

ROLL ON COLUMBIA: WOODY GUTHRIE,
MIGRANTS' TALES AND REGIONAL
TRANSFORMATION IN THE PACIFIC
NORTHWEST

by

JOHN R. GOLD

Professor of Geography,
Geography Department,
Oxford Brookes University,
Gipsy Lane,
Headington,
Oxford OX3 0BP.

e-mail: jrgold@brookes.ac.uk

Abstract

The coming of electricity to rural America in the interwar period seemed to offer prospects not just for economic development but also for remaking lives and for social transformation. This paper deals with the expression of such ideas from the folk music of that time, examining the representations of people and place found in 26 songs composed by the folk-musician Woody Guthrie for the Bonneville Power Administration in May 1941. After providing context about rural electrification, this paper surveys Guthrie's early career and the reasons why he was employed by the Bonneville Power Administration. The next sections of the paper considers Guthrie's 'Columbia River' song collection, highlighting two narrative themes within them: migrants' tales and the notion of electrification as a progressive force for both regional and social transformation. The final section relates the contents of the songs to three different standpoints from which Guthrie, as narrator, shaped his songs: folklorist, radical minstrel and social documentarist.

Introduction

In May 1941 the folk singer Woody Guthrie was commissioned by the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), a federally-funded power corporation based in Portland (Oregon), to write music for a documentary film and possibly radio broadcasts.

Although only employed for one month, Guthrie responded by writing an assortment of anthems, work songs, ballads and talking blues filled with a rich poetic imagery reminiscent of Walt Whitman. These songs, now known as the ‘Columbia River Collection’,¹ commemorated both people and place. They dealt with the natural landscapes of the Columbia River Basin and with the spectacular electrification and irrigation projects then being introduced. They celebrated the qualities of the people drawn to the region to build the dams, work in the fields or to establish new family farms and wove narratives about their life histories. Above all, they imaginatively related the social history of the people to the environmental history of the areas in which they lived.

This essay makes use of lyrics and background documentation, first, to examine key narratives in the songs that Guthrie composed and, secondly, to analyze the standpoints that he brought to bear in doing so. It contains four main sections. The opening part briefly examines the coming of electricity to America and the promise held by rural electrification. The next section surveys Guthrie’s early career and outlines the events that led to him receiving the offer of employment by the BPA to compose songs about the development of hydroelectric and associated irrigation

schemes along the Columbia. The third section deals with the writing of the Columbia River songs and highlights two narrative themes within them: migrants' tales and the notion of electricity as a progressive force for both regional and social transformation. The final section turns from narrative to narrator. Guthrie adopted various roles in writing his songs, including folklorist and radical minstrel, but it is suggested that identifying a third role, that of social documentarist, provides better description of his standpoint when composing the Columbia River songs.

Electrifying America²

It is sometimes difficult for present-day observers to appreciate fully the profound impact that the advent of electricity once exerted over the American imagination in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1881 the poet Walt Whitman (see Holloway 1938, 88) captured something of the mystic and spiritual qualities of the new energy medium when he wrote:

I sing the body electric,
The armies of those I love engirth me and I engirth them,
They will not let me off till I go with them, respond to them,
And discorrupt them, and charge them full with the charge of the soul.

At much the same time, electric illuminations became a major attraction. When

Charles Brush set up a single arc light on a Boston street corner in 1878 curious crowds gathered nightly to see it (Nye 1994, 176). The same scene would be repeated in cities throughout the USA in the next few years. Thousands turned out to see an invention that could separated light from heat and could apparently turn night into day (Schivelbusch 1988). It was the start of a process that rapidly impacted on the social and physical fabric of the American city, with profound implications for the conduct of social and economic life.

Electrification was also quickly regarded as critical to the future of rural areas. By the 1930s, the electricity pylon had become a powerful emblem of modernity for ‘forward-thinking’ individuals who believed in the power of science to address the enormous social and economic problems of the countryside (Bergonzi 1978; Gold 1997, 78-79). The march of pylons across the terrain symbolized the march of progress. Electrification could revolutionize many aspects of rural domestic life not only by providing electric lighting in place of kerosene lamps but also through supplying power for refrigeration, pumping and heating water, and washing (Nye 1997, 191). Diet was thereby improved, new economic functions were adopted, and work patterns changed. Some observers saw more far-reaching cultural outcomes. Lewis Mumford (1938, 344-5), for instance, believed that electrification schemes like those appearing in the Tennessee and Columbia valleys carried ‘energizing and civilizing’ consequences for rural society, with: ‘an environment that lends itself not only to production, but to a higher standard of consumption and more vivid creative activities’ (see also Brown 1980; Tobey, 1996).

Comparable ideas were developed by the popular media, most notably by documentary film-makers. The British documentary film *The Face of Britain* (1935), for example, offered hopes of a 'New Age' in which the problems of the present (rural poverty, urban slums) would somehow be rectified by the alchemy of electricity. A similar strategy of identifying social transformation through electrification without ever analyzing the real causes of the problem was seen in the American documentary, Power and the Land (1940). Made by the US Film Service for the Rural Electrification Administration of the Department of Agriculture, this was perhaps the most effective film made to promote President Roosevelt's New Deal policies. It focused on a single farm family in Belmont County (Ohio) and identified the ways in which an electrification programme, funded by the federal government rather than a private energy company, had brought improvement to the family's lives and productivity (Sklar 1993, 250; Kline, 1997).

Woody Guthrie's 'Columbia River' songs, also nominally written for a documentary film, were to develop comparable themes in a different medium. They too confronted the problem of 'documenting' rural life and environmental change and showed strategies by which these matters might be effectively represented. Before discussing these songs further, however, it is important to sketch something of Guthrie's early career and influences on his musical style.

Woody Guthrie

Woodrow Wilson ('Woody') Guthrie's career was short but remarkably productive. He was struck down at the age of 39 by Huntington's Chorea, a degenerative disease of the central nervous system, giving him a working career of just 17 years. Nevertheless, his output in that time was enormous. He composed more than 1000 songs, many of which have never been recorded. He also wrote several books (e.g. Guthrie 1943), produced a quantity of short folksy writings (e.g. see Marsh and Leventhal 1990), participated in numerous radio broadcasts and collaborated in several films (Klein 1980).

Commentators on his career tend to have followed the passing fashions of historiography, stressing particular stages of Guthrie's work and avoiding the complexity of the ambiguous positions that he took on many social and political issues (Lookingbill 1994, 397; see also Gold, 1998).³ Early contributions came from folklorists who treated Guthrie as a self-taught rustic folk-musician who gave a voice to his people. Collectors such as Alan Lomax subsumed Guthrie's work as part of a tradition stretching back to the philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder, which saw folk song as expressing the deepest levels of a people's culture (Bluestein 1972, 90). In the 1960s, when the folk music revival interpenetrated the protest movement, Guthrie was seen as a 'radical minstrel' who inspired Peter, Paul and Mary, Joan Baez and Bob Dylan (e.g. Denisoff 1971; Reuss 1975; Fiori 1978). Later still he became regarded as a 'prophet singer', whose work echoed that of Walt Whitman in preaching the restoration of community and democratic fairness (Pascal, 1990).

Part of the reason for the incompleteness of each of these views lies in failure

to recognize the fluidity of the folk traditions that his music absorbed. Guthrie grew up in the Oklahoma cotton belt, an area of ethnic and cultural diversity. The music played locally included traditional fiddle tunes, ballads, Tennessee church songs and hillbilly music. Guthrie supplemented these with other styles that he heard on the radio in the 1920s or that he himself collected while wandering around the rural south. These included nascent country music (especially the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers), blues, hoedown and gospel. Later still, he availed himself of influences from the radical Left; the music of protest, struggle and liberation.

Although himself acting as folklorist, Guthrie had no more regard for purity of form than those around him. Few, if any, of his songs ever reached final and definitive versions. He was continually rewriting and performing them in different ways; altering the words, changing the order of the verses to change the course and direction of the narrative, and modifying the tempo. While retaining a deep respect for the ballad with its four-line stanza, he was prepared to innovate in other forms, such as talking blues. These were freely adapted from others, frequently setting his songs to existing tunes. The resulting songs and the metamorphoses to which they bear witness, therefore, can only be understood within the dynamic tradition of making, performing and receiving music of which Guthrie was part.⁴

Employment

In 1933, a few months after his inauguration, President Roosevelt authorized the

construction of the Bonneville Dam at the cascades on the lower Columbia and the larger and more ambitious dam upstream at Grand Coulee (on the Spokane River in Washington state). This action redeemed a promise made during the 1932 Presidential election, when he had committed himself to supporting the ambitious Columbia River Project, intended to transform the region through hydroelectric and associated irrigation schemes. Against opposition from conservative interests, he also backed development as a social project proclaiming:

I state, in definite and certain terms that the next great hydroelectric development to be undertaken by the Federal Government must be that on the Columbia River...And from there... there will exist forever a national yardstick to prevent extortion against the public and to encourage the wider use of that servant of the American people -- electric power.⁵

This was not the first time that the river and its tributaries would be dammed for power or irrigation,⁶ but the Bonneville and Grand Coulee Dams represented a different scale to anything seen before in the region. They also embodied a new scale of expenditure. Roosevelt defended spending 13% of the federal budget on an area containing only 2.8% of the national population on the basis of the region's potential for development and settlement rather than work creation (Clark 1995, 259-60). The remote and drought-prone Pacific Northwest region, for instance, had over 40% of USA's potential water power, but less than one-tenth of it had been developed by 1936

(Johansen 1967, 444). Regardless of the long-term prospects, however, there remained a long construction period during which good publicity was needed to help convince the American people that these were funds well spent and projects free from undue Socialist influence.

The Bonneville Power Administration, established in 1937, paid close attention to the cause of public relations. Although officially established to sell generated power to private and public utilities, the BPA became enmeshed in the wider question of public involvement in the energy industry. By 1939, it had hired a full-time public relations officer, Stephen Kahn, who immediately took steps to win over public opinion. Kahn had employed graphic artists to design posters exhorting the public to recognize 'It's Your River'. He cultivated local newspaper editors to help portray the BPA's work in the best possible light, and created slogans and lyrics for songs advertising the schemes' merits. In 1939, his Information Division produced a pedagogic-style 30 minute documentary called *Hydro!* about hydroelectric schemes along the river. Its director Gunther von Fritsch, however, felt that it lacked audience appeal and proposed making another film with a stronger promotional message. To be called The Columbia, it would use a rustic-sounding narrator who would sing folk song accompaniments to pictures of the river and explain the benefits of the Columbia schemes. Kahn had contacted Alan Lomax of the Library of Congress to ask if he knew anyone who might be appropriate for the job. Lomax recommended Guthrie, with whom he had recently made recordings.⁷ After an interview with the BPA's Director Dr Paul J. Raver in May 1941, Guthrie received employment for one month

to act as 'Information Consultant'.

It was not a competitive position.⁸ The job specification was written around what Guthrie had done and who he was.⁹ He had worked in radio for KFVD in Los Angeles and CBS in New York. More relevantly, he had also worked with the radical film-maker Pare Lorentz on *The Fight For Life* (1940), a documentary about childbirth, infant mortality and the maternity associated with insanitary conditions in poor urban neighborhoods (Musser 1996, 325). His remit was to engage in: 'Necessary research and investigation to determine feasibility of making documentary film of Administration program, and preparation of radio broadcasts'. Subject to being under the general supervision of the Director of Information, he would have wide latitude to use independent judgment:

to engage in research on the federal program for the development of the Columbia River; to survey the economic and social conditions of the region, its history and folk lore, to determine the feasibility of preparing a documentary film showing the relationship of the activities of the Administration to the solution of such problems...

The Columbia River Songs

Guthrie spent the ensuing month touring the Columbia Basin extensively in a BPA car -- a necessity since his Pontiac had been repossessed -- and on foot. After claiming to

have visited ‘just about every cliff, mountain, tree and post’ (Murlin 1991, 40), he crafted 26 songs; rather more than the half-dozen for which von Fritsch was actually looking. The songs themselves stand up to closer scrutiny. They were personal, in that they inevitably reflected the events of Guthrie’s complex life and relationships, but were also intensely topographic. They listed the tributaries of the Columbia, the shape of the valleys, the vegetation on the hills, the ‘thunderous foamy waters of the rapids and cascades, the wild and windward watersprays from the high Sheliloh Falls’ (Murlin 1991, 86). Guthrie’s songs conveyed the area’s problems as they were at that time: the droughts, the rapids that impeded navigation, and the lack of power supplies. They listed the improvements that were being made: the flood channels, the dams, irrigation works, electrification schemes and lauded their impact on the rural economy of Oregon, Idaho and Washington states. At the same time, they presented the human picture of the lives of the thousands who came to work on the construction of the dams, to seek temporary agricultural work, and to settle permanently on the newly-irrigated agricultural lands.

These songs were therefore unmistakably products of place and time; impressions of a region experiencing unparalleled change at a key moment in its history written by a singer-songwriter at a transitional stage in his career. Yet they were also overlain with two more general contemporary narratives. One was an extension of the American fascination with migration and movement, especially movement to the west, that was an established theme in American literature and popular culture (e.g. Dettelbach 1976). The other tapped the wellspring of

technological utopianism (e.g. Segal 1985) to express the idea of regional and social transformation through the agency of technology.

Migrants' Tales

Migrants and drifters were no strangers to Guthrie's songs. His songs were peopled with travellers and endless highways. The dams, the factories and the irrigation projects were constructed by migrant workers. Somewhat surprisingly, Guthrie's songs made no mention of the fact that both the Grand Coulee and Bonneville Dams were started partly as work relief projects using Federal Emergency Relief Administration and Public Works Administration funds. Instead Guthrie celebrated the social importance and dignity of honest work. It was the unsung worker-heroes, rather than FDR or the Bonneville Power Administration, who received the credit for making the whole thing work. Many songs -- 'Grand Coulee Monkey', 'Hard Travellin', 'Ramblin' Blues' and 'Jackhammer Blues' -- conveyed the sense of a workforce that moved restlessly from job to job. Once that job was completed, there was always the impression that the construction workers will simply drift on to the next job relatively content, neither expecting nor receiving permanency.

For the other group of migrants, the refugees from the Great Plains, that was not true. Guthrie, of course, made his name with the 'Dust Bowl Ballads', a collection of 20 or so songs written from 1937 onwards. As shown elsewhere (Gold 1998), these songs were framed around a quasi-Biblical narrative that contained three mythic

landscapes: dry, dust-swept plains that symbolized Judgement on the people of the Southwest; the wilderness of deserts and mountains that the people endured on their way west; and the imagined golden lands of the West that represented the promise of Paradise. As he travelled around the Columbia region, Guthrie encountered numerous families who had left the drought-stricken Plains, moving to find a new place in which to remake their lives. They inevitably became drawn into his narrative.

Three songs in the Columbia River Collection -- 'Oregon Line', 'Pastures of Plenty' and 'Mile an' a half from the end of the line' -- as much concluded the saga of the Dust Bowl as addressed the absorption of migrants in the Columbia Basin. 'Mile an' a half from the end of the line', for example, traced the chronology of a family that settled on the Northern Plains in 1889 and for 25 years had 'done just fine'. After the recurrent droughts of the 1930s, the family 'fanned (their) tails for the Oregon line', but paradise was as elusive as ever given that the all-important power line stopped a mile and a half away.

The same bitter-sweet quality was conveyed by the haunting 'Pastures of Plenty'. Set to the old folk tune 'Pretty Polly', 'Pastures of Plenty' traced the migrant experience, through the hard times to arrival in the newly green valleys of the Pacific Northwest. The song is permeated by a wistful recognition that it was a paradise to which the migrants have only brief admittance; a green land, with a fine climate and abundant crops in which were only welcome as a temporary labor force at harvest time:

‘California and Arizona, I make all your crops,
And it’s north up to Oregon to gather your hops,
Dig the beets from your ground, cut the grapes from your vine,
To put on your table some light sparkling wine.’

ending with the verse:

‘Green pastures of plenty from desert ground,
From the Grand Coulee dam where the waters runs down,
Ev’ry state of this Union us migrants have been,
We’ve come with the dust and we’re gone with the wind.’¹⁰

Yet if this sense of the unending search for somewhere permanent to stay and put down roots is a recurrent theme in these songs, it is constantly juxtaposed with the more optimistic, even utopian, promise of redemption through the new technology.

Transformation through technology

Guthrie shared the public excitement at the scale of the dams constructed in the West. He happily echoed Roosevelt’s description of the Grand Coulee Dam as ‘the biggest thing on earth’ (Schwantes 1989, 307) in the song ‘The Biggest Things that Man has ever done’, comparing the scale of the dam favorably with all previous buildings and

structures -- three times the size of the Boulder Dam and twice as high as Niagara. His enthusiasm for technology, with its connotations of the controlled application of scientific method to human problems, often led him to present the Columbia construction projects as the antithesis of wild nature. That opposition was expressed at many points in the Columbia River songs. The erstwhile turbulent waters of the Columbia were now tamed. Seagoing traffic could navigate inland up into Idaho, 400 miles from the sea. Storm waters were channelled into spillways. More symbolically, Guthrie paralleled the taming of the river with the development of the nation. 'Roll, Columbia, Roll' evoked the spirit of the frontier, noting how the river defeated early attempts at exploration but left the pioneers with dreams of the day that the Columbia would be conquered.

The work of conquering the river partly involved extensive irrigation projects, particularly with regard to the Grand Coulee Dam. With his sympathetic eye for drought-lands, Guthrie displayed an empathy with the prospects for farmers to remake their lives as they remade the land. That theme is found in the song 'New Found Land' and in 'The Song of the Grand Coulee Dam'. The latter, for example, listed how the former flood waters would be channelled into vast lakes, creating fertile farm lands in the surrounding region and banishing fear of drought.

Yet it was undoubtedly the promise offered by electrification that caused Guthrie most optimism. Guthrie happily endorsed the ideas of rural electrification as a social programme and as a progressive force for social as well as regional transformation. As his son Arlo said, his father felt that what was happening in the

Columbia ‘was not only good but needed’ (Murlin, 1991, 20). The songs enthusiastically listing the new factory developments, producing chrome, manganese and aluminum. ‘Columbia Talkin’ Blues’ added promotional rhetoric, reflecting the element of his brief that hinted at the need to win public support for the still controversial idea of federal intervention:

‘You just watch this river and pretty soon,
Ever’body’s a-gonna be changing their tune,
The big Grand Coulee And the Bonneville Dam,
Run a thousand factories For Uncle Sam.’¹¹

Guthrie’s ringing, if temporary, endorsement of technological utopianism conveyed hope for real change, which set these songs apart from their counterparts that are developments of the Dust Bowl theme. Paradise might now be at hand rather than an illusion. In ‘Out Past the End of the Line’, Guthrie suggested that electric power could help to create jobs and keep people on the land; in ‘New Found Land’, this gained an additional spiritual quality with Woody comparing the electric light with the light of a new morning. It was powerful imagery; electricity, the new technological wonder, providing vulnerable rural communities with a permanence and security that they had never enjoyed before. Above all, as Guthrie concluded in ‘The Song of the Grand Coulee Dam’, the USA needed more schemes like the Grand Coulee Dam.

Discussion

The two narratives of migrants' tales and transformation through technology, with their internal tensions between hope and illusion, were generated by Woody Guthrie's past experience, his excitement at what Arlo Guthrie called 'the booming spirit of the place' (Murlin, 1991, 20) and his absorption of a wider set of culturally-articulated ideas. As these narratives are analyzed further, it becomes clear that Woody, as narrator, speaks at various times from three different standpoints.

The first was that of the folklorist. Just as Guthrie's works were collected by folklorists such as the Lomaxes, so too was Guthrie a collector. At one level, he claimed the songs that he wrote were generated by the places he encountered and people he met -- even if the material was not necessarily written down on the spot. As Guthrie observed (Murlin 1991, 12):

These Pacific Northwest songs and ballads have got all of these personal feelings for me because I was there on these very spots and very grounds before, when the rockwall canyon stood there laughing around at me, and while the crazybug machines, jeeps, jacks, dozers, mixers, trucks, cars, lifts, chains and pulleys and all of us beat ourselves down every day yelling and singing little snatches of songs we was too hot and too busy and too tired to set down with our pen and pencil right then while the thing was being built.

Yet this sense of the songs being generated by the experience of people and place is only part of the story. Woody Guthrie was no passive collector. In line with the dynamic musical traditions outlined earlier, he was always gathering material to shape it further. As with the reworking of the Dust Bowl imagery in several of the Columbia River songs, it is the testimony of the construction and agricultural workers that is made to fit the broad narrative of migrants' tales, not vice versa.

The second, if nascent, role of radical minstrel was part of that process. Woody Guthrie had neither acquired the status of champion of the Left that he would assume shortly afterwards when he became involved with the Almanac Singers nor did he offer any sociopolitical rationale for the state of human affairs in his songs. The vagaries of nature are still to the fore, even though Guthrie looked for themes that supported a progressive message. There is an optimistic tone that stemmed from him seeing the government's actions in building these massive dams as being what socialism would be like if it came to the United States. Moreover, his songs endorsed the message of positive action to relieve rural problems; bringing industrial work and incomes to rural areas and offering displaced people a home free from the tyranny of droughts and mendacity of landlords of their previous homes.

These in turn overlap with the third role that has not previously been attributed to Guthrie, namely that of social documentarist. This role, after all, was defined by his remit of employment. He had been hired to help document the Columbia River projects through film and possibly radio broadcasts. The making of documentaries tended to conjure up images of something that was utilitarian, pedagogic and

impersonal, but the social documentation movement of the late interwar period always offered more than that. Documentarists in film, photography, radio and literature broadly shared the belief that promoting greater social and environmental awareness was an essential step in promoting reform. They also recognized that reality was something that you construct, even create, for the audience. Documentary realism was, at best, a relative concept.

This mood was accentuated by the increasingly radical stance taken by the American documentary movement at the start of the 1940s. This was strongly influenced by Pare Lorentz, a vocal critic of Hollywood's escapism and the head of the US Film Service. Joris Ivens, the Dutch film-maker who had directed The Power and the Land in Lorentz's stead while the latter worked on The Fight for Life, once said that: 'There is no problem in enhancing reality if it helps to tell the story properly' (Kline 1997). His search for the 'inner truth' (Musser 1996, 331) was something with which Woody Guthrie would have wholeheartedly agreed. There was never much chance that Guthrie's collection of Columbia River songs and their underlying narratives would be translated quickly to documentary film. Chances for funding had already waned by late-1941. Quite apart from the diversion of funds due to the war effort, there was now less need for films to promote electrification when war-time needs themselves justified massively boosting power generation on the Columbia. The Columbia was eventually made by the BPA in 1948 using at least some of Guthrie's material, but the changing political landscape of the Cold War soon led to it being quietly withdrawn from screening.¹² Yet, regardless of the fate of the film, Guthrie's

music stands the test of being a document of the times of which it was part. The Columbia River songs are selective in their interpretations, sometimes as interesting for what they exclude as what they include, but are imbued with a desire to represent 'the real', at least, as Guthrie saw it. They evoke powerfully not just the visual excitement and sense of achievement of building the dams, but also why a keen observer felt they were needed. As such, quite apart from their musicological content, they still merit the closest study for anyone interested in contemporary thinking about the state of rural America at the end of the New Deal.

Notes

¹ The versions used here are those found in Sing Out Publications' collection *Roll On Columbia: the Columbia River Collection*, see Murlin (1991). For details of how these songs and acetates recorded by Guthrie came to be found, see Clark (1995, 306-7).

² An aphorism taken from Nye (1990).

³ For more information on Guthrie and his career, see Reuss (1968), Logsdon (1970, 1991), Turner (1977) and Klein (1980).

⁴ As an illustration of the dynamics of development and adaptation, one can scarcely do better than consider the case of the song 'The Wabash Cannonball'. Guthrie had used the tune of this existing song for 'The Grand Coulee Dam', one of his Columbia River songs. 'The Wabash Cannonball', however, was itself the result of a process of evolution. Guthrie took this tune from a version by the Carter Family (Klein 1980, 475), who had adapted it from a song written by William Kindt in 1904. Kindt himself had based his composition on a song called 'The Great Rock Island Route' written by J.A. Roff in 1882 (Cohen 1981, 377). Moreover the process of evolution did not end with 'The Grand Coulee Dam'. In 1947, Guthrie created a conscious parody of 'The Wabash Cannonball' in his composition 'The Farm-Labor

Train’, which put the tune and structure of ‘The Wabash Cannonball’ to use as a political protest song (see Hille 1948, 85).

⁵ Quoted in Clark (1995, 259).

⁶ For example, the Newlands Act (1902), which created the U.S. Reclamation Service (renamed Bureau of Reclamation in 1923) had supervised a number of dam and canal projects. Early river projects in Oregon, Idaho, and Washington, using small reservoirs, had led to reclamation of 125,000 acres of arid land by 1909. Larger projects had also followed, such as the 354 foot Arrowrock Dam in southern Idaho which was finished in 1915. For more details, see Johansen (1967) and Schwantes (1989).

⁷ These are available as *Woody Guthrie: the Library of Congress Recordings* (Rounder Records C-1041, parts 1 and 2). These recordings feature Guthrie playing a selection of his songs and engaging in brief conversations with Alan Lomax, then the Director of the Library’s Archive of Folk Song.

⁸ At least not by this stage. Employing Guthrie was initially only one of several options that von Fritsch had in mind (Clark 1995, 271).

⁹ The original documentation, dated May 13, 1941, is available in the Woody

Guthrie files at the Archive of Folk Culture, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

¹⁰ ‘Pastures of Plenty’. Words and Music by Woody Guthrie. TRO -c- Copyright 1960 (Renewed) 1963 (Renewed) Ludlow Music, Inc., New York, New York. Used by Permission.

¹¹ ‘Columbia Talkin’ Blues (Talking Columbia)’. Words and Music by Woody Guthrie. TRO -c- Copyright 1961 (Renewed) and 1963 Ludlow Music, Inc., New York, NY. Used by Permission.

¹² In early 1953, shortly after the Eisenhower administration took office, the BPA sent all copies of *Hydro!* and *The Columbia* to the incinerator where a copy of each was saved by chance. For more details, see Clark (1995, 299-300).

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