MY WILDERNESS
THE PACIFIC WEST

William O. Douglas



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Those of us who have traveled the Middle Fork think this would be the greatest indignity ever inflicted on a sanctuary. The Middle Fork—one of our finest wilderness areas—must be preserved in perpetuity.

Man and his great dams have frequently done more harm than good. Margaret Hindes put the idea in beautiful verse:

Gone, desecrated for a dam—
Pines, stream, and trails
Burned and bared
Down to dust.
Now water fills the hollow,
Water for power,
But the bowl of wilderness
Is broken, forever.

I discussed this matter with Olaus J. Murie. "We pay farmers *not* to produce certain crops," I said. "Why not pay the Army Engineers *not* to build dams?"

Olaus laughed and said, "Good idea." And he went on to add that soon all dams for hydroelectric power will be obsolete.

We are, indeed, on the edge of new breakthroughs that will open up sources of power that will make it unnecessary, and indeed foolhardy, to build more dams across our rivers *to produce power*. Hydrogen fusion, with an energy potential that is astronomical, has not yet been mastered. But it certainly will be. Solar energy, though not yet available by commercial standards, is in the offing. Nuclear fission already exists and promises enormous energy supplies. Science may yet save the sanctuary of the Middle Fork from destruction.