[From the Free Lance-Star, Fredericksburg, Va., June 18, 1968]

STILL A WASTE

Nothing has happened to change the opinion we expressed last September about the proposed Salem Church Dam—it's too big, too expensive, a prime example of a wasteful pork barrel project.

No, nothing has happended to change our opinion, which is reprinted below.

The one major development of recent months that bears a relation to the proposed dam is the announcement by the Virginia Electric and Power Co. that it will build a nuclear power plant in Louisa County. This is further proof that Vepco will continue to meet the power needs of this area and that the piddling power output of the Salem Church Dam is not needed.

The essential needs of the Fredericksburg area so far as the Rappahannock River is concerned are water supply, flood control and water quality control. But it makes no sense whatsoever to say that the Salem Dam is the best way to achieve these aims. Only 15 percent of the dam's benefits are involved in water supply, flood control and water quality control. Only 15 percent of the benefits are designed to meet our essential needs. The other 85 percent involve recreation, salinity control and unneeded electric power.

It's a waste of money to pour far more than $79.5 million into a project that is 15 percent essential. We repeat what we said nine months ago:

Let's abandon this infatuation with montrous dams and get to work on a project more reasonable in scope and more suited to our real needs.

[An editorial from the Free Lance-Star of Sept. 20, 1967]

TOO BIG, TOO EXPENSIVE

Tommorrow's hearing on the proposed Salem Church Dam before a Senate subcommittee will be a major step in the up-and-down progress of that much-debated project.

Without the subcommittee's blessing, the dam is probably dead. With subcommittee approval, the project will continue its legislative progress. Even then the dam would be subject to several more votes on the Senate and House sides of Congress and could be killed by a negative vote at any stage.

For more than a dozen years we have opposed construction of the Salem Church Dam as proposed by the Army Engineers. We still oppose it. We believe the Engineers' dam is a far bigger and far more costly project than is needed to meet the water problems of the Fredericksburg area.

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A close look at the Engineers' own figures will reveal that the dam is not designed primarily to meet the pressing needs of the area.

The engineers don't propose a project unless it is "feasible." (One veteran of the pork barrel game recently defined the word this way—"Feasible means there's enough political support for it, and there's a benefit-to-cost ratio of at least 1 to 1.")

On the face of it, the Salem Dam looks very "feasible." The Engineers say it would return benefits of $2.10 for every $1 invested over 50 years. That's an unusually favorable ratio.

The benefits stressed by dam proponents are flood control, water supply and water quality control. Those are the chief reasons for proposing river development. But when you add up the benefits for water supply, water quality control and flood control the total comes to only 15 per cent of all benefits. That's right —the Fredericksburg area's essential needs account for only 15 per cent of the dam's benefits.

Where do the Engineers get the other 85 per cent of the benfits they need to make the project "feasible"? The big item is recreation. Forty-one per cent of the annual benefits are attributed to recreation, the figure being obtained by assigning arbitrary values to such things as one man fishing for one day, a day's worth of water-skiing, etc. Is the need for recreation facilities so urgent that we have to build a dam that provides 41 per cent of its benefits in the form of recreation? Hardly.

The next biggest annual benefit is 23 per cent for power. $11 million of the cost of building the Salem Dam is allocated to hydro-electric power facilities that would have a dependable capacity of 81,000 kilowatts. There would not be a steady flow of power; the turbines would have to be shut down frequently be-