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YOU GO GREAT WHEN YOU GO GREAT NORTHERN



(Continued from Page 148)
of dollars" to the water users and the United States Government.

Straus had testified that the work-stoppage charge was "pure nonsense." In a defense summation which he refers to as his "Voltaire speech," Straus said to the subcommittee: "We have been accused of not being engineers, which is true. I have been accused of being a dilly-whacker, which may be true, and all manner of other accusations. However, I want to report to you that it is my firm belief that we have acted properly and within the law."

As for the many charges that the bureau puffed itself up too much at the taxpayers' expense, Straus said the Reclamation Law required him to inform the public to the fullest extent about what the bureau was doing. "Information is not disseminated by mumblings in a dark closet," he cracked, contending that his publicity network amounted to a "courageous educational program" and a policy of keeping the bureau's operations in a "gold-fish bowl."

Meanwhile, Senator Downey, an emotional man with a full-blown oratorical style, was regularly thundering against Straus on the Senate floor. "It was corn, but good corn," Straus now says patronizingly.

Downey was trying to get a modification or repeal of the Reclamation Law's excess-lands provision as it affects the Central Valley. This provision prevents water from the project from being sold to a farmer who holds more than 160 acres—or 320 acres between himself and his wife in a community-property state—and Downey argued that the unusual amount of underground water in California would make it impossible to enforce the provision there. He charged that Straus was lobbying against repeal of the limitation and also knifing him with anti-Downey propaganda.

Straus insisted that he was simply carrying out the sense of the 1902 law, which, he said, was designed to aid "family-sized farms" only.

California's Gov. Earl Warren had expressed doubts about the workability of the 160-acre limitation in 1947, and last year Judge Arthur C. Shepard, of the Superior Court, Madera County, California, ruled that the excess-lands provision is unconstitutional as it affects certain property in private ownership. The Hoover Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government has urged that the whole 803 pages of "contradictory" reclamation laws be brought up to date.

At the height of the bullbaloos over Straus and then Interior Secretary J. A. Krug, who got dragged into the investigation as a reward for giving Straus a free hand, Downey received one of those letters from Truman. "I think you ought to know that I need both of these gentlemen," the President wrote the senator on January 7, 1948, "and while I know you are on a tear and raising hell with both of them, that still doesn't keep me from being for them. Some time when you feel like it, if you will come down here, you and I can discuss the situation, I think, in a manner that will be to our mutual advantage."

Downey did not take Truman up on his invitation and in June, 1948, Congress attached a rider to the Interior Department appropriation bill providing that none of the money could be used to pay the salary of the Reclamation Commissioner or a regional direc-

tor of the bureau who did not have five years' experience as an engineer. This was an undisguised maneuver to cut loose both Straus and Richard Boke, the director of the Central Valley project, who had been a target of Downey's along with Straus. The rider stopped their salaries as of February, 1949.

In July, 1949, Downey agreed to drop the rider, in return for a complete investigation of Straus and Boke by a Senate Interior subcommittee under Sen. Joseph O'Mahoney, Democrat, of Wyoming. The subcommittee held hearings that put Straus through what by now he was complaining of as a "chronic performance." But O'Mahoney, who became friendly to Straus, never filed a report on the investigation and never had the hearings printed for public release.

Straus loves to recount how, during the five months in which Congress dammed his pay checks, the people of the West shipped him preserves, salmon, slices of buffalo meat, potatoes and other edibles to keep him from starving to death. Actually, Straus was able to eat regularly without such manna; he is a trustee of the estate of his wife's family, from which she draws an income, and he subsequently got his

Career girls have created a new type of woman, half amorous and half Amazon. —SHANNON FIFE.

back pay. Straus is married to the former Nancy Porter, of Winnetka, Illinois, daughter of the late James F. Porter, a wealthy Chicago real-estate operator. The Strauses have three children: Margaret, a recent graduate of Sarah Lawrence College; Michael, a junior at Syracuse University; and James, a sophomore at Hobart College.

Straus is one up on other bureaucrats, in that for twelve years he has lived in a Government house on Government property. He and Mrs. Straus occupy a quaint seven-room stone house, complete with New Orleans porticoes and stone slave quarters, on wooded Linnean Hill, overlooking part of Rock Creek Park in Northwest Washington. Three times Straus has been investigated for occupying this structure, which was built in 1800 as a private residence and sold to the Federal Government during the Grant Administration. The house later came under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, and finally Ickes had it restored by the WPA, and in 1939 advertised it for rental bids in Washington newspapers. To his embarrassment, Straus, his right-hand man, was the only bidder. He awarded the place to Straus, after raising the latter's bid by 50 per cent to \$183 a month. Straus' rent has not been raised since, but the Strauses are now building their own home a short distance away, on their own property.

As one of the very few original New Dealers left in a top Government post, Straus is widely admired by other bureaucrats in Washington for being able to survive nineteen years. His enemies have given up on getting rid of him under Truman. However, if there is a G.O.P. victory at the polls next November, they vow that one of the first orders of business will be separating the Interior Department from its loudest and least repressible mouth.