

RE: FOLEY RESPONSE/TONASKET ON SECOND BACON SIPHON/CAMPAIGN '80
(SEE: FOLEY AS DEMOCRAT)

SOURCE: SPOKESMAN-REVIEW, A-6

date 8/6/80

FILE: _____
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'Not based on fact'

Foley questions Tonasket stand

By ROBERT L. ROSE

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U.S. Rep. Thomas S. Foley, D-Wash., said Tuesday that Mel Tonasket, a GOP candidate for his job, was making statements "not based on fact" on the cost and scope of a giant Columbia Basin irrigation project.

Earlier Tuesday, Tonasket said Foley, by backing the Second Bacon Siphon and Tunnel project, was promoting "one of the grandest boondoggles that has ever been presented to the general public."

The Colville Indian leader, citing a 4-year-old study prepared by professors at Washington State University in Pullman, said the plan to bring 500,000 acres of land under irrigation would eventually cost \$2.5 billion and would "never be economically feasible."

"The economists who wrote the report pointed out it's never too late to stop the project," Tonasket told a news conference at his Spokane campaign headquarters.

However, Tonasket said he was not asking a halt to the project, but merely that the project be re-evaluated by some agency outside the government to see just how much it will cost and if it is now feasible.

"The facts should be brought up to date," he

said. "That's healthy both ways, whether the recommendations come back to halt the project or to go ahead and specialize in certain crops to fit within an overall market potential."

Tonasket said his \$2.5 billion figure included not only construction costs of the tunnel

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and siphon system, but also eventual costs of installation of on-farm distribution systems, energy costs in pumping the water, and "social costs" of building communities for workers who would carry out final irrigation system construction.

Foley, in an interview here, said Congress already was re-evaluating the project, estimated to have cost up to \$45 million so far, to see if it should be continued and implemented.

"Congress is committed to project costs nothing like Mr. Tonasket is suggesting," Foley said.

"The project is being constantly reviewed."

Foley was asked whether Congress will say no to further development if the current reviews show the project costs getting out of hand.

"That's exactly right," Foley said.

Also, he said, Tonasket was wrong in saying farmers were being forced into the irrigation project.

"Tracts of the project are approved segment-by-segment by the farmers involved and by the irrigation districts that will carry on the actual operation and maintenance of the program," he said. "And they have been negotiating with the Department of Interior for some time on the costs.

"Mr. Tonasket's statements are not based on fact in terms of the operation of the program or in his suggestion that farmers are forced into participation against their will.

"The fact of the matter is, Congress has to review the matter periodically during the course of the development of a project of this kind, including all questions of feasibility. The

individual farmers have to vote on several occasions whether they want to participate."