

RECLAIMING ARID LANDS

Representative Sweet Discusses the Bill Now Pending in Committee.

GOVERNMENT CONTROL IS FAVORED

Under the Direction of the War Department a Survey is to Be Made for the Purpose of Determining What is Necessary.

WASHINGTON BUREAU OF THE BEE.

WASHINGTON, D. C., June 2.

Talking with Representative Sweet of Idaho today, the fact was developed that a contest will be inaugurated over the policy of the government relative to the final disposition of the lands of the arid region. Various plans are being considered, which the government shall dispose of these lands, but in a general way two theories only will be presented. One is the transfer of the land to the state wherein it is situated, the other is the reclamation of the arid lands by the general government, and then its disposition to settlers in small tracts, perhaps under the present law, adding to the price of the land the cost of its reclamation.

The difficulty in connection with the latter plan is the indefinite knowledge possessed by the government of the exact quantity of land capable of reclamation and the supply of water with which to irrigate it. In the absence of this knowledge congress is in the dark as to the amount of money, or even to an estimate of what would necessarily be expended in this work before the task is completed.

Recognizing this fact, and further that it is impossible for congress to appropriate without full knowledge as to the specific sum required with which to reclaim a specified amount of land, Mr. Sweet has a bill introduced for a accurate survey of certain portions of the arid region situated in the state of Idaho, together with the water supply of that section.

The bill places in charge of the survey the War department, which, of course, means that it will be directed by the chief engineer of the army, who has a few years' experience by maps and data covering each tract, whether to be reclaimed by canal or reservoir, congress will be in a position to know how much it will cost to reclaim certain tracts, and the extent to which homes might be provided for the people.

While the bill does not set forth in detail the line of policy inaugurated by this survey, yet the argument in support of it will be in favor of adopting precisely the same plan followed by the national government in river and harbor improvements. The land would thus be reclaimed in tracts of various sizes, and as rapidly as it was reclaimed be sold to settlers. Thus, the government would not be called upon to expend a very large sum of money before the returns from the sale of the land would be coming into the treasury.

This plan involves the introduction of local bills. It is believed to be necessary, because the same conditions do not exist in different states yet in the same state. There might be causes in which it would be advisable to transfer all of the land to the state wherein it is situated, but upon the whole, the plan proposed by Mr. Sweet is for the government to reclaim the land and sell it to the settler, who would be required to reclaim it, giving him a title to the water as well as to the land, and eventually transferring the control of the water to the state. It is believed by some that this bill to be the only method under which it will be possible to give to the home seeker a home over which he is the master. It is well known that in tracts reclaimed by the owner of the water owns the land, and, unless restricted by law, the man who owns the water can do as he pleases with it, and a system amounting virtually to that of landlord and tenant in the great arid regions of the west.

Mr. Sweet is of the opinion that a general transfer of these lands to the states would, in many instances, be equivalent to making tenants of the people who own the land. A system of reclamation by states would plunge young states into debt, while a gradual development of the water power and the securing of the lands under the eye of the general government, such a course would be in line with the policy declared by Mr. Reed in his Pittsburg speech. Many leading republicans have stated to Mr. Sweet that they would support this course should not be adopted. It is in exact line with the system of river and harbor improvements already in operation, and is distinct from the plan proposed, and is demanded by every sentiment connected with the establishment of free homes, and the control of the water power, and is a basis of perfect independence. Many believe that it is time for the national government to interpose between the home seeker in the arid regions and the water power, and means obtain control of the water channels of those sections, and thus virtually own the land as well.

SPECIAL PENSION EXAMINERS. Congressman Avery of Michigan has been investigating the subject of appropriations for the employment of special examiners in the pension office. He has ascertained that the appropriations for this purpose for 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898, 1899, 1900, 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 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