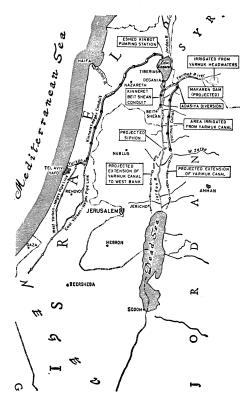
To Resume River Diversion

Original plans for the Jordan's development were resurrected after Israel's victory in the Six-Day War.

Israel, still entrenched on the Jordan River in the wake of the Six-Day War, is considering reviving original plans for diversion of the Jordan River. The project has been a sore point for years between Israel and her Arab neighbors: Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

More than a decade ago, Ambassador Eric Johnston, personal envoy of President Eisenhower, tried to negotiate a unified water scheme for the four nations. But the three Arab states then, as now, refused to cooperate with Israel. Each state then went ahead with its own plan.

Israel proposed on its own to tap the water of the Jordan above Lake



Water projects along the Jordan

Kinneret near the Bnot Ya'acov bridge. At this level, the water would flow southwards by gravity and even power a hydroelectric plant. The salinity of the Jordan River is 20 milligrams a liter; that of Lake Kinneret is 380 milligrams a liter since both the shores and bottom of the Lake are dotted with mineral hot springs.

But due to Syrian refusal to allow Israel to work in what, before the war, was the demilitarized zone, the original scheme of tapping the relatively saltfree Jordan River had to be abandoned for pumping the water from Lake Kinneret itself, at Eshed Kinrot, on the northwest side of the Lake. This meant pumping the water nearly 850 feet high, i.e., from 700 feet below sea level to the conduit which is 150 feet above sea level.

From here the water runs to the operational reservoir more than 20 miles away at Beit Netofa in Lower Galilee. From there, through a series of open and closed conduits, it is borne southward. The Lake Kinneret-Negev project can carry 320 million cubic meters each year a distance of 150 miles.

Reverting to the original plan, to tap the Jordan above the lake, would give Israel excellent sweet water and will allow her to set up the hydroelectric plant. The high cost of pumping the water upward from the Lake will be eliminated. And since Israel has control of all the disputed demilitarized zone, constructing the original link in a straight line will sharply reduce the cost.

However, a considerable part of the water will still have to be returned to the Kineret to reduce the salinity of the Lake. At present its salinity is growing, and the Jordan River below the Lake has such a high salinity content that the settlements along the Jordan have to have water pumped down to them.

The salinity of the Jordan has also been increased by Jordan's diversion of the Yarmuk River into the East Ghor canal. The Yarmuk, which fed into the Jordan below Lake Kinneret, had diluted the saline lake water.

Returning to the original scheme will save Israel considerable money, but it will not materially increase the land under irrigation.

Israel believes that if the original joint plan which Ambassador Johnston tried to negotiate was implemented, all four countries would benefit and the area under irrigation could be doubled, going a long way to solve the refugee problem.

Macabee Dean

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