'Dam-Buster'-Ideologue Hosts May Ruin Mekong River Commission Visit to U.S.

by Marcia Merry Baker

From October 6-17, a delegation from the Mekong River Commission (MRC), representing its four Southeast Asian states, will visit sites on the Mississippi River, observing infrastructure, natural resources, economic activity, and speaking with a series of interested groups and individuals. The idea of such a visit is most welcome; for the United States to resume an involvement in key projects in Asia, is of great strategic importance.

However, those hosting the Mekong guests represent an extreme current of anti-American opposition to infrastructure development, and even to science itself. Take just one member-group, American Rivers, of the Mississippi River Basin Alliance (MRBA), which is principal host for the Mekong River Commission tour. As American Rivers writes about itself, "We were founded in 1973 to increase the number of rivers protected by the national Wild and Scenic Rivers System and to prevent the construction of large new dams on our last wild rivers. Today, in addition. . .we focus on dam removal and reform." Andrew Fahlund, Senior Director, Dams Program, of American Rivers, lists his favorite river movie as "*Dambusters*, a British film from the 1950s about a World War II bomber squadron that blows up dams on the Rhone River."

United States Anti-Development Shift

As expressed in the "general welfare" clause, and the Preamble of the Constitution, the United States is founded on the concept of scientifically developing the physical resource base of the nation for the purpose of the general good. The history of U.S. water management shows many such achievements—transformations in the physical resource base, to serve the purpose of present and future civilization. A few landmarks: Tile drainage (underground pipes) was introduced on New York state farms in 1835. A series of Federal Swamp Lands Acts (1849,1850, 1860) furthered the drainage of vast areas of marshland. In 1858, Central Park was drained in New York City.

Under the 1899 Rivers and Harbors Act, the Army Corps of Engineers received the broad Federal mandate for maintaining navigability of channels. In subsequent decades, the Army Corps was given responsibility for building flood control systems, and for other large projects. In the 1930s Presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the Tennessee Valley Authority was created for power, water control and navigation, and other grand projects were undertaken.

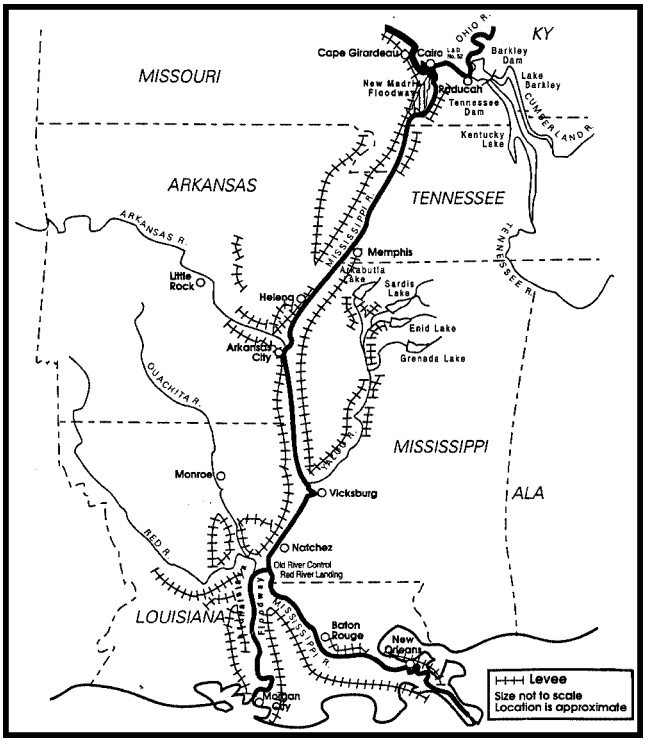
As of mid-20th Century, after World War II, plans were made to continue improvements to the land and water resource base of the continent, including bringing water and power to the "Great American Desert." In the 1950s, California hydrologists proposed the North American Water and Power Alliance (NAWAPA), which received favorabl attention in Congress in the 1960s. This continental-scale project calls for bringing water southward from the Arctic-flowing Alaska and MacKenzie River systems, to benefit Canada, the United States, and Mexico. The Federal government backed R&D efforts for nuclear-powered seawater desalination. This kind of work was a priority for upgrading the water-short Rio Grande River Basin, for example.

In the vast Mississippi Basin, most of the Lower Basin flood control, sea-barrier and other waterworks were completed by mid-century, under the "Comprehensive Flood Control Plan" of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (see **Figure 1.** What remained to be done after World War II was to finish plans for the Upper Mississippi Basin (levees, etc., see **Figure 2**), and also the Upper Missouri Basin—and in between, the Basin of the Red River of the North.

But all such plans were halted by the 1970s. A tightening alliance of Wall Street and conglomerate financial interests, and environmentalist foundations and groups, intervened in international and domestic policies to further a *speculation-based* economic shift away from attention to the physical economy. In 1971, the U.S. dollar was floated, and moves to "free" trade undertaken, serving to loot whole nations through rigged terms of trade, etc. The United States itself came to be more and more import-dependent for consumption, as its own domestic agriculture, industry and infrastructure-building atrophied and were looted under "deregulation" schemes for transportation, health care, energy, etc. The shift was called the "post-industrial" or "new economy" era.

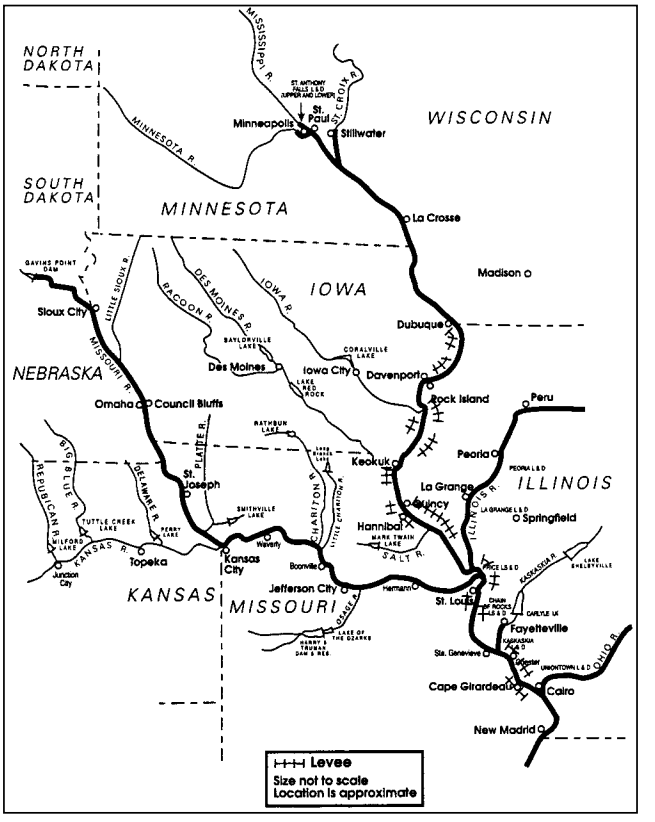
One of the false flags under which this shift was made in the 1970s, was that of "ecology" and "environmentalism." New groups were set up, to coordinate in turning both popular opinion, and the policy outlook at existing institutions—universities, government agencies (U.S. Agriculture Department, the Geological Survey, etc.)—against science and technology. Among them: American Rivers, in 1973; World Watch, in 1974; and the World Resources Institute (part of the MRBA hosting the Mekong guests) in 1982.

FIGURE 1
Flood-Controlled Lower Mississippi River



Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

FIGURE 2
Relatively Uncontrolled Missouri–Upper Mississippi Rivers



The Eugenical Nature Conservancy

The hoariest of the lot in this regard, are the Nature Conservancy, founded in 1951 out of a 1940s predecessor group, the Ecological Union; and the related Conservation Foundation, founded in 1948 in Washington, D.C. International interests desired to re-locate there, its predecessor, Brussels-based, pre-war group, the International Office for the Protection of Nature, founded in 1910, and disgraced for its advocacy of master-race feudalism. The first director of the Conservation Foundation was Henry Fairfield Osbourne, the nephew of the infamous proponent of pure-race theories, Fairfield Osbourne, who chaired the 1932 International Eugenics Conference.

Just this Sept. 30, The Nature Conservancy issued a new anti-infrastructure Mississippi River report, timed with the visit of the Mekong guests. The two-year study was funded in part by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region V, and the McKnight Foundation.

Titled, "Conservation Priorities for Freshwater Biodiversity in the Upper Mississippi River Basin," the report uses pseudo-science to call for designating 47 sites in the seven-state Upper Basin region, as where "natural" habitat can be preserved, or restored to "recovery."

The reasoning? The press release states, "The National Research Council names the Upper Mississippi River and the Illinois River, which are both part of the Basin, as two of only three large-floodplain river ecosystems remaining in the United States where sufficient ecological integrity exists to allow for their recovery." Moreover, the Nature Conservancy calls for this study to be "a global model" for assessing local ecology in a way to determine which areas should be protected, to preserve "diversity of life on Earth."

The vision? "Working with stakeholders, sharing scientific information on natural flow regimes, and implementing best agricultural practices, the Conservancy is working to create and implement plans that aid the river system in regaining some of the vitality of its glorious past, ensuring economic health for the people, communities, wildlife, and businesses that rely on the river."

As the backers of the Nature Conservancy's see-through rhetoric well know, the economy of much of the Mississippi Basin is collapsing. As for the "glorious past," look at the damage from the "500-year" Flood of '93. When it hit the Midwest, the Army Corps of Engineers' flood control system on the Lower Mississippi Basin held fast, and protected the region, but the Upper Mississippi, lacking fullscale flood control, was devastated. More than 97% of the '93 flood's damage

Recommended Reference Book

World Water Resources at the Beginning of the 21st Century: It is not usual to review a physical science reference text, but a new release deserves special mention: *World Water Resources at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century,* edited by I.A. Shiklomanov, of the State Hydrological Institute, Russian Federation; and John C. Rodda, Past President, International Association of Hydrological Sciences, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Wallingford, Oxon. Copyrighted by UNESCO in 2003, the new release is 435-pages long, hardbound, and published by Cambridge University Press at $150.

The monograph is valuable for the fact that it has, all in one place, the most recent data on world fresh-water resources—by continent, by country, and with analysis. But its main usefulness comes from the openness of its premises regarding what it calls, the "anthropogenic" impact on rivers and lakes. Academician Shiklomanov states in his introduction, "For the first time in history the availability of water resources and their distribution in space and time has begun to be determined by human activity, in addition to the natural variations in climate."

Therefore, the point is implicitly posed, in the regional summaries throughout the book, that mankind's intervention can and must be made, using technology, to increase "natural" resources. In the case of North America, the author of this section, A.Z. Ismailova, reviews the largescale water transfer projects that were proposed decades ago—the North American Water and Power Alliance (NAWAPA), the CeNAWP (Central American Water Project), and the GRAND Canal (Grand Recycling and Northern Development) Project. But, as the book notes, as of the 1970s, this kind of outlook was abandoned. The truthful identification of such a shift, and other features of the study, recommend it.—*Marcia Merry Baker*

was in the Upper Basin, amounting to $15-25 billion in losses.

It is also worth noting The Nature Conservancy's own "glorious past." Eugenics to one side: In July this year, the U.S. Senate Finance Committee began a detailed investigation of how The Conservancy has been engaged in multimillion dollar real estate deals, loans, and schemes to serve its own staff, trustees, board members, and family relations, all under the guise of nature preservation. Besides the flimflam now under scrutiny regarding how The Nature Conservancy has put some 15 million acres in the United States into "preservation" since 1951, there are 102 million acres internationally locked-up, many in debt-for-nature schemes, against the sovereign rights of nations.

So much for the false friends of the environment. But there are apparently "two sides" of the debate raging in the headlines in the U.S. right now. As indicated, one is the radical environmentalist stance, that dams (levees, and all such installations) are wrong, and should be removed. Swamps must be maintained. Rivers must roam free. For example, *New York Times,* a Corporate Partner of American Rivers, reported in its *Science* section, at the time of 1993's "500-year Flood" of the Mississippi, that the river should have its flood protection systems removed, and return to "freedom."

The fake-opposite view supports dams, ports, and waterworks where—and only where—it suits their own private looting schemes. For example, Cargill, headquartered in Minnesota, but part of the international syndicate controlling commodities (grains, salt, meat processing, etc.), wants the aged locks and dams of the Mississippi system repaired and expanded. Not for the public good of general development; rather, for its own bulk-commodities freight.

In contrast, the *science-based approach to the Mississippi,* and to the entire resource base of North and South America, is indicated in a newly released 40-page white paper, *The Sovereign States of the Americas,* issued in September by the Lyndon LaRouche campaign for the Democratic Presidential nomination. The paper contains maps and descriptions of the overdue infrastructure projects for the Americas, in particular for launching "NAWAPA-Plus"—meaning the North American Water and Power Alliance combined with related projects in Mexico and Canada—and also, finishing the water management work never completed on the Upper Mississippi and in other basins.

LaRouche's *Sovereign States* economic development document proceeds from the idea of mankind's betterment coming through a commitment to science and to transforming the Earth. LaRouche writes, "The full development of such a NAWAPA-Plus program will span a capital-cycle of about two generations—fifty years, including a primary construction cycle of about a quarter-century. This is comparable to the present long-term development program of China. China's long-term infrastructure building, such as the Three Gorges Dam and kindred ventures, will develop the interior regions of China with significant improvements, leading into a take-off growth of productivity to erupt during the second twenty-five-year interval of a fifty-year span. The development of the NAWAPA-Plus development, from the Arctic down to Mexico's southern border, will be a comparable effort. . . .

"Contrary to the popularized delusions among many self-styled ecologists, human progress does not necessarily occur at the expense of the well-being of other living processes; but rather, with the guidance of science, the Biosphere as a whole is improved by man in ways which the Biosphere could not benefit otherwise."