

Whereas the development of the Oahe Unit will stimulate population growth in the project area increasing the number of farm families and attracting numerous other families to staff the increasing industrial developments associated with this multiple-purpose development thus reversing the trend of declining population that has been experienced in the state for a number of years: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the South Dakota Association of Cooperatives assembled in annual convention in Huron, South Dakota, this 23rd day of November, 1966, That this association reaffirm its support for the development of the Oahe Irrigation Unit and ask that early authorization is given this project by the Congress of the United States.*

Adopted by SDAC's Membership November 22, 1966.

Reaffirmed by Board of Directors May 5, 1967.

STATEMENT OF REV. ORVILLE M. HEPLER, REPRESENTING SOUTH DAKOTA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee: I am Rev. Orville M. Hepler speaking for the South Dakota Council of Churches, and other church bodies in South Dakota.

We do want to commend and thank the committee for holding the Senate Sub-Committee Hearing on the Oahe Irrigation Project at Redfield, South Dakota on May 22, 1967. At that time several hundred local people and Community leaders demonstrated to your sub-committee the grass roots interest and concern of the people of South Dakota for this project.

We strongly urge your favorable consideration and support of this project. There are many persons who favor this irrigation project simply from an economic viewpoint. In this statement of support we wish to go beyond the economic, to present some of the broader ethical, moral, and social implications of the Oahe project for the State of South Dakota, for our nation, and for the world.

The economic advantages of irrigating the soil through the Oahe project could have direct and far reaching consequences for the social and spiritual life of this entire area. The home, the school, the church and the entire community will be affected by what is or is not done as a result of this hearing. Through irrigation of farms, many families can find a new lease on hope and on life.

Farms which now do not produce enough for a farmer to take his sons into partnership could be enabled to sustain such a relationship, and so keep families together. Many marginal farmers would find that, where at present they must have additional income from off the farm to maintain their families, proper irrigation with a sufficient supply of water would increase their farm income so that off the farm income would no longer be necessary. Thus they could become full time and better farmers, with renewed hope and enthusiasms for the future.

Farm income affects all the surrounding community life, including our towns and cities. A good water supply is the life blood of agriculture. As agriculture became more stabilized with greater production, this in turn would help to stabilize the entire economy, be helpful in long range strategy and planning for our churches and schools as well as our other social institutions and communities. In our smaller towns with their declining population, these institutions which are at the heart of our American way of life, suffer most. Without an adequate tax basis for our schools we cannot provide the best educational opportunities for our children. Without sufficient people and financial resources the influence of the church in many of these communities will be lost, as more and more churches are forced to close.

We have mentioned the trend of declining population in South Dakota. This project could lessen or reverse that trend as the young people of our communities found new job openings awaiting them at the end of their school years. Some of the future community leaders whom we are now forced by economic necessity to send to other states would perhaps remain in South Dakota and our communities would be better because of their leadership. City development is, of course, closely tied to the stabilization of the population and economy. More effective city planning would be possible with a stable economy. New areas of conservation and wild life development would be possible, thus creating a more inviting atmosphere for living in South Dakota. This, in turn, could contribute in some small measure in helping to alleviate the overcrowding of our cities.