

★ Harold L. Ickes

Perhaps the reader has been wondering why the Congress saw fit to pass and President Truman to sign the bill changing the name of Boulder Dam.

Boulder Dam began as a gleam in the eye of Arthur Powell Davis, of the Bureau of Reclamation, about 1910. In 1910, and until 1918, Mr. Hoover's home address, according to "Who's Who in America," was Red House, Hornton St., London, England.

Meanwhile, out in the West, especially in California, sentiment for Boulder Dam grew mightily. In time a bill was introduced in the Senate by Hiram W. Johnson, of California, and in the House by Philip D. Swing, of California. Senator Reed Smoot, of Utah, the Republican leader, led a filibuster against it in the Senate. But Senator Johnson and Congressman Swing, especially the former, fought it through. President Coolidge was in the White House and signed the bill. Mr. Hoover was one of 10 members of the Coolidge cabinet.

The new law gave authority to the Bureau of Reclamation in the Department of the Interior to proceed with the building of the dam. Roy O. West was then secretary of the interior.

As secretary of commerce in the Coolidge cabinet, Mr. Hoover was the chairman of an interstate commission selected to apportion the waters of the Colorado River as between the upper and the lower basin states. The commission made a report 25 years ago, the recommendations of which have not yet been carried out. The commission said nothing about a dam in the Colorado River.

After Mr. Hoover became President in 1929, he appointed Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur, secretary of the interior. For four successive years, he signed routine appropriation bills of the department which gave sums to the Bureau of Reclamation to put into the dam. In three or four of these appropriation bills, Boulder Dam was referred to as "Hoover Dam."

So far as I can ascertain, this fortuitous interjection of the name "Hoover" was the only thing that Mr. Hoover has ever had to do with this dam. Sen. Hiram W. Johnson soon learned that, in fighting the Boulder Dam bill through the Senate, he had to overcome the silent but strong opposition of Mr. Hoover, who could not fight it openly because he, too, was from California, besides which he dearly wanted to become president.

Shortly before the Roosevelt administration came into power, Secretary Wilbur made a surreptitious attempt to pin the name "Hoover" on to this long-suffering project. However, the dam was not finished and there could be no dedication under the Hoover administration. Franklin D. Roosevelt succeeded Mr. Hoover as President on March 4, 1933. Since that date, this project has been referred to in scores of statutes including Interior Department appropriation bills by its original and almost universally accepted name, Boulder Dam.

When President Roosevelt came in, it was estimated by

the engineers that it would require about five years to finish the dam. This date would have been more than a year later than the termination of Mr. Hoover's second term as president if he had been reelected.

However, the dam was finished two years ahead of time. It was completed because President Roosevelt in 1933 had allocated to it the sum of \$38,000,000 of Public Works funds and \$10,000,000 under the Emer-



gency Relief and Appropriation Act of 1932. While these grants were optional with President Roosevelt, only he could make them. On Sept. 30, 1935, President Roosevelt went all the way out to Boulder Dam to dedicate it "Boulder Dam" at ceremonies presided over by the writer, who was then secretary

of the interior. He was also public works administrator and as such had recommended to President Roosevelt the allocation of the money without which the dam could not have been finished when it was.

To paraphrase the late Al Smith, "a look at the record" shows that:

Hiram W. Johnson got the bill through. President Coolidge signed it. The Department of the Interior built the project. President Roosevelt found the money for its completion ahead of time. President Roosevelt dedicated it as Boulder Dam. President Roosevelt authorized the issuance of the Boulder Dam Memorial Stamp as of Sept. 30, 1935. President Roosevelt, on Sept. 11, 1936, pressed the golden key at Constitution Hall in Washington, thus starting the first generator in the Boulder Dam power house. The high-cost-of-living Congress in 1947 changed the name to "Hoover Dam." Q.E.D.!

N. B. Incidentally, Mr. Hoover has never believed in public power. President Roosevelt did.

It would be just as proper for Congress to change the name of Constitution Hall to King George Hall, as to name a great public power dam for Mr. Hoover, in absentia.

P.S.: A correspondent suggests that few people will ever think of Hoover without a dam.