on the Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation, by the following year.[27]

When Lyndon B. Johnson became Vice President in 1961, Bob Kerr made another big move upward: to the chairmanship of the Senate Aeronautical and Space Sciences Committee. This committee, formed in January, 1959, with Kerr as only the fifth-ranking Democrat on it, had been headed by Lyndon Johnson. When Johnson moved out in January, 1961, the Democratic steering committee of the Senate named Kerr chairman, since those ahead of him already were chairmen of permanent Senate Committees.[28] Kerr was the first Oklahoman in ten years to become chairman of a standing committee.

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[25]The Public Works subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee was a new one; see Congressional Record, 84th Cong., 1st Sess., CI, Part 8, (July 5, 1955), 9857. The Daily Oklahoman, Jan. 19, 1962, 1.

[26]U. S., Official Congressional Directory, 84th Cong., 1st Sess., 1955 (Washington: Government Printing Office), 208, 210, 211, 233. The New York Times, July 10, 1955, VI, 10, 11.

[27]U. S., Official Congressional Directory, 1956, 227, 228, 230, 254.

[28]Washington Bureau, The Tulsa World, May 27, 1962, II, 1, 18; Jan. 11, 1961, 1.

Senator Elmer Thomas of Lawton had been chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee until his defeat in 1950.[29]

Thus, by 1962, Kerr's committee assignments read as follows: Space-Committee chairman; the ranking Democrat on Finance, after Chairman Byrd of Virginia; the ranking Democrat on Public Works and in charge during the absence of the ailing Chairman Chavez of New Mexico, and also serving as chairman of the two subcommittees on Public Roads and on Flood Control, Rivers, and Harbors; and memberships on the Democratic Policy Committee, the Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation, the Joint Committee on Reduction of Nonessential Federal Expenditures, and the Senate Office Building Commission.[30]

Kerr chaired an important special committee: the Senate's special Select Committee on National Water Resources, created in 1959 to study national needs in water for the future. This committee spent two years holding some twenty-six hearings across the country, before going out of existence. It published thirty-two Committee Prints on its findings.[31] Among its proposals were a recommendation that the Federal government make annual matching grants of about $5 millions to the states for their part in river-basin planning, and a recommendation that the nation approach its long-range needs in water through the method of comprehensive river-basin planning.[32]

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[29]The Tulsa World, Jan. 11, 1961, 1.

[30]Congressional Directory, 1962, 131, 233, 235, 236, 239, 264, 265, 267. Brownson, 1962, 119.

[31]U. S. Senate, Select Committee on National Water Resources, Water Resources Activities in the United States, passim. Kerr, "Water Needs of the Nation from 1980 to 2000," Address, Tucson.

[32]Kerr, U. S. Senate, Select Committee on National Water Resources, Committee Report No. 29, vi. See also Congressional Record, 87th Cong., 1st Sess., CVIII, Part 2, (1961), 1414.

Thus Kerr's committee power. If his last, and perhaps biggest, assignment as chairman of the Senate committee on Space seems to indicate that he was getting away from the navigation project, he did spend a good deal of time in those late years talking to space-industry leaders about possible locations in Oklahoma. If his interest became centered on the space-industry potential for Oklahoma, perhaps he was thinking of a barge-way to the Houston-Canaveral crescent.[33]

Methods of Operation

In the United States Senate, Robert Kerr had his own methods of achieving what he wanted. He usually worked independently, and directly with the chairmen of committees. At times he bypassed the regular Democratic leadership of the Senate itself.[34] In going after the space-industry business, Kerr, Monroney, and others of the Oklahoma delegation worked "behind the scenes." Again, "he gets what he wants, or most of it anyway, by old fashioned horse-trading behind the scenes."[35]

Another part of the Kerr repertoire was persuasion. Senator Clinton Anderson of New Mexico relates how Kerr could carry others along with himself in his enthusiasm for a cause. Some time after the start of their first terms in the Senate,

> . . .he called me one day and told me that I was going to Oklahoma City for a meeting of the Arkansas, Red, and White River group. I tried to assure him that I had made no commitment of any kind to go. He assured me that I had. [A check of Senator Anderson's files showed no such commitment but,] Nonetheless, I went. I was on his plane

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[33]"'Seaports' for Oklahoma," U. S. News and World Report, LIV, No. 6 (Feb. 11, 1963), 68.

[34]Tuohy, 16.

[35]Jack Cleland, Washington Bureau, The Tulsa World, May 27, 1962, II, 1, 18, in an article on Kerr's efforts to make Tulsa the "Space Capital."

> that afternoon, because he was determined that I should go there and because of what he was trying to do to make sure that a great development took place.
>
> I made no contribution, except to hold up my hand at the meeting and to say that I was willing to support Senator Kerr in everything he had to propose for the development of the water of his State and the conservation of it for use in the future.[36]

There is a hint that Kerr the old protectionist could even go beyond his traditional limits. In 1962, to President Kennedy, the Oklahoman lent his vital help on a foreign trade bill that would authorize great reductions in tariffs. The first definite sign of Kerr's support appeared when that ranking Democrat of the Finance Committee took charge of the public hearings on the bill in July. Said a lobbyist for a protectionist trade group, "Now we can't even get in to see him." The lobbyist saw defeat for his forces.[38] Business Week speculated that Kerr might have switched in exchange for President Kennedy's promise to move up the pace of spending and the completion date on Kerr's cherished Arkansas River Navigation Project.[39] But Kerr said he worked for Kennedy's trade bill because it would help the United States deal with the "third big power," the European Common Market set up against the Communists.[40]

Besides persuasion, horse trading on occasion, careful study, and such quiet methods, Kerr's methods included his best known weapon: oratory. He was seldom at a loss. At a boosters' meeting in Tulsa in 1961, he said that with the opening of the Arkansas River, ". . . there will be an

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[36]U. S., Memorial Services, 50.

[37]"Kerr Switches Sides to Push Trade Bill," Business Week, No. 1717 (July 28, 1962), 84, 86.

[38]Ibid., 84.

[39]Ibid., 86.

[40]Ibid.

industrial run into this valley just like the run for land into the Cherokee Strip in 1889."[41] In his book, Land, Wood, and Water, he grew lyrical on the future of a well watered region.

> The AWR /Arkansas-White-Red Rivers/ basins region is one of the last frontiers of America. It is still uncluttered by dense populations crowded into jerry-built cities or by a careless hodgepodge of industry. Its immense storehouse of raw materials is relatively untapped. This may be our last and certainly our best chance to plan wisely for the crowded years of the next century. We can turn over to our sons a vast area of land still fertile, streams unpolluted, hills yet naturally verdant, and cities unspoiled by either smoke or smog.[42]

Kerr, the senator who "does his homework," usually brought some statistics or figures to give his listeners. Stabilization of the river banks would save 5,000 to 6,000 acres a year "of the finest farm land in our country," he said in Tulsa at a river meeting.[43]

Waterway traffic of the nation had been increasing 7.8 billion ton-miles a year since World War II, Kerr pointed out.[44] The industrial boom along such waterways as the Ohio, the Monongahela, and the Mississippi "thrilled" Kerr, but the time of the Arkansas too now had come. That last great tributary of the Mississippi still lacked navigation. "Due to the inexorable circumstances of history and geography, our region was partially passed up and penalized by the main lines of wagon, boat, and rail," Kerr reminded.[45]

In summary of Robert S. Kerr's ways of achieving what he sought,

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[41]The New York Times, March 13, 1961, 24.

[42]Kerr, Land, 343.

[43]The Tulsa Tribune, March 12, 1960, 1, 5.

[44]U. S. Senate, Select Committee on National Water Resources, Water Resources Activities in the United States, iii.

[45]Kerr, Land, 157.

Allan W. Cromley of The Daily Oklahoman's Washington Bureau, offers this analysis:

> As you know, there's sometimes a great gulf between authorization and actual appropriation of public funds. It was this gulf which Kerr bridged by means of legislative skill, subtle arm-twisting, and a lot of homework . . . .
>
> Exactly how Bob Kerr persuaded his hard-headed colleagues to appropriate the additional funds in /fiscal-/ 1957 is hard to define. He used every lever at his command. He held out the bait of other public works projects to other senators in the public works subcommittee. He traded. He made deals. He log-rolled. He was proud of his ability to extract the maximum from the pork-barrel.

More importantly, Cromley adds the following recollection to more brightly illuminate Kerr's habit of careful study, his horse trading, and perhaps to light up another aspect of the great breakthrough on the Arkansas log-jam.

> In order for Kerr to gain budget bureau support for the Arkansas Project, he had to get on the good side of the director or high officers of the budget bureau. Robert Merriam, formerly of Chicago, who had ambitions to go back into Chicago politics some day, was assistant budget director. It was in the closing days of congress. (I've forgotten exactly which year, but I think it was 1957 or 1958, a crucial period.) Before the senate was a highly controversial proposal to divert Lake Michigan water down the Illinois river to flush Chicago sewage away from the city. It meant lowering the Great Lakes an inch or two, and therefore was opposed by senators from the Great Lakes states, who also claimed it violated a treaty with Canada. Kerr, who seldom sided on issues not involving Oklahoma, was in this one up to his eyebrows. He took the floor in favor of the diversion bill. On the closing night of the session the senate was locked in debate on the diversion bill. Opponents centered their fire on the Canadian treaty. Kerr sat quietly through much of the talk, intently reading a document, which turned out to be the treaty. Seems the opponents of the bill had not bothered to read the fine print of the treaty. Kerr proceeded to cram it down their throats, proving that the treaty did not bar passage of the legislation. Why was he so interested in a Chicago water project? It showed up in the following legislative session, when the budget bureau proposed handsome sums for the Project, really getting it underway. The budget bureau had done a flip-flop on the Project. The appropriation in 1958 was $18 million and in 1959 it was $31 million. Merriam was repaying the debt.

> My reference to Kerr's quiet study of the Canadian treaty is typical. He never took the floor on any issue unless he knew more about it than anyone else. I've never seen him caught short.[46]

What about the financial burden on the rest of the nation, from the cost of the Arkansas River Navigation Project? To a friendly questioner worried about the national fiscal load, Kerr gave the following answers in a panel discussion in 1958 sponsored by the League of Women Voters:

> Mrs. [James] Hayes: . . . I want you to tell me that this is necessary nationally, for our whole economy, and I want you to tell me that this will really pay off.
>
> Senator Kerr: It will cost less per mile to make this Arkansas River navigable than it is costing on the average to build the national interstate highway system.
>
> Mrs. Hayes: But will the whole country benefit as much as the whole country will under the interstate highway?
>
> Senator Kerr: Well, every part of the country that has a river basin of this kind is having it developed. This is the last of the great tributaries of the Mississippi to be made navigable.
>
> Mrs. Hayes: I want you to tell me that this is necessary . . . .
>
> Senator Kerr: Well, I'll tell you how necessary it is. If we don't promote this on a basis that we want, fifteen years from now, the national necessity for its increased production through development will be so great that the Federal Government will move in here, and take this, and make it a Federal authority project, just as they did in the Tennessee Valley, and they will do it not primarily for our benefit, but for the benefit of the nation . . . . I think this is our last chance to develop this river basin the way we would like to have it. If we fail, which we are not, the future economic emergency would be treated like a national defense crisis, and Uncle Sam would draft our resources, just like he drafts men and material to save the nation from an outside enemy.[47]

More demonstrably for the national welfare, Kerr warned of the economic threat arising from Russia, which was pushing its own program of hydroelectricity and strategic inland navigation.

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[46]Cromley, letter, Washington, April 7, 1964, to the author. Concerning the dates he mentions, I judge from other sections of Cromley's letter that he is referring to fiscal years rather than calendar years.

[47]Kerr, Land, 295-300.

> A connected system of rivers, lakes, and canals now bring created in European Russia has great strategic value. A submarine, a barge train, or a fifteen hundred ton ship will be able to go from the Arctic Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea.[48]

And, always in the Kerr method, more flowing oratory to stir the senses and imagination of the Southwest.

> Once again, the boats of commerce will ply the waters of the Arkansas. Giant steel barges of petroleum, silhouetted against the western sky; the grotesque shapes of long pipes and heavy machinery; grimy barges piled high with the finest coal; the products and requirements of farm and industry; all will be going up and down the Arkansas and on into central Oklahoma. . . The hidden wealth, which has long awaited cheap transportation, will be utilized, and new cities and industrial centers will spring up where today only a shallow river hunts and follows a shifting pathway to the sea.[49]

Appropriations and Construction

In 1955, the year that appropriations began to break loose on the Arkansas project, also was published the massive report of the federal-state interagency committee. The status of construction then on the navigation project was described as follows:

> Although some units of the multiple-purpose plan are under construction or have been completed, the only works directly related to the navigation feature of the plan which have been constructed to date consist of works for bank stabilization and channel rectification at specified localities where the safety of existing levees, bridges, or other improvements is endangered by caving banks.[50]

Very little of the navigation project existed yet.

The year before, in 1954, when Kerr was running for re-election to the Senate, he listed his accomplishments during the first six-year term.

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[48] Ibid., 335.

[49] Ibid., 157-158.

[50] U. S., AWRBIAC Report, Part I, 66, and Part II, Sec. 4, 9.

He had fought valiantly, if unsuccessfully, for tax relief. He had fought to curtail oil imports. And so on, including his fight for hydroelectric power and R.E.A. preference. Near the bottom of his campaign statement, "I favor a more aggressive program of soil and water conservation, including flood control and an abundance of municipal and industrial water." Not a word on navigation. The senator from Oklahoma had not yet reached his key committee position and the navigation project still lay on the shelf. That was in 1954 and 1955. The logjam began to go in 1955.[51] The following pages will attempt to trace in some detail how Kerr and his allies shook loose the vital appropriations.

Representative Ed Edmondson of Oklahoma summarizes the action. The House voted to appropriate $900,000 to start construction on the two key dams of the time, Eufaula and Dardanelle. Navigation of the Arkansas could not come without the silt-catching dam on the Canadian near Eufaula, though for fiscal purposes the dam itself also could be justified by its hydroelectric production. The Senate added $1 million to start construction on the Oologah dam -- and this was "construction" money, as separate and distinct from "planning" money. Construction money is the green light. For the Keystone dam, the Senate added $150,000 in final-planning money. The President signed the measure into law, and that, says Edmondson, was the turning point.[52] Funds for the Arkansas River Navigation Project were provided in a section of the Public Works

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[51] The Tulsa World, Oct. 31, 1954, 26.

[52] U. S., Congressional Record, 84th Cong., 2nd Sess., CII, Part 2 (Feb. 14, 1956), 2571. Allan Cromley of The Daily Oklahoman Washington Bureau calls this $1.9 millions "the first break-through" for the Arkansas River Navigation Project, but thinks the following year more important. Aside from the $150,000 for Keystone Dam and $1 million for Oologah, "The White House specified that the money [$450,000 each] for Eufaula and Dardanelle be used for planning only." (Cromley, letter to the author, ibid.)

Appropriations Act for fiscal-1956, a section appropriating $401 millions for general construction under the Army's civil functions. The measure became law on July 15, 1955.[53]

The initial appropriations were small, but they were a beginning. When President Eisenhower signed the $1.35-billion public-works bill that first came up, he objected to 107 projects, costing perhaps $1.5 billions, that his budget had omitted. Many of them had not had detailed engineering studies, he said. Senator Kerr responded: three Oklahoma projects -- Keystone, Eufaula, and Oologah -- lacked budget approval, true. But they had received detailed engineering studies. Since Eisenhower objected not to planning money, but to the idea of construction money which signified a go-ahead, Kerr surmised that only Oologah and Eufaula were jeopardized.[54] It might be noted here that it is easier to push appropriations past the White House from the Senate than it is from the House of Representatives, says House Majority Leader Carl Albert.[55]

It was only some $2 millions, "but the mandate of the Congress was clear and decisive," says Congressman Edmondson. This appropriation for the three key dams in Oklahoma, plus Dardanelle in Arkansas, was "the great breakthrough on the floor of Congress in 1955."[56]

We can follow roughly the progress of the appropriations, if we cannot follow the individual courses of the participants. On July 1, 1955,

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[53] U. S. Statutes at Large, LXIX, 370.

[54] The Oklahoma City Times, July 16, 1955, 1.

[55] The Tulsa Tribune, March 14, 1964, 11.

[56] Edmondson, Address, St. Louis, Congressional Record, 86th Cong., 2nd Sess., CVI, Part 3 (Feb. 17, 1960), 2835-2836. As indicated, Edmondson felt the break-through came in 1955, and assigns a larger role to the House than do Kerr, Allan Cromley, and a few others, who call 1956 the more decisive year. Please see succeeding pages.

the Senate Committee on Appropriations reported out the Public Works Appropriation Bill for the ensuing fiscal-1956. Of these four vital elements of the navigation project -- Dardanelle, Eufaula, Keystone, and Oologah -- the President's Bureau of the Budget had earmarked not a cent.[57] The House had inserted construction money: $450,000 for Dardanelle, which the Senate subcommittee let stand. The House had inserted $450,000 for Eufaula, which the subcommittee approved. But the House had let Keystone and Oologah remain unbudgeted. The Senate subcommittee dropped in $450,000 construction money on Keystone and $1 million on Oologah.[58]

The matter went into joint conference of the two chambers. When the joint conference finished wrestling out the matter, Oologah still had the $1 million the Senate had inserted, Keystone's $450,000 which the Senate had inserted was pared to $150,000 of "planning" money, and the House's $450,000 on each of Dardanelle and Eufaula stayed as it had been. All items were construction money except as here noted.[59] The conference committee of the two houses had taken less than a week, reporting on July 7, 1955.[60]

Although President Eisenhower signed the Army civil-functions

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[57]U. S. Senate, Committee on Appropriations, Committee Report, Public Works Appropriation Bill, 1956, Report No. 700 (Washington: Government Printing Office), tables, 17, 24. See also Congressional Record, 84th Cong., 1st Sess., CI, Part 8, (July 13, 1955), 10406, 10408, 10410.

[58]U. S. Senate, Committee on Appropriations, 17, 24.

[59]U. S. House, Conference Report, Public Works Appropriation Bill, 1956, Report No. 1085, 84th Cong., 1st Sess., 1955 (Washington: Government Printing Office), tables, 9, 10. For approval, see Congressional Record, 84th Cong., 1st Sess., CI, Part 8, (July 13, 1955), 10410, 10416, 10470.

[60]Congressional Record, 84th Cong., 1st Sess., CI, Part 8 (July 12, 1955), 10306, and tables, 10308, 10310.

appropriation bill that year, he expressed concern over projects that had, in effect, bypassed the scrutiny of the Bureau of the Budget. He mentioned Keystone, Eufaula, and Dardanelle, which boded ill for the future, Representative Edmondson commented later.[61]

Of these four big dams, without which there could be no Arkansas River Navigation Project, not a one had received so much as $1 million in construction money until 1955. Dardanelle, a $94.6-million project, had by that year received a total of $251,000 in appropriations. Eufaula Dam, a $153-million project, had received only $950,000. Keystone Dam, a $137-million job, only $651,000. And Oologah, a $31.4-million project, had received only $392,000 in construction money by the year 1955.[62]

The trickle of appropriations for construction had begun in 1955. The next year brought more, but not without a struggle. This too tested the strength of the opposing forces.

Senator Kerr chaired the hearings on the projects contained in the Omnibus Rivers and Harbors and Flood Control Act, passed in 1956. With $1.6 billions for the fiscal year, it was pocket-vetoed by Eisenhower.[63] Although the President had signed the appropriations bill in 1955, his budget message in 1956 ventured what was criticized as an unconstitutional "item veto" -- that is, simply leaving funds out of the budget.[64] Eisenhower's budget message had this to say about the Arkansas River Navigation Project:

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[61] Congressional Record, 84th Cong., 2nd Sess, CII, Part 2, (Feb. 14, 1956), 2572.

[62] U. S. Senate, Committee on Appropriations, Report, tables, 17, 24.

[63] U. S. Congressional Record, 82nd Cong., 2nd Sess., CII, Part 11, (July 27, 1956), 15033.

[64] Representative Ed Edmondson's criticism, Ibid., Part 2 (Feb. 14, 1956), 2572.

> Funds were added by the Congress to the 1956 budget to begin construction of Eufaula Reservoir and Dardanelle lock and dam. This would, in effect, commit the Federal Government to a cost of over 1 billion dollars for the development of the Arkansas River for navigation, since the major benefits from these two structures would not be realized until the entire navigation development is completed. I regard the development of the Arkansas River for navigation as not being of sufficiently high priority at this time to justify the large financial commitment. Therefore, I am not requesting funds for continuation of work on these two structures.[65]

Eisenhower's "item veto" of these Arkansas projects was based on the argument that thirty-two of the projects, involving over $530 millions, had not been reviewed[66] previously by the Chief of Engineers, as required by the Rivers and Harbors and Flood Control Act of 1954. Further, the President felt that some of the projects called for insufficient local participation.[67] What followed the popular chief executive's message is recalled by Cromley:

> Usually this kind of outright opposition by the White House seals the fate of an individual public works project. Nevertheless, Kerr persuaded the senate, and the house ultimately, to appropriate more than the White House requested . . . . congress provided an additional $4.4 million to begin actual construction of Keystone, Eufaula, and Dardanelle lock and dam, near Dardanelle, Ark. This was the big breakthrough, because it committed the Project to eventual completion.[68]

Kerr passed some of the credit for the 1956 success on to others. He listed the combined efforts of the Oklahoma and Arkansas delegations -- including Monroney and Representatives Albert, Edmondson, and Steed --

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[65]U. S., President Eisenhower, Message, (House Doc. No. 256) Congressional Record, 82nd Cong., 2nd Sess., CII, Part I (Jan. 16, 1956), 581.

[66]The New York Times, Aug. 11, 1956, 1.

[67]U. S., President Eisenhower, Message, Congressional Record, 82nd Cong., 2nd Sess., CII, Part 11 (July 27, 1956), 15305.

[68]Cromley, Letter to the author, April 7, 1964.

along with some pressure on the administration by Representative Page Belcher, Oklahoma's sole Republican, two successive votes for the money by Congress, and, not least, Kerr's posts on the Senate Appropriations subcommittee, with the final Senate-House conference -- all these brought about a thaw in the executive ice-jam.[69]

Edmondson also directs attention to the official endorsement of navigation by the House Committee on Appropriations, which on May 22 initiated an appropriations bill to continue construction for Oologah, Eufaula, and Dardanelle dams.[70] The House acted, providing $1 million for Dardanelle and Eufaula.[71]

A compromise between the two chambers was in order. In the Senate version of the next fiscal year's appropriations, the big four dams -- Dardanelle, Eufaula, Oologah, and Keystone -- would get $7.5 millions in "construction" money.[72] As reported out in June, the Senate version would make it possible to go ahead with construction of the comprehensive flood-control and navigation plan for the Arkansas River, said Senator Fulbright.[73] The bill had to go into conference committee of the two houses. Senator Kerr was one of the managers on the conference committee.[74] As finally approved by both houses, the conference bill cut $100,000 from the Senate figure on Dardanelle and cut $750,000 from the

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[69]Kerr, Land, 182.

[70]Edmondson, Congressional Record, 82nd Cong., 2nd Sess., CII, Part 7 (May 22, 1956), 8752.

[71]Congressional Record, 82nd Cong., 2nd Sess., CII, Part 7 (May 22, 1956), 8717.

[72]Ibid., Part 8 (June 13, 1956), 10180.

[73]Ibid.

[74]U. S. House, Conference Committee, Conference Report, Public Works Appropriation Bill, 1957, House Report No. 2413 (Washington: Government Printing Office, June 25, 1956), 1 ff.

Eufaula reservoir.[75]

The conference bill included $4 millions for Oologah, $1.5 millions for Keystone, $1.25 millions for Eufaula, and $650,000 for Dardanelle. All four were construction funds, as against planning money. President Eisenhower's budget had provided $4 millions for Oologah and nothing for the three other dams.[76]

On July 2, 1956, the President signed into law the Public Works Appropriation Act for fiscal-1957.[77] This committed the Federal government to finish the Arkansas navigation program, said Kerr. Twice Congress had voted construction money for the big dams.[78] "In signing the appropriations bill in 1956, President Eisenhower finally acknowledged that the Federal Government was committed to the completion of Arkansas navigation."[79]

There were more difficulties, but the main battle was over. In 1958 when Eisenhower vetoed another public-works appropriation bill, because it included "new starts" in that time of no-new-starts economizing, Kerr compromised with the administration through some Republican senators; he reduced the number of new projects.[80] The Eisenhower budget included $25 millions for four big Oklahoma reservoirs, or $6.4 millions more than Congress had provided the previous year. Senator Kerr pointed out that for the key projects -- Eufaula, Keystone, and Arkansas bank stabilization,

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[75]See list in Congressional Record, 84th Cong., 2nd Sess., CII, Part 8 (June 27, 1956), 10186-10187.

[76]Tables, ibid., 11118-111120, 11081-11084.

[77]U. S. House, Conference Report, tables, 8, 10.

[78]U. S. Statutes at Large, LXX, 490.

[79]Kerr, Land, 171-172.

[80]Washington Bureau, The Tulsa World, May 27, 1963, II, 1, 18.

the budget had recommended only $541,000. Not enough, Kerr said.[81]

On March 8, Oklahoma's second Democratic member of the Public Works Committee proposed tripling the $30-million allocation of the President for Oklahoma water projects, raising it to $90 millions for the next fiscal year. Democratic congressional leaders had already been demanding an accelerated program of public-works spending as a recession remedy. Of Kerr's proposed increase for Oklahoma, about $47 millions were for Corps of Engineers projects. Included in Kerr's proposal were $26.5 millions for Eufaula, over Eisenhower's proposed $4.5 millions; $20 millions for Keystone, against Eisenhower's $4 millions; $12 millions for Oologah, against $10 millions, and $8 millions for "permanent" bank stabilization on the Arkansas River, for which the President had budgeted nothing. This river-bank item would be classed as a new start, since money for "emergency" or routine bank-stabilization usually was a thing apart from the navigation project. The dams were already under construction by now.[82]

Kerr, as chief sponsor of the new bill after Eisenhower's 1958 veto, said the Senate Public Works Committee had reached a compromise in June with the Budget Bureau. The new bill, replacing the measure vetoed as pork barrel by the President, consisted of $1.5 billions in navigation, flood control, irrigation, and power projects. Its total was only $23 millions less than the vetoed bill.[83] Kerr's proposals for increasing the public-works budget did not challenge the President's $30,000 budgeted for a preliminary survey of the Central Oklahoma canal project. No increase was sought.[84]

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[81] The Daily Oklahoman, Jan. 14, 1958, 3.

[82] Ibid., March 9, 1958, D-8.

[83] The New York Times, June 14, 1958, 22.

[84] The Daily Oklahoman, March 9, 1958, D-8.

In 1959, President Eisenhower vetoed another public-works bill, objecting, again, to new starts. Congress enacted it over his veto.[85]

Kerr's chief staff associate, Don McBride, compiled a chronological list about a year before Kerr died, showing appropriations for Corps of Engineers projects in the Arkansas valley. (Significantly, he starts with the year in which Senator Kerr began his second term and became chairman of the Rivers and Harbors subcommittee of the Public Works Committee.) In the fiscal year ending in June 1955, Congress appropriated $5 millions. The next year the Arkansas valley appropriation went up to $16 millions, and in the line of succeeding years, to $17 millions, to $22 millions, $34 millions, $45 millions, $59 millions, and finally to $115 millions for the fiscal year ending in 1962.[86]

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[85]The Tulsa World, Aug. 26, 1960, 1.

[86]The Daily Oklahoman, Jan. 19, 1962, 1-2. The figures are rounded off.

CHAPTER VIII

EPILOGUE: DEVELOPMENTS, ASSESSMENTS, CONCLUSIONS

Sandbars Ahead for the Navigation Project

The day after Senator Kerr's death, the Arkansas project already seemed to have lost a little velocity. Senator Monroney, speaking on the loss of the Oklahoma senator, thought fewer projects would come to Oklahoma in the future and that the Central Oklahoma waterway stood a little less chance.[1] An executive of a newcomer industry to Oklahoma ventured the opinion that some of the space contractors who had planned to move into Oklahoma were adopting a "wait-and-see attitude."[2]

Some reassuring words came from Second District Representative Ed Edmondson at the annual meeting of the Arkansas Basin Development Association near Muskogee later in the year. Completion of the Arkansas project -- on schedule -- was the main legislative goal of the Oklahoma delegation, he said.[3] Senator McClellan of Arkansas was hopeful: Despite the hard early years of the project, "We are now, however, making satisfactory progress. We have finally achieved a momentum in appropriations and work, which, if maintained, will carry us to our ultimate goal by the scheduled date of 1970," he said at Coffeyville.[4] Two days

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[1]Washington Bureau, The Tulsa Tribune, Jan. 2, 1963, 31.

[2]"'Seaports' for Oklahoma," U. S. News and World Report, LIV, No. 6 (Feb. 11, 1963), 66-69.

[3]The Daily Oklahoman, Oct. 21, 1963, 1-2. The Tulsa Tribune, Oct. 21, 1963, 11.

[4]The Daily Oklahoman, Oct. 19, 1963, 12.

later, the House passed, by voice vote, a one-year authorization for $31 millions in appropriations for the Arkansas basin in the period to June, 1964. This was the amount needed to keep construction on schedule.[5]

In December, Congress had appropriated $89 millions for the Arkansas navigation program, in a $4.4-billion appropriations bill sent to President Johnson. It included $18 millions in construction money for bank and channel work in the two states, $11 million for construction of locks and dams, $18.5 millions for construction on Eufaula, $15.5 millions for Keystone, and $2.3 millions for the Robert S. Kerr lock and dam near Sallisaw.[6] President Johnson signed the public-works bill on December 31, 1963.[7] In it was $95,000 for a feasibility survey on the Central Oklahoma barge canal from the Arkansas through Lake Eufaula up Deep Fork Creek to a point near Oklahoma City.[8]

But clouds were gathering over the Arkansas. A one-year delay in completion soon appeared probable. Johnson's new budget asked for only $84 millions on the Arkansas project.

"The Corps of Engineers indicates that this is $15 million less than required for completion in 1970 and will mean a one year 'slippage,'" wrote Don McBride early in 1964. McBride, Kerr's counselor on water projects and now with Senator Monroney, was still hopeful:

> Every effort will be made to find funds to transfer to the items that are essential to making navigation possible by 1970, even if power and some other features are delayed beyond that date. [Monroney was a member of the Senate Committee on Appropriations.] It may be possible to secure

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[5]The Oklahoma City Times, Oct. 21, 1963, 1. The Tulsa Tribune, Oct. 21, II, 1.

[6]The Daily Oklahoman, Dec. 13, 1963, 1-2.

[7]The New York Times, Jan. 1, 1964, 12.

[8]The Daily Oklahoman, Dec. 13, 1963, 1-2.

> enough money to keep NAVIGATION on schedule although the project as a whole would not be completed until a later date.
>
> I believe the President weighed the relative importance of the completion of the navigation on the Arkansas against the tax reduction and his evaluation of the necessity of a balanced budget.[9]

Senator Monroney said that Oklahoma congressmen would try to restore the budget cut for the Arkansas project; perhaps, he said, they could recapture the $15 millions by trimming another part of the budget.[10] Major General Jackson Graham, director of civil works, explained that the Arkansas project was among thirty projects in a $90-million cut in the Corps of Engineers budget that kept it from rising fourteen percent in 1964. The rule of thumb under which the cut was applied was to "stretch out projects not nearing completion" now.[11] He too said the budget cut would delay completion of the Arkansas navigation project until 1971.[12]

McBride, in effect, questioned the fiscal wisdom of the $15-million budget cut. He argued that since construction prices rise five percent a year, a one-year delay in completion would increase the cost by $38 millions. He based this on the $773 millions remaining to be appropriated for the Arkansas River Navigation Project as of the fiscal year 1964.

Aside from losses in economic benefits that he had computed, McBride pointed out that the cities of Oklahoma and Arkansas had already begun organizing their port authorities and had invested in lands and engineering as their "local participation" in the project, aiming at getting the river into operation by 1970, and finally, that both industries and

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[9] McBride, letter, Washington, March 5, 1964, to the author.

[10] The Tulsa Tribune, March 14, 1964, 11.

[11] Ibid., March 13, 1964, 33.

[12] The Daily Oklahoman, March 14, 1964, 1-2.

cities have done their over-all planning on the basis of the widely publicized date of 1970.[13] The main casualties of the budget cut included locks and dams in Arkansas and Oklahoma, which are essential to the navigation feature of the Arkansas basin program, said Senator Monroney.[14]

Once cut, the appropriations might stay down, delaying the project four or five years, warned Senator McClellan. He too suggested that the $15-million cut was false economy.[15] House Majority Leader Carl Albert sounded more optimistic: "I think I know President Johnson. If Senator McClellan can find the $15 million needed, I think Johnson will let the Corps of Engineers spend it on the Arkansas."[16] Beyond that, speculation on possible further developments of a presidential-election year lies outside the scope of this study.

The Arkansas project had come a long way. Of the three vital upstream dams in Oklahoma, Oologah was operating, Eufaula was almost finished, and Keystone was more than three-fourths complete by 1964. From the flood-control standpoint, the river had been harnessed; altogether, seventeen reservoirs now lay up and down the Arkansas basin. More important for navigation, work had begun, though small, on some of the navigation locks and dams.[17] A navigation lock and dam project on the main river just below Pine Bluff, Arkansas, was beginning construction in the spring of 1964.[18] Likewise beginning was the last really big job of

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[13]McBride, letter, 3. The five-percent-inflation figure on construction prices comes from Engineering News-Record, McBride says.

[14]The Tulsa Tribune, March 14, 1964, 11.

[15]The Tulsa World, March 14, 1964, II, 1.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Verser Hicks, president of the Arkansas Basin Development Association, in his annual report, The Daily Oklahoman, March 14, 1964, 1-2.

[18]The Tulsa Tribune, March 13, 1964, 33. The Daily Oklahoman, Feb. 28, 1964, 4.

the Arkansas navigation project -- the $106-million Robert S. Kerr Lock and Dam, at Short Mountain.[19]

Assessments by Contemporaries

What of Senator Kerr and the project? Assessments of the man and the job by contemporaries might include that of the then Vice-President Lyndon Johnson, who called the Arkansas River a "laboratory" of the Southwest, adding:

> Just as history has identified George Norris with the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Arkansas River of tomorrow, bustling with the traffic of commerce and recreation, will be a living monument to the vision and leadership of Bob Kerr.[20]

Opinion from witnesses of Kerr the man might come from his colleagues of the key waterway state of Illinois. Senator Everett Dirksen, Republican, analyzed Kerr:

> Was there a secret weapon in Bob Kerr's life which made his accomplishments possible? There was. In fact, there were two. One was his unfaltering faith and the other his amazing capacity for doing his homework well. Every Senator can testify to Bob Kerr's skill and ability in handling the most abstruse and complicated legislation on the Senate floor.[21]

Senator Dirksen's Democratic counterpart, Senator Paul H. Douglas of Illinois, asked for assessment of Kerr and the project, as one of Kerr's long-time foes in the Senate, wrote only that "I don't think I should make any comment on Senator Kerr except to say that he was a very able man."[22]

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[19] The Daily Oklahoman, March 12, 1964, 3.

[20] From Johnson's introduction to the revised edition of Kerr's Land, Wood, and Water (1963), 7, which he wrote after Kerr's death.

[21] Dirksen, Memorial Services, 68.

[22] Douglas, letter, Washington, March 30, 1964, to the author.

Senator Fulbright of Arkansas eulogized Kerr as follows: "The Arkansas River navigation and Red River programs on which he worked so tirelessly will be only two of the more important monuments in our area to his efforts."[23] This idea of the Arkansas navigation project as a working memorial to Kerr comes up often in various sources. Says one who had observed during Kerr's years in the Senate:

> The Arkansas Navigation Project is, of course, Senator Kerr's monument in Oklahoma. I think he planned it that way. There was nothing dearer to his heart in the legislative field than the authorization and funding of the Project.[24]

Representative Ed Edmondson of Oklahoma even introduced a House Joint Resolution to name the navigation channel the "Robert S. Kerr Seaway." Instead, Secretary of the Army Cyrus Vance suggested to the House that it name only a part of the project for Kerr, one lying within his own state, such as the big Short Mountain dam. The House did just that, naming it the Robert S. Kerr Lock and Dam.[25] At the Markham Ferry project on the tributary Grand River, the dam built by the state-owned Grand River Dam Authority also was named for Kerr.[26]

Kerr's appointive successor, J. Howard Edmondson, praised the far-sightedness of the late Oklahoma senator thus:

> To the untrained eye the Arkansas River looked like a vast sandbed with too little water for navigation -- a scar on the face of our State caused by our own careless, thoughtless, and wasteful use. . . .

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[23]Fulbright, Memorial Services, 44.

[24]Allan W. Cromley, Chief, Washington Bureau, Oklahoman and Times, letter, Washington, April 7, 1964, to the author. Similar views of the navigation project as Kerr's brightest hope are expressed in Memorial Services by his congressional associates.

[25]Edmondson, Memorial Services, 187-190.

[26]The Daily Oklahoman, Nov. 29, 1962, 6; Jan. 3, 1962, 1.

> But to Senator Kerr it was no folly. It was a challenge to restore one of the country's greatest rivers to its original condition and uses, and in the process open the heart of the Nation to industrial development and production.[27]

A Washington onlooker summarizes Kerr's contribution to the Arkansas River Navigation Project as the deciding element in putting it over:

> It was the state's senior senator, however, who spearheaded the drive to make this dream a reality. It was Kerr who overcame Budget Bureau hostility to the program, who cajoled and bargained with lukewarm colleagues in both the House and Senate to authorize and finance the program, who prodded the Corps of Engineers to utilize to the best of its ability the funds that were eventually forthcoming.[28]

Besides navigation, Senator Kerr is credited with much legislation preserving water for future generations.[29] In the area of public works -- or pork barrel -- with Kerr as chairman of the Rivers and Harbors subcommittee of the Senate Public Works Committee, his native state did not go forgotten. Oklahoma received as high as an estimated ten percent of U. S. public works, at the peak of Kerr's power.[30] That power was still curving upward in the Senate when he died;[31] and the Arkansas-Basin appropriations for Oklahoma were rising steeply in that last year of his life, as has been shown.

Dr. Charles Evans of Ardmore, former administrative secretary of the Oklahoma Historical Society and editor of The Chronicles of Oklahoma (1944-1954), assesses not only Kerr's power but his influence on the

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[27] Edmondson, Memorial Services, 26.

[28] Jack Cleland, Washington Bureau, The Tulsa World, May 27, 1962, II, 1, 18. More detailed, similar views are in Chapter VII.

[29] E.g., Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri, Senator Monroney, and others, Memorial Services, 19 ff.; see also Chapter II of thesis.

[30] "Without King Kerr," The Economist (London), Jan. 12, 1963, 108. Cf. The New York Times, Oct. 10, 1962, 24.

[31] Washington Bureau, The Kansas City Star, Sept. 16, 1962, D-1.

nation in a forthcoming book. Among such men as John F. Kennedy, Dwight Eisenhower, Lyndon Johnson, Adlai Stevenson, and others,

> If I were asked which of these had kept America on an even keel longest and best I would boldly offer the name of Robert S. Kerr, United States Senator for almost fifteen years from the State of Oklahoma. I shall not debate this with anyone but I shall ask all readers to observe in the last ten years or more how Robert S. Kerr laid his hand upon the great Senate of the United States and shaped its course, thereby shaping the course of America more than anyone. He told in a large measure what bills should or should not pass in the Congress of the United States more than any man; even Kennedy in all his highest power could not stop him in such as cases as the Medicare. . . .[32]

Kerr took over the wheel only after Johnson's move into the Vice Presidency, according to another view.

> The power vacuum Senator Kerr leaves is the one he stepped into two years ago. Up until then, he had spent 12 years in the Senate building up seniority, acquiring influence, but not exercising active leadership, which was held pretty firmly in the strong political hands of Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson.[33]

A left-handed tribute came seven months after Kerr's death, from the vociferous Life; ". . . the grandest pork barreler of them all, a man who chivvied more than $1.2 billion out of the U. S. Treasury to adorn his native state." The periodical attacked the navigation project as "outrageous pork barrel."

> Diking [to fill in elbows of the river with silt, so the river would return to its main channel] is so costly the Corps once considered excavating a parallel 516-mile canal as a cheaper alternative.[34]

To these allegations of pork barrel, Senator John McClellan of Arkansas replied, "pure bunk," and an insult to the late senator from Oklahoma.[35]

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[32]Evans, manuscript, Adventures in Education; Setting Forth Principles of Education, With Addenda, 134-135.

[33]The St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Jan. 4, 1963, editorial.

[34]Wheeler, 20-27. [35]The Tulsa Tribune, Oct. 19, 1963, 14.

A further reply came from Kerr's son, Robert S. Kerr, Jr., who cited one advantage of the Arkansas project as "year-round navigation," compared with such seasonal waterways as the St. Lawrence Seaway, which, he said, the aggrieved periodical "didn't consider pork barrel at the time."[36]

The more precise criticism remains that of the railroad-financed economic study which stated that the taxpayers of Oklahoma and Arkansas would bear only about two percent of the cost of the Arkansas navigation project, yet enjoy most of the benefits.[37] An official report, however, by a committee of federal and state agencies chaired by the Department of the Army, had indicated satisfaction with the potential volume of barge traffic, while the Army Engineers had found a favorable ratio of public benefits to cost, concluding that the project would pay itself out.[38]

Later in the year of Kerr's death, Arkansas-River boosters dedicated their annual meeting to the late senator from Oklahoma; and their placards along the twenty-mile route to Greenleaf Park near Muskogee read as follows: "Arkansas River Project -- lest we forget -- Robert S. Kerr got it done."[39]

Conclusions

Robert S. Kerr served in the Senate from 1949 until his death on

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[36]Address, Oklahoma State University, Nov. 20, 1963.

[37]Haver, Back, and Sjaastad, 3. The opposition of President Eisenhower and others during the developments in Washington is discussed in Chapters VI and VII.

[38]AWRBIAC Report, Part II, Sec. 4, 9 ff. Lieutenant General E. C. Itschner, Chief of the Corps of Engineers, spoke of the prosperity that could follow development of navigation and hydroelectric power in the Arkansas Basin, in Kerr, Land, 183-184, and The New York Times, March 13, 1961, 24.

[39]The Daily Oklahoman, Oct. 21, 1963, 1.

Jan. 1, 1963. Up to the middle years of the 1950's, the Arkansas River Navigation Project was stuck on high center. In 1955 and 1956, it began to move.

In the late 1950's, part of the national, or eastern, press began to notice Bob Kerr had undergone some kind of transformation from the genial, rich but rather harmless, sorghum-toting occasional headline hunter of the 1952 presidential campaign, to a major power in the Senate, and that somebody was tapping the federal purse for public-works projects in Oklahoma, of which one project was the Arkansas navigation plan. They credited Bob Kerr. So have almost all other sources investigated. This study has found, as Kerr admitted several times, that he had numerous and varied helpers; the Arkansas River navigation movement was by no means a one-man effort. Senator Kerr probably supplied the margin of leadership and political acumen to achieve a break-through in construction appropriations during the last half of the decade of the 1950's. These appropriations committed the government to eventual completion, despite some regional criticism of the project as a pork-barrel undertaking for Oklahoma and Arkansas at the expense of the nation -- criticism remindful of that leveled at the Tennessee Valley Authority in its beginning stages. Most of the witnesses to the stream of events in Washington assign to Kerr the role of having led, having added new life to an old cause, and having helped to fuse the related movements for navigation and water supply into a potent combination -- for the navigation project is a segment of a multiple-purpose plan of river development.

On the project itself, the economic motive seems conclusive: The proponents were convinced that cheaper freight rates would accelerate the industrial potential and the exploitation of the minerals of the Southwest. Kerr and others wanted to get Oklahoma off a "plateau" of high

railroad freight rates which were hindering its industrial development. River-barge tows with their capacity for hauling great bulk at cheap rates would lengthen dramatically the hitherto short market radius to which Oklahoma industry and minerals were restricted by their need for bulk shipping and cheaper freight rates. Kerr even predicted a new steel industry rising in Oklahoma from the wedding of Oklahoma coal and limestone with eastern iron ore brought up the Arkansas River.[40] He saw the Arkansas Basin as a new American Ruhr, an Ohio Valley of the Southwest, not the least aspect of which would be the growth of a space industry to connect by waterway with the "Space Crescent" on the Gulf Coast. By the time of his death, the barge route to a point near Tulsa was assured, while his hopes of extending it to Oklahoma City were to require many years to realize.

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[40]Chapter VI discusses the economic possibilities, including a steel industry and the market for eastern-Oklahoma coal.

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Arkansas-Oklahoma Interstate Water Resources Committee. Additional Benefits in the Proposed Plan for Comprehensive Improvement of the Arkansas River Basin. Tulsa: States of Arkansas and Oklahoma, May 1945. 89 pp.

For the period to 1945, this official publication is valuable for detailed information on the Arkansas-River navigation movement, including the shipping, farm, and industrial aspects. Based on the Corps of Engineers' comprehensive plan, this work dwells on the case for navigation. It was aimed chiefly at the Corps' Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors.

U. S. Army, Corps of Engineers. Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers on Civil Works Activities. 2 vols. yearly; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1941-1962.

The reports, by fiscal years, are filed under War Department until 1948, then under Department of Defense.

U. S. Congress, Joint Committee on Printing, compil. Memorial Services Held in the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, Together with Remarks Presented in Eulogy of Robert Samuel Kerr, Late a Senator from Oklahoma. 87th Cong., 2nd Sess., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1963. 190 pp.

This is a collection of speeches and remarks in Congress by colleagues, given in the months following Kerr's death. Besides reminiscences, it contains useful biographical data. Of special value are the "Memorial Tributes" by Senators A. S. Mike Monroney and Representative Ed Edmondson and the "Remarks by Senators Clinton Anderson, Dirksen, J. Howard Edmondson (Kerr's appointive successor), Fulbright, Humphrey, Monroney, Randolph, Margaret Smith, and Smathers, and Representatives Carl Albert, Edmondson, and Steed.

U. S. Congress, Official Congressional Directory. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1949-1962.

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U. S. House of Representatives, Committee on Flood Control. Comprehensive Flood-Control Plan for the Ohio and Lower Mississippi Rivers. Committee Print No. 1. 75th Cong., 1st Sess., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1937. 14 pp. Charts, tables, maps.

This document reviews the Corps of Engineers' comprehensive plan at the time, which recommended flood control by diversion channels and reservoirs.

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This reply to Eisenhower's objections to the bill also includes a list of the projects involved.

U. S. House of Representatives. Conference Report, Public Works Appropriation Bill, 1956. Report No. 1085. 84th Cong., 1st Sess., Washington: Government Printing Office, July 7, 1955. 12 pp.

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Dealing with the controversy over little upstream dams versus big downstream dams, this report in part attempts to delineate the jurisdictions of the feuding agencies, notably the Department of Agriculture and the Soil Conservation Service vs. the Department of the Army.

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This epochal report, embodying the "Comprehensive Plan" of development of water and related land resources in the three river basins for the ensuing quarter-century, was prepared by an interagency committee chaired by the Department of the Army. Especially valuable to the thesis research were Part I, a summary which is the title volume; Part II, Sec. 2, Vol. C, Arkansas River Basin Below Keystone Dam; and Part II, Sec. 4, Navigation.

U. S. President (Kennedy), National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Robert S. Kerr. Washington: May, 1961. 2 pp.

Issued a few months after Kerr became space-committee chairman, this biographical sketch is located in the files of The Tulsa World and The Tulsa Tribune, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

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This inventory of possible basin-development programs is a general summary and guide to the use of the 23-volume comprehensive report of the same committee, listed above.

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Kerr was chairman of this special committee, which had some ninety studies made on national activities in water resources, held hearings across the country, and issued thirty-two committee prints on its findings.

U. S. Senate, Select Committee on National Water Resources. Water Resources Activities in the United States: Future Needs for Navigation. Committee Print No. 11. 86th Cong., 2nd Sess., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1960. 28 pp. Illus., tables, charts.

This report to the committee outlining the nation's waterway needs by 1980 was prepared by the Department of the Army; a main part of it is a report which favors barge navigation.

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Written in the first person, this book is both an exposition of Kerr's philosophy of conservation and a source on his activities in the navigation movement. The message: a plea for basin-wide development of U. S. water resources. Editing of the paperback (1963) was done by Kerr shortly before his death. The 1960 edition is cited except where noted.

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Written by a Daily Oklahoman editorialist and protagonist for the small, upstream, detention reservoirs, this book is an attack, of ably done rhetoric, at the big downstream dams. It is likewise critical of the navigation project.

Stephenson, Malvina, is mentioned here as a valuable future source. A Kerr staff member, press aide, and editor of his book, Miss Stephenson has been working for some time on a biography of him.

Monographs

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The authors are two University of Chicago professors and a former O.S.U. professor of agricultural economics, Dr. Back, who is now with Economic Research Service, Department of Agriculture, Washington. The study was financed by the Association of American Railroads, which has some copies of it.

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The writer examines inter-agency conflicts in principle, against the problem of carrying out a comprehensive water-resources program without such friction.

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This analysis of Kerr's power in the Senate appeared on the occasion of his defeat of Kennedy's medical-care bill.

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A favorable treatment of his business and political careers.

Sullivant, Otis. "Robert S. Kerr; 'Realist in Politics'," in Public Men In and Out of Office, ed., John Thomas Salter (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946), pp. 415-427.

The article is generally favorable.

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An editor's note says that two months of travel and research went into the article, which offers an extreme example of national editorial opposition.

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Written on Kerr's candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination, the article concludes: "But Wildcatter Kerr's one hope of striking the pay zone is Truman's endorsement."

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Technical Liaison Office, Corps of Engineers.

McBride, Don. Letter, Washington, March 5, 1964, to the author. 4 pp.

Now assistant to Senator A. S. Mike Monroney, McBride was Senator Kerr's right-hand man, or, as Kerr said, "the third senator from Oklahoma." McBride is an engineer, a water authority with Kerr since the governorship; and, "Don McBride was my chief consultant in the preparation of this book," (Land, p. 367).

Oral Documents

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This discussion centers on Eisenhower's fiscal policies.

Kerr, Robert S., Jr. Speech, on the Arkansas River Navigation Project, before Young Democrats, O. S. U., Nov. 20, 1963.

Attended by the author. Another account in the Daily O'Collegian, Nov. 21, 1963, containing most of the speaker's main points.

Dissertation

Ferrell, John. (Please see appendix.)

Newspaper Articles

(Note: This is a fairly complete compilation of the articles that bear directly on the thesis topic. About 15 more, of less significance, are mentioned only in the footnotes.

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U. S. House of Representatives. Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1949. House Document No. 607. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1950. 2057 pp.

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A P P E N D I X

APPENDIX A

AN OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE OF ROBERT S. KERR

ROBERT SAMUEL KERR was born in Ada (Indian Territory), Oklahoma, September 11, 1896; student at East Central Normal School, Ada, Okla., Oklahoma Baptist University at Shawnee in 1911 and 1912, and Oklahoma University at Norman in 1915 and 1916; during the First World War served as a second lieutenant with the 1st Field Artillery, U.S. Army 1917-19, with 9 months of oversea duty; captain and later major in Oklahoma National Guard, 1921-29; was admitted to the Oklahoma bar in 1922 and commenced the practice of law in Ada, Okla., drilling contractor and oil producer in 1926; chairman of the board of Kerr-McGee Oil Industries, Inc.; special justice, Oklahoma Supreme Court, in 1931; president, Oklahoma County Juvenile Council in 1935 and 1936; member, Unofficial Pardon and Parole Board, 1935-38; Governor of Oklahoma from January 1943 to January 1947; chairman, Southern Governors' Conference in 1945 and 1946; Democratic national committeeman, 1940-48; delegate to the Democratic National Conventions, 1940-60; elected as a Democrat to the U.S. Senate in 1948, 1954, and again in 1960, and served from January 3, 1949, until his death in Washington, D.C., January 1, 1963; interment in Rose Hill Cemetery, Oklahoma City, Okla., and subsequently at the Kerr family homestead near Ada, Okla.[1]

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[1]U.S. Congress, Joint Committee on Printing, compil., Memorial Services Held in the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, Together with Remarks Presented in Eulogy of Robert Samuel Kerr. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1963), 7.

APPENDIX B

REPRODUCTION OF A BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

6-10-57

THE DAILY OKLAHOMAN
OKLAHOMA CITY TIMES
THE FARMER-STOCKMAN

THE OKLAHOMA PUBLISHING COMPANY
OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA

PHONE CE 2-3311
E. K. GAYLORD, PRESIDENT

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

NAME KERR (LAST) ROBERT (FIRST) SAMUEL (MIDDLE)

Date of Birth September 11, 1896 **Place of Birth** Ada, Oklahoma

Address (Present) Sheraton-Park Hotel, Washington 8, D. C. (Washington, D. C. address) 327 N. W. 18th, Okla. City (Oklahoma address)

Where have you lived in Oklahoma? (Dates)

327 N. W. 18th, Oklahoma City (1947 to present). Lived in Oklahoma City since 1931. Ada, Oklahoma prior to 1931.

Name of Parents William Samuel Kerr and Margaret Wright Kerr

If Parents deceased, give date William Samuel Kerr (1940) Margaret Wright Kerr (July 29, 1953)

Names of Brothers T. M. Kerr, Aubrey Kerr, B. B. Kerr **Names of Sisters** Mrs. Richard Anderson, Mrs. Lois Winterley (deceased)

Married Yes **Date of Marriage** December 25, 1925

To Graycc Breene

Divorced No.

Children, Date of Birth, Present Address

1. Robert S. Kerr, Jr., (Oct. 25, 1926) 700 N. W. 39th Street, Oklahoma City
2. Breene M. Kerr (January 27, 1929) 6612 Hillcrest, Oklahoma City
3. Kay Kerr Clark (May 25, 1931) 9125 Auburn Drive, Indianapolis, Indiana
4. William Graycen Kerr (Oct. 18, 1937) 101 W. Duffy, Norman, Oklahoma

If any children are deceased, please so note with date

BUSINESS OR PROFESSIONAL

Business or Profession United States Senator / Chairman of Board, Kerr-McGee Oil Industries, Oklahoma City

Title or Specific Work

Please detail briefly your rise in your business or profession, with significant dates, employer (if any), etc.

1925-1926 - Okla. State Commander of The American Legion
1940-1948 - Democratic National Committeeman from Okla.
1942 - Elected Governor of Okla. (1943 to 1947)
1944 - Delivered keynote address, Democratic Nat'l. Conv., Chicago, Ill.
1948 - Elected to U. S. Senate for term beginning Jan. 3, 1949
1954 - Reelected to U. S. Senate for term beginning Jan. 3, 1955.

1916 - Magazine salesman for the Curtis Publishing Co.
1916 - Worked in law office of B. Robert Elliott, of Webb City, Mo.
1919 - Produce business in Ada, Okla.
1922 - Admitted to Okla. Bar and law partner of Judge J. F. McKeel, of Ada.
1926 - Entered oil drilling business. Joined firm of Dixon Brothers, Ada.
1929 - Oil partnership with Jim Anderson--Anderson & Kerr Drilling Co., Okla. City
1937 - R. H. Lynn and Dean McGee joined firm--Kerlyn Oil Co., Okla. City
1946 - Firm name adopted of Kerr-McGee Oil Industries, Inc. President of Company.
1954 - Accepted position of Chairman of the Board of Directors, Kerr-McGee.

Church Affiliation (if you are particularly active in church please furnish details, such as offices held or attendance record or other pertinent data)

Life-long Baptist. Baptist Sunday School teacher in Ada, Oklahoma City, and Washington for over 30 years. 1944, President, Oklahoma Baptist General Convention. Served as Chairman of Oklahoma Baptist Orphans' Home Committee. 1953, became member, Radio and Television Commission of Southern Baptist Convention. 1954, elected to four-year term as a Director of The Baptist Foundation of Oklahoma, and Vice President since Foundation first organized **Vice President**, Southern Baptist Convention.

Clubs or Societies

The Last Man's Club of The American Legion, Dept. of Oklahoma, Post 72, Ada; La Societe des 40 Hommes et 8 Chevaux; Loyal Order of Moose, Oklahoma City; Lodge No. 1640, B.P.O. Elks, Ada; Masonic Orders, including Shrine.

Education, When and Where, in Detail

Student, East Central Norman School, Ada, (1909-11; and 1912-15;) Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee; (1911-12;) University of Oklahoma; 1915-1916.

Authorship of books or Paper

Scholastic and Athletic Achievements, with Dates

Military Record, if any—Decorations, Awards, Citations, if any

Volunteered for service in World War I, 1917-1919; 2nd Lieutenant. Honorably discharged in 1919. Served with 28th & 87th Divisions overseas. 2nd Lieutenant, O. R. C., 1919. 1921, organized Battery F., 160th Field Artillery, Oklahoma National Guard, in Ada; Captain, 1921-1925; Major, 1925-29. 1925, elected State Commander of the American Legion in Oklahoma. (Youngest State Commander in nation)

If you Actively Participate in Civic, Public or Political Activities, Please Give Details

Spear-headed campaigns that gave Oklahoma City its two modern YMCA buildings, and helped raise $400,000 for an orphanage
* * * (1938, First Okla. State Chairman of Marchof Dimes)
1938, Chairman, March of Dimes. (Served twice as State Chairman fund drives to fight poli
1943 to 1947, Served twice as member of Executive Committee of National Governors' Conference
1945-1946, Chairman, Southern Governors' Conference.
1950 - Oklahoma Chairman of Brotherhood Week, sponsored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Also member, Board of Directors of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, Oklahoma City.
Fund-raising activities and membership drives of the Red Cross, Y.M.C.A., and Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce.
Chairman, Cancer Drive.
Headed campaign for approvalof bond issue for needed water supply for Okla. City.
Baptist Children's City--dedicated building for orphans in memory of my father.
Mrs. W. S. Kerr Memorial dormitory for women at O.B.U. in memory of my mother.
Oklahoma City Baptist Hospital fund-raising drive.
Charter Member, The Hall of Fame for Famous American Indians, Anadarko.
Honorary Member, Oklahoma Semi-Centennial Commission.
Member, Oklahoma Hall of Fame, 1956.
Member, Frontiers of Science Foundation of Oklahoma, Inc., 1955 to present.
Director, Okla. Medical Research Foundation, Okla. City,

* * *
1931, Special Justice, Oklahoma Supreme Court
1935-38, Member, Unofficial Pardon and Parole Board of Oklahoma
1935-36, President, Oklahoma County Juvenile Council
1946 , Chairman, Interstate Oil Compact Commission

Recreation and Hobbies

Fishing.

May We Have a Recent Photo for our Files?

If at Anytime you Wish to bring this Record Up-to-date, Please Send Additional Information to the Library

APPENDIX C

DISCUSSION OF A STUDY IN PROGRESS ON THE ARKANSAS BASIN

A study comprehensive in scope is now in progress on the entire Arkansas Basin and its tributaries, and should prove of value to future researchers in this field. The investigation, giving special attention to Senator Kerr, is being pursued by John Ferrell at the University of Oklahoma for his doctoral dissertation.

The tentative title under which Mr. Ferrell registered his dissertation with the American Historical Association in 1963 was "The Arkansas Basin Development Plan: The Dust Bowl in Transition."

Although he naturally would have preferred to study the field alone, Mr. Ferrell was kind enough to explain his labors to the author in detail at O. U. on February 4, 1964. The author, who since early 1963 was considering a Master of Arts thesis possibly on Kerr, then his work in conservation, and finally on Kerr and the navigation project on the lower Arkansas River, felt that little duplication would result. The author and the O. U. doctoral student approached their subjects not only from different levels but from different ends -- the author through the topic of Senator Kerr, Ferrell through a river-basin study that brought in Kerr because of his large role in the conservation program. Second, the author has intended to assemble a narrative on Kerr and the lower-Arkansas navigation project, while Mr. Ferrell is constructing a survey that is broader both in time and in geography, and if I interpret correctly emphasizes intellectual history. I have attempted to concentrate on the navigation episode, emphasizing its culmination during the later part of Kerr's career in Washington. Where feasible of course I have tried to avoid duplication of Mr. Ferrell's efforts. His study almost certainly should be investigated by students interested in the field, and with this in mind the author is including the following material.

Mr. Ferrell said his dissertation, to be completed in the fall of 1964, would have these two key points:

1. Analysis of Senator Kerr's motives: why he introduced the "Kerr Plan" for developing the Arkansas River basin and its tributaries. Further, the legislative background of Kerr's entire career was to be covered.

2. A history of the Arkansas Basin and its tributary rivers, dealing in some depth with the plans for upstream dams. (Probably two chapters.)

At the time Mr. Ferrell discussed it with the author, he had tentatively planned chapters of his dissertation as follows: "A Century of Navigation on the Arkansas River," an approved chapter on the early period of navigation, including steamboat travel on the White and Arkansas rivers; a chapter in rough form on the improvements of the Arkansas and White rivers in the same early period (1820-1910), including material on the Canadian River; a chapter begun by Ferrell on efforts to get improvements on the Arkansas River Basin in the period 1910-43; a chapter on upstream developments -- a history of irrigation and conservation; one on Kerr as

governor, his relationships with groups, his ideas, and affairs in soil conservation, irrigation, and navigation of the Arkansas; his Senate career, including analysis of his motives on the Pick-Sloan plan for the Missouri River and his thoughts on handling it by valley-authority means, his reasons for rejecting the idea on the Arkansas in favor of inter-agency development of the river; a chapter on the Kerr Plan; and, finally, Mr. Ferrell's thesis that the Kerr Plan "creates a conscious regionalism" in the Arkansas River Basin. This theory is based on the idea that a river valley knits together a people's attitudes, ideas, and thoughts into some kind of relationship. For illustration of regionalism created by a river valley, Mr. Ferrell suggested some basis in Frederick Jackson Turner during the conversation.

APPENDIX D

THE KERR PAPERS

These, the files of Senator Robert S. Kerr, were deposited with the Division of Manuscripts at the University of Oklahoma, with their use subject to the consent of the family. The interested researcher may inquire of Dr. A. M. Gibson, head of the division.

The condition of the Kerr papers seems to make their use difficult at present. In any event, The University of Oklahoma, after due deliberation, concluded in its judicious wisdom to reserve the Kerr papers for the study of John Ferrell, a doctoral student at The University of Oklahoma, for the time being. Before The University closed the papers to the author, he was most courteously allowed to conduct a detailed survey of the Kerr files, with the following results.

Type of Material and Quantity: These senatorial office files, consisting of correspondence, legislative material, and other papers, came in about four large truckloads. There are approximately eighty-two file drawers full, thirty-six pasteboard storage boxes, and 151 document boxes of material.

As is described below, the method of shipment disordered the papers, according to Jack Haley, assistant archivist, who spent some time with the author in the papers, during Dr. Gibson's absence. The great bulk of the papers are unlabeled, unsorted, and unorganized: sixty-three transfer cases of file-drawer size with contents unknown, about thirty-six cardboard storage-boxes with contents unknown, and thirteen file drawers that are labeled only "Kerr Material," direct from the canvas mail sacks in which they came. A second classification is a small quantity of partly organized papers: six file drawers of unorganized material from Kerr's early career; eighty document boxes (shelf type) with such labels as "Legislative Matters," "General Correspondence," "Postal Matters," "Washita River Basin," and of course "Arkansas/Red Rivers Basin Navigation," -- all from the early part of his Senate career. In addition, there are about seventy-one document boxes of his early period, including papers of Don McBride, administrative assistant to Kerr.

This material from the earlier years in the Senate had begun coming to The University of Oklahoma Library from Senator Kerr before his death, during the summer and fall of 1962. Like the later shipments, it also came in mailbags. Haley says that written and telephoned protests to Kerr's office brought assurances but no action; the papers kept coming in a mess.

Besides the Senate papers, The University of Oklahoma Library possesses a group of 120 document shelf-boxes of papers from Kerr's period as governor of Oklahoma, a slight amount of early-Senate papers, and some campaign material. This group of papers, received earlier, is fairly well organized.

Physical Condition: When the author visited the collection, the mood of Mr. Haley was one of dejection. It was ". . . the worst congressional collection we've ever received." "It will take at least two years and a minimum of $10,000 [students at $1 an hour] to get it in any general, very general, working order, even if we get started this spring."

Contained in standard file folders, the Kerr papers were shipped to The University of Oklahoma in canvas mail sacks. Most of these office folders had been tied in bundles, but many of these came undone, scattering the contents in the mailbags. "The working order of the files has been destroyed . . . they are in no order whatsoever . . . it will take years to do it," Mr. Haley said.

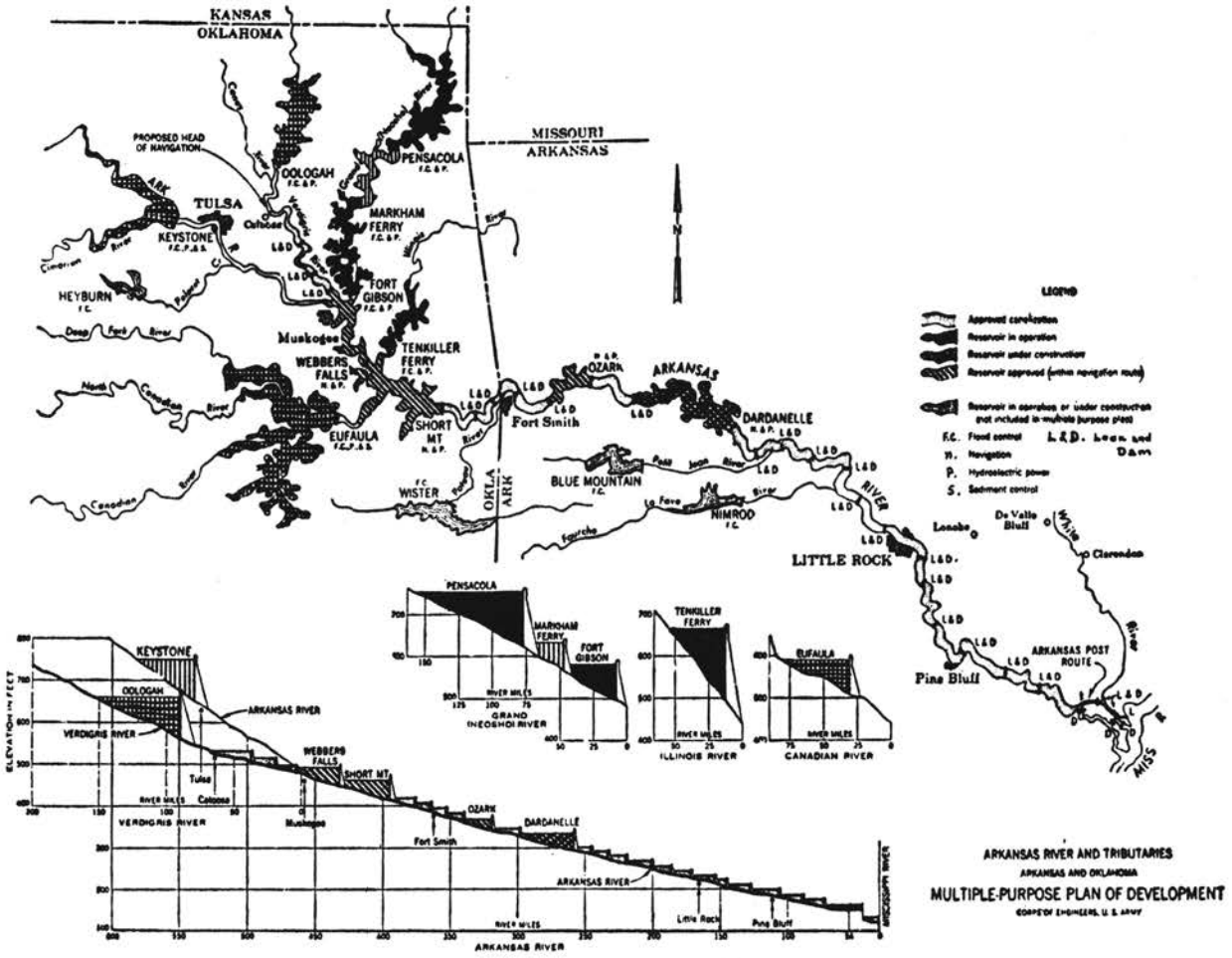
Most of the mailbags were emptied into the library's temporary containers (boxes and drawers). These were given only general labels, such as "Correspondence"; others had no labels.

Mr. Ferrell, The University of Oklahoma doctoral candidate, had begun working at one end of the stacks of boxes, sifting the Kerr papers for his dissertation on the Arkansas River Basin. As he worked, he was attempting to label the papers and shelve them in good order, but obviously had a big job ahead.

Rain was dripping from an overhead leak onto several of the pasteboard boxes of the Kerr papers. Discovering this, Mr. Haley the archivist sent out an urgent call for university maintenance workers.

APPENDIX E

MAP OF THE MULTIPLE PURPOSE PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT



LAND, WOOD AND WATER

VITA

Thomas L. Reynolds

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: SENATOR ROBERT S. KERR AND THE ARKANSAS RIVER NAVIGATION PROJECT

Major Field: History

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Stillwater, Oklahoma, October 19, 1928, the son of T. H. and Mabel C. Reynolds.

Education: Attended grade school in Stillwater, Oklahoma; graduated from Stillwater High School in 1945; attended McMurry College, the University of Louisville, and Oklahoma State University, from which last institution was received the Bachelor of Arts degree, with a major in history, in May, 1963; completed requirements for the Master of Arts degree in May, 1964.

Experience: Ten years of editing and writing for small and large newspapers, returning to school from two and a half years as staff writer on the Louisville Courier-Journal.

Membership: Phi Alpha Theta, national honor society in history.