ARABS AND ISRAEL FOR RIVER PROJECT
Special to The New York Times.
New York Times (1857-Current file); Jul 7, 1954; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2002)
pg. 1

ARABS AND ISRAEL FOR RIVER PROJECT

Johnston Tells President They Have Accepted Principle of Sharing Jordan's Water

Special to The New York Times.

WASHINGTON, July 6—Eric Johnston reported to President Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles today that Israel and Syria, Lebanon and Jordan had accepted the principle of international sharing of the water of the Jordan River in a unified development project.

He said Israel and the Arab states were prepared to cooperate with the United States Government in working out details of a mutually acceptable power and irrigation program.

Mr. Johnston, now president of the American Motion Picture Association and a former president of the United States Chamber of Commerce, made his report after a four-week visit to the Middle East as personal representative of President Eisenhower.

In Cairo and in Tel Aviv he discussed separately with representatives of the Arab and Israeli Governments a plan for unified development of the Jordan Valley prepared by the Charles T. Main Engineering Company and two rival plans put forward by the Arab Governments and Israel.

"An early understanding on all aspects of a plan for unified development of both the Arab and Israeli portions of the Jordan Valley is now a possibility," Mr. Johnston said after reporting to

Continued on Page 6, Column 5

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

ARABS AND ISRAEL FOR RIVER PROJECT

Continued From Page 1

the President and Secretary of State.

He listed these major points accepted by the two sides:

¶"The limited waters of the Jordan River system should be shared equitably by the four states in which they rise and flow." This principle was implicit in the valley plans of both sides and affirmed by both sides in conversation with Mr. Johnston.

¶"A neutral impartial authority should be created to supervise withdrawals of water from the river system" in accordance with the division of waters that is still to be worked out. The precise nature of such an authority remains to be determined.

¶"Amelioration of the condition of the Arab refugees from Palestine should be a principal objective of the irrigation program for the Jordan Valley."

¶It is urgent that broad lines of understanding be reached on the total program in the interests not only of the refugees but of the whole area.

¶When progress in developing the Valley indicates that the Sea of Galilee is needed as a reservoir its use for this purpose will be considered "open-mindedly by all parties."

Succeeded Beyond Hopes

These points showed that Mr. Johnston had succeeded in going considerably beyond his immediate objective, which was to win acceptance of the principle that the Jordan was an international river, the development of which must be carried on internationally.

Officials accompanying Mr. Johnston pointed out, however, that "acceptance" of the points outlined must not be confused with formal agreement. The technical and political representatives who met Mr. Johnston and his party of officials of the State Department and Foreign Operations Administration in Cairo could not bind their Governments.

The points Mr. Johnston made this afternoon were, however, contained in a joint communiqué issued by the Arab representatives and were affirmed by Israel's Premier, Moshe Sharett, at a press conference.

The Americans gave credit to the Egyptian officials who acted as hosts for the talks in Cairo for much of the success achieved. Although not directly concerned, Egypt took the lead in working toward a solution.

A Big Hurdle Ahead

The big hurdle still to be negotiated is division of the Jordan River waters. In their original plans Israel and the Arab states were "poles apart" on this point. Negotiations with Mr. Johnston have considerably narrowed the gap, United States officials said.

Israel, it was understood, has for the time being agreed to put aside her claim that the waters of the Litani River in Lebanon should be used in the regional plan. Mr. Johnston's view is that the Litani is a Lebanese national river.

The plan originally submitted to the Arab Governments and to Israel by Mr. Johnston last October called for expenditure of $121,000,000 for irrigation and power works over eight to ten years. Resettlement of Arab refugees in the lower Jordan Valley could, however, begin within a few months after work on the project had been started.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.