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POWER FOR VICTORY

An Address by

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on

Saturday, January 10, 1942  
1:30 p.m., E.S.T.

Over the National Broadcasting Company

Washington, D. C.

Today we celebrate the completion of two dams in the Tennessee Valley, built to provide power for victory in this war, the Cherokee and the Watts Bar Dams. The Cherokee Dam was built to store the waters of the Holston River and was ready on December 1, 1941, just 16 months after it was authorized by Congress. The Watts Bar Dam was ready and began storing water on January 3, 1942, a year ahead of schedule. Behind these two dams which we here today dedicate, there is now accumulating two and a half million acre-feet of water, water which produces power for the war.

The great project of the Tennessee Valley, created by the President in time of peace as a comprehensive regional program for flood control and navigation of the rivers in this watershed; for the storage and use by the people of the created power; for soil conservation and reforestation - this project has served the people and the land of the southern mountains, has brought health to their soil, benefits to their homes, new hope to their lives. It now takes its place, not theoretically but actually, to serve in the war effort which must preserve these benefits and the way of life to which they belong.

In the report of the Joint Congressional Committee Investigating the Tennessee Valley Authority in 1938, there was a brief paragraph suggesting the relationship of the power dams to national defense. But no one realized then how soon this relationship would be tested.

During the first world war two nitrate plants were built, but not fully equipped, at Muscle Shoals on the Tennessee River; and Wilson Dam was completed in 1925. Many attempts were subsequently made to deal with Muscle Shoals and the proper development of the river; until finally the Tennessee Valley Authority Act of 1933 combined all the public interests connected with the river, creating a regional agency based on local, state and Federal cooperation.

In its report on the T.V.A. the Joint Congressional Committee said: "In the main, however, it appears that national defense in the Tennessee Valley is hardly distinguishable from the public interest in general. In this inland valley, well protected from attack, it is obviously desirable to have a well developed system of water transportation available to relieve the heavy strain that falls on railroads in case of war. Industries located in this protected area would constitute a factor of security in case of any severe strain on the national fabric. National defense, as is now well recognized, depends largely on the possession of soundly organized economic areas safe from attack. The objective of national defense in the Authority, therefore, is chiefly a matter of producing a balanced economic situation in all the elements with which the program deals."

In the spring of 1940 it became apparent that the vastly increased need for electric energy for defense production in the Tennessee Valley area would soon outrun the available supply. The National Defense Council turned to the Tennessee Valley Authority. What could it do, and how quickly? The Cherokee Dam, the Authority reported, could be built in 18 to 20 months - in time to catch the rains of the winter and spring of 1942. And the Watts Bar

Dam, by all out efforts, could be speeded up to cut a year off the schedule of completion. Congress authorized the construction of Cherokee on July 31, 1940. On August 1 construction crews were at work. In 16 months the great dam was ready. When power is needed to make up for the seasonal low water on the main river, 3 huge generating units will be installed, with a 30,000 kilowatt capacity.

I suppose this was faster than any dam of such size had ever been built. Norris, which was a larger dam but which did not require the immense rolled rock and earth fill of from three to four million cubic yards that went into Cherokee, took 30 months; Hiwassee, half as big as Cherokee, took 44 months; and the Owyhee in Oregon, a comparable enterprise, 51 months.

I am convinced that this magnificent accomplishment is in no small part due to the way T.V.A. dealt with the 3,000 to 4,000 workmen on the job, men who in April placed 132,030 cubic yards of concrete - one cubic yard every 15 seconds; who handled 200 cars of stone and sand and gravel and 20 to 30 cars of portland cement a day. Representatives of organized labor had testified before the Joint Committee that quote "Collective bargaining had been brought to a pitch of excellence hitherto never achieved on any other Government enterprise," unquote. This mutual cooperation has made the men who operated the machines, poured the concrete, moved the mountain of earth and rock, feel that they were engaged in a tough and splendid joint undertaking. The Authority's agreement with the 15 unions was clear-cut and carried out by both sides. The agreement (signed a week after the statute became law) provided for rapid handling of jurisdictional disputes, employee grievances, and other labor disputes, and created a conference machinery of men and management which has successfully determined all labor standards and settled all differences, offering at the same time a training program for employees, and a carefully worked out program to prevent accidents and protect health. On both sides there is an attitude of trust and understanding.

The Cherokee Dam is a great storage reserve, serving the series of power dams along the main stream of the Tennessee River, one of the immense tributary dams, storing the water that floods down in the rainy seasons and comes in torrents in the spring when the little mountain streams swell to rivers and rush into the tributaries, holding that water until it is needed in the long dry season, when the streams are low and power is scarce; adding to power, holding the power in leash, controlling it with the will of man to the needs of men.

The stored waters released from Cherokee will produce 36,000 kilowatts of continuous power at that dam. And to this is added more than 84,000 kilowatts as the water passes through other dams down stream, at Watts Bar, at Chickamauga, at Hales Bar, at Gunter'sville Dam, at Wheeler Dam, at Wilson and Pickwick Landing.

120,700 kilowatts of continuous power, for the driest year on record, added in so short a time to the great T.V.A. system! Why, that will be enough energy to produce

aluminum for 1,200 great four-motor bombers, or 2,200 medium heavy bombers annually!

By the same Act, Congress authorized a large steam-electric generating plant at Watts Bar to produce 120,000 kilowatts of generating capacity. It will begin production this month. Downstream at the Wilson and Pickwick Landing Dams, additional generating units are being installed to help absorb the energy provided by Cherokee storage.

These combined projects will add more than 350,000 kilowatts of installed capacity to the T.V.A. system. But this is not enough; and four other dams are now rising on the Hiwassee River that will provide 210,000 kilowatts more of installed power capacity. Within a few weeks two of these storage dams will be closed, seven months after construction started; the other two will be finished before the year is done. Soon the installed capacity of the system will be almost doubled.

Sixteen months ago the Holston River was here, fed by tributaries, by little streams and rivulets. There was no force in the water and no authority.

Then there came a job for this river to do. The river was latent power and the power was needed. The Congress threw their good-will behind the plan, and they were joined by the men of strength, the men of labor. Caissons and forms went in from bank to bank and the great cement wall rose in the pathway of the river. And finally the dam was finished. The water came to the wall and it could go no further, and it spread out and filled the valley. The river became a lake. As the water crept up against the wall it was like the pent emotion of the people.

Now it is ready, now the pouring force of this water is ready to be used for the whole people. And this happens at the moment when the force of the people themselves is ready to defend the future.

A little time ago - it seems long now - we were a quiet, docile people, sometimes confused with small, complicated ideas, with little personal greeds played on by false prophets. And then the wall of danger arose in front of us, and the latent power of the people crept up to that wall, accumulated there, and rose until its force broke over the spillway. Now our weight is controlled and directed and our incredible pressure drives the dynamos. This pent-up force is only a little part of the latent power within our brains and souls. It takes the dam to develop the energy in water, and it takes danger to develop the victorious energy of the people.