

A Playground For Earthquakes

(Phoenix Republic)

When a scientist gets to guessing he loses control of his imagination and goes wild. If he could be confined to ascertained scientific facts and had as a stabilizing force, a partner who himself, unable to extract such facts, as a basis for further discoveries, might put some restraint upon the wild imagining of his excited associate, then, we believe, the team would get somewhere.

We see now that a scientist of the U. S. Coast and Geodetic survey is blaming the Boulder dam, or rather Boulder lake, for a series of earthquakes last September, of such a mild character that we have not heard of them until now. If we had been apprised of them we would have attributed them to another outbreak of the political furor which had intermittently prevailed in the Colorado basin for the previous 14 years.

It is a possible theory of this scientist that the gathering of such a weight of water in Boulder lake is responsible for those and later shocks and "shakes." There is, of course, a considerable shift of weight gradually taking place there, but it is small in comparison with the sometimes unaccountably high tides that are thrown with such force upon our coasts, tidal waves suddenly moving a volume of water that would fill Boulder lake.

This is not the first time that earthquakes have been mentioned in connection with Boulder dam. One of the earliest arguments against the dam was that it was a favorite seismic playground though there was little evidence that there had ever been a violent earthquake in that region. The same argument might have been of equal force against the construction of a dam on any square mile on the Pacific coast, or for that matter, in the Mississippi valley or along the Atlantic coast south of New England.

Earth movements have been general from the earliest times in this country. The causes of them for the most part could be only guessed at.