

Now, last year, you had a solid recommendation, or the year before last. Now, there has been a change of philosophy for various political reasons. I am just wondering if you can make any statement today when you think the Department will be prepared to make a solid decision on alternatives?

Secretary UDALL. Congressman, I want to be as candid as I can on this. You have asked a pertinent question.

Here is the way I see it and I am just giving you the personal impression of somebody who sits where many related problems are being studied.

It is going to take us about another 8 to 10 years to perfect weather modification if Congress gives the appropriations we need. It is going to take until 1976, let's say, or 1977, if we move on target to get the Bolsa Island project built and in operation for a year or two. If we have a National Water Commission—and both Houses are committed to that if we can work out the differences—its study is going to take 5 years.

All in all, I think that within 8 to 12 years, in that range, the country and the Congress ought to be in a position where they can begin to make some judgments on these alternatives.

Mr. TUNNEY. I would like to turn to page 15 of your statement. You indicate that—

Our proposals for the Colorado River Basin Project include works to salvage some 680,000 acre-feet of Colorado River water that have constituted river losses in the past.

Now, I know this is a question of hydrology and the studies you have done to determine what the losses are. But one of the things that I would like to ask you is has this hydrology taken into consideration that such places as Imperial Valley and the Coachella Valley, you have to have extensive leaching of the soil and in a sense, it is wasting water if you are going to talk in terms of irrigation in the Midwest, but wasting water to get the salts out of the soil to make it productive.

Now, does this figure constitute a recognition of the leaching that must go on?

Secretary UDALL. Congressman, let me say two things in regard to that:

I would say it does contemplate that. This is a sound irrigation practice. You have to leach out your soils. Hopefully, at least in some areas, as the leaching continues to take place, there will be less dissolved solids that will be picked up and the return flows will improve.

The only other thing that we have omitted here, and I have not had time to ask my people why, is that, in the long run, it may very well be that the biggest saving in water conservation might be lining of the All American Canal. Again, you would have to decide how you did it, what the economics of it were. I think I can say very straightforwardly that the normal leaching associated with sound agricultural practices will have to continue.

Mr. TUNNEY. Does it also contemplate that the water is going to get more saline as the upper basin begins to put in more projects and return flow to the river? This is one of the problems that we face down in that area. As the water gets more saline, you have to use more water to leach the soil.