

Don't blame too-high Hoover costs on the usual bureaucratic suspects

To the editor:
When I read Burton J. Simpson's article about cost overruns at the Hoover Dam visitor's center ("Up, up and away: Why the huge cost for dam renovation?" Review-Journal, Feb. 5), I was reminded of a wonderful line from "Casablanca." Near the end of the movie, Claude Rains turns to his staff and says: "Round up the usual suspects."

Mr. Simpson would have your readers believe that the Hoover Dam visitor's center costs escalated from \$32 million to \$120 million because of the Davis-Bacon Wage Act, legislation to assist disabled Americans, OSHA regulations, affirmative action programs, federal compliance personnel, environmentalists, "ridiculous" EPA regulations, and the Carter administration.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Those are just the usual suspects.

Mr. Simpson's effort to place blame elsewhere is a classic exercise in bureaucratic fingerpointing. It's always someone else's fault.

I reject that approach. My agency, the Bureau of Reclamation, is responsible for the cost overruns at Hoover. We were told to build a visitor center for a specific cost and we didn't do it. We let down the American taxpayers and we deserve the blame.

I'm less interested in pointing fingers and more interested in making sure such a mistake is never repeated.

Our report on what happened, why and how to prevent such a disaster in the future will be issued by March 15.

And that report will not blame someone else, especially not the usual suspects.

DANIEL P. BEARD
Commissioner
Bureau of Reclamation
Washington, D.C.

■ To the editor:

Congratulation. You have just performed another great public service by publishing the article, "Up, Up and Away," by Burton J. Simpson. This article, illustrating how it is possible, indeed almost inevitable, for the cost of a

government project to go from \$32 million to \$120 million plus, is the greatest argument for less federal government that I have seen recently.

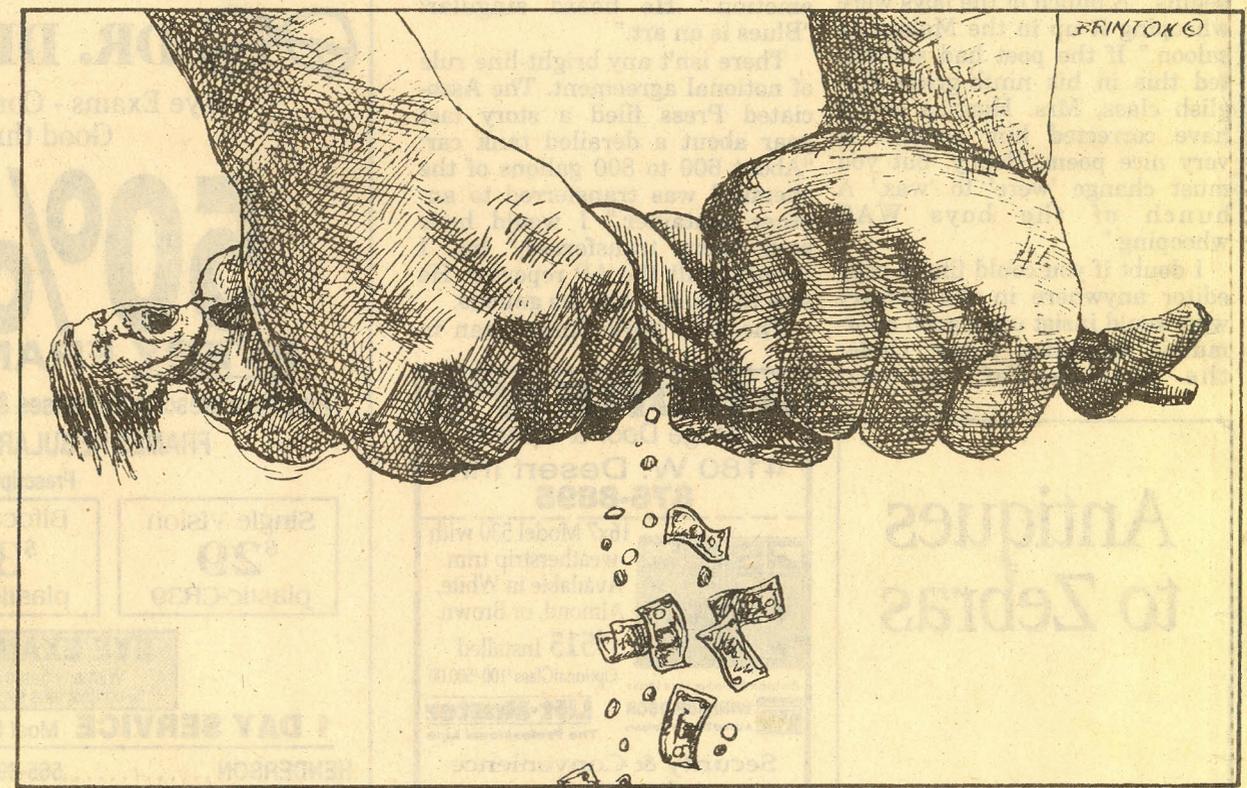
The saga of the Hoover Dam visitor center is probably surpassed only by the new Denver airport.

MANSEL E. PHILLIPS
Las Vegas

■ To the editor:

Daily, I read the Review-Journal's editorial page and silently relish the Jeffersonian attitude of personal freedom and free enterprise. Some of your editorials are of such significance as to motivate me to fire up my ancient computer and respond.

A Feb. 6 editorial refers to attorney Philip K. Howard's book, "The Death of Common Sense, How Law is Suffocating America." You state that, "The cumulative weight of years of regulation has created a system in which compliance becomes impossible, thus deeding absolute power to the whims of bureaucrats." Do we need more proof of this than the



previous day's special report to the Review-Journal by Burton J. Simpson, retired chief design engineer for the Bureau of Reclamation?

I'm beginning to understand how the Hoover Dam visitor center originally planned at a whopping cost of \$32 million has escalated to \$120 million. Mr.

Burton's report is a mind-boggling story of construction under the "cumulative weight of years of regulation." The visitor center calamity would be hilarious except for the spiraling costs. Someone has to pay for repressive regulation. Most often it appears in the form of inflation, triggering higher prices for

everything we purchase.

We must continue to be a nation of laws. The alternative, anarchy, is not inviting. But, the time for surgical repair of our existing tangle of laws has passed. At this point, a meat cleaver is probably the best approach.

KEN COX
Las Vegas