

# Carter Reply To Drought: Stop Dam Construction

by Eric Lerner

President Jimmy Carter announced Sunday his answer to the drought emergency in the Western states—a \$268 million dollar budget cut to *eliminate* 18 major water projects including irrigation and power throughout the drought region. Speaking for the President, Environmental Protection Agency head Buzerros stated explicitly that the goal of the cancellation of irrigation construction in the midst of the worst drought in decades was to “convince people that more water is not the answer — we must simply cut back consumption.”

The budget cuts were announced immediately before a Denver meeting of Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus and the governors of the 17 drought-stricken states. Enraged and astonished governors, who found out about the cuts only hours before the meeting, confronted Andrus, who lamely replied, “The timing of the cuts was most unfortunate” and proceeded to enunciate the Carter drought program — water rationing and conservation.

Carter’s stated reasons for cutting the long authorized projects is that times have changed and the projects are declined as “unnecessary and environmentally unsound.” The Administration’s tactic is to box the opposition into a fragmented, case-by-case fight by requiring individual review of each project over the next 60 days by a special study group headed by Andrus. But Congressional opposition has already begun. (See below)

The cuts are only the first installment of a general review of all 320 ongoing irrigation projects in the U.S. They constitute the first step in carrying out the plans laid out in the Rockefeller funded program The Unfinished Agenda, which calls for the abolition of the Bureau of Reclamation and the end to *all dam construction* and irrigation works. By themselves, the already announced cuts would be devastating, stopping projects already partially completed in six water short states.

## *Bureau of Reclamation*

### *Projected Cuts in Western Drought Areas*

\*\*\* The Central Arizona Project, now 30 percent complete, has been forty years in the making from conception to development. It will provide water and power to the already constrained municipal and industrial supplied of Tucson and Phoenix and will irrigate 250,000 acres and provide 1.2 million acre feet per year. Wes Steiner, State Water Commissioner, explained that without it there will be no further development of the area, now the fastest growing state. “The legal battles have already been fought, contracts made with the Department of Interior, and authorization by a previous Democratic administration. Now with one stroke of a pen it is jeopardized.” Ed Essertier, an Andrus aide when contacted about the cuts explained, “as the C.B.S. Special Tuesday showed, there are serious environ-

mental problems in the area particularly the loss of wildlife habitation. This is an area for nesting of eagles...” Governor Castro was stunned and angry by the cuts. Alliances are being made with similarly affected states for the upcoming governors conference.

\*\*\* The Central Utah Project consists of five units of which the Bonneville Unit will provide massive water production for six counties. It has been redlined by Carter. Thirty percent of the total \$775 million has already been invested. The project has been ongoing for ten years, tested in court and approved by six presidents. Bob Hillbert, president of one of the water districts of CUP, reported if the project is stopped for any length of time, it would cause irreparable damage. Utah is suffering the worst drought since 1934 and water rationing is already in effect in many municipalities. The state legislature held a special joint session on Monday to protest the cuts.

\*\*\* The Auburn Dam, now slated to be cut, is the key element in the massive Auburn-Folsom South Project in California with \$200 million already spent on the dam and \$700 million needed to complete it. The project will provide water and hydroelectric power to the highly productive San Joaquin Valley, an area severely hit by the drought and facing cutbacks of 75 percent in water from existing sources this season. The entire project would irrigate 418,000 acres and provide large amounts of water and power to the Sacramento and East Bay areas, which are undergoing mandatory rationing now. (The Central Valley provides 25 percent of the nation’s food and 40 percent of the country’s fresh fruit and vegetables.)

\*\*\* The Garrison Diversion project in North Dakota would irrigate an additional 250,000 acres in the driest areas of central North Dakota and South Dakota which could become highly productive wheatland. According to the State’s Water Commission, over 90 percent of the canal system is complete. But Carter evidently is siding with the Audubon Society which has been attacking the project since late fall, and demanding additional environmental impact statements. The Garrison Dam, part of the Pic-Sloane Missouri River project irrigating 10 states, was built 20 years ago with the state’s stipulation that these additional acreages would be developed.

\*\*\* The South Dakota project begun in 1968 would ultimately irrigate almost a half a million acres. Along with California, this state has been the worst hit by drought. Most livestock has been sold off and small towns are hauling overland water for drinking. The state’s future depends on the development of infrastructure of the Missouri.

\*\*\* Three projects in Colorado: Fruitland, Savery, and Dolores which would irrigate a total of 110,000 additional acres of fertile fruit producing areas are threatened.

\*\*\* The Army Corps of Engineers has 10 projects slated for cuts. One is a 22 million dollar Louisiana river channel

project. Long under attack by environmentalists, this project would permit huge offshore rigs constructed inland (near Morgan City) to be floated into the Gulf of Mexico. Senator Bennett Johnston (D-La) has called the cut "unwise and unjustified." Sen. Russell Long's (D-La) administrative assistant, James Guirard, called the project critical to the nation's offshore drilling program. The project is already underway. \$5.1 million is slated for cuts earmarked for dredging the Atchafalaya River.

In all, more than 2 million acres of irrigated land scheduled to come into use over the next few years as the projects are completed will be eliminated if these cuts are allowed to stand. This land would produce more than 6 million tons of food. By comparison, total U.S. wheat

production is about 60 million tons. This \$250,000 cut will waste the more than \$5 billion dollars already invested in the projects and cause losses in food production of more than \$1 billion a year.

The policy initiated by Carter means the destruction of U.S. agriculture. More than 15 percent of all U.S. crop land is currently irrigated and yields on irrigated land are typically three times higher than on adjacent unirrigated areas: more than a third of all U.S. food production is directly attributable to the effect of irrigation. To allow the destruction of this productive capacity is to ensure mass starvation in every country now dependent on the U.S. for grain exports.

**EXCLUSIVE**

## The Next Ten Years As Seen By Brookings

*The Brookings Institution, a self-styled Washington, D.C.-based think tank founded in 1927 to define foreign and domestic policy for the U.S. government and dictate public opinion, has recently released a so-called "policy" blueprint for the Carter Administration entitled "Setting National Priorities, The Next Ten Years." The Brookings' perspective for the next decade celebrates the "aura of power" doctrine expoused by former Defense Secretary and current Carter energy czar James Rodney Schlesinger. The 600-odd pages of ponderous pronouncements by Brookings braintrusters all boil down to the following formula: the United States will maintain its leading position in the world by conducting a Schlesingerian global chicken game whose outcome will be determined by whether the U.S. or Soviet Union flinches first.*

*The Institution subsumes all discussion of the U.S. role in the world economy, the organization of government, and U.S. domestic policies in the decade ahead under the umbrella of America's military posture. In the opening sections, "Peace or War," and "Toward a New Consensus in U.S. Defense Policy," authors Henry Owen, Brookings director, and Barry Blechman, Brookings military expert, contend that all foreign policy should be predicated on step-function escalation of superpower confrontation in which traditional military strategy is supplanted by psychological warfare. Direct military action is to be undertaken by the U.S. at critical junctures to "convince" the Soviet Union that the United States "means business." Such military confrontations are to be strategically staged within an overall context of U.S. destabilizations against friend and foe alike.*

*This said, the authors identify the Middle East, southern Africa, and Europe as the immediate targets for disruptions leading to war — a road Carter and his associates have faithfully followed since taking office January 20. Aside from covert interventions in the political life of these areas by the National Security Council, State Department, and Central Intelligence Agency, Blechman proposes a sweeping redeployment of American troops from the Pacific Command theatre and*

*elsewhere to Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Persian Gulf. Direct American military intervention in southern Africa is not possible, the author argues, because the American population would not sit still for it. Therefore, Carter must wage war in the region through surrogates like Rhodesia's Ian Smith and South Africa's John Vorster.*

*Key excerpts from the Brookings national security and military posture statement follow:*

*"In recent years, discussion of U.S. defense policy has tended to focus more on the political role of the armed forces than on their military functions. The military establishment helps to set the image of the United States as a great power. The mere existence of large military forces is evidence of the nation's ability to play an important part in international affairs. That the United States has chosen to allocate a significant portion of its resources to the military demonstrates its ability and its willingness to underwrite its announced role in the world. Thus by their existence alone, the armed forces serve important purposes.*

*"By their location, military forces can be directed to specific ends as well....Consequently, overseas deployments make it more likely that the United States will live up to its announced policies. Moreover, during crises or at critical times in negotiations, changes can be made in the location, activity, or readiness of military units to buttress specific demands, to reinforce protests, and to make threats or promises more plausible.*

*"Obviously, accomplishment of these purposes is not automatic — the credibility of the announced aims of military deployments sometimes must be tested by confrontation, if not violence. The point is that the main purposes of the military are political or psychological. A large military establishment is maintained not so much to provide for the direct defense of the United States as to affect the perception of leaders in foreign nations, prompting them to see things in such a way that they will make decisions that will help avoid the necessity for direct offense." (emphasis added-ed)*