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Review of *Dammed Indians: The Pick-Sloan Plan and the Missouri River Sioux, 1944-1980* By Michael L. Lawson

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Dammed Indians: The Pick-Sloan Plan and the Missouri River Sioux, 1944-1980. By Michael L. Lawson. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982. Maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. xxvi + 261 pp. \$19.95.

Under the Pick-Sloan plan the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers constructed five mainstem dam projects that destroyed more than 550 square miles of tribal land in North Dakota and South Dakota. The projects wreaked havoc on five Sioux reservations: Standing Rock, Cheyenne River, Crow Creek, Lower Brule, and Yankton, *Dammed Indians: The Pick-Sloan Plan and the Missouri River Sioux, 1944-1980* chronicles the development and implementation of the plan and traces the events, personalities, and agencies involved.

The Pick-Sloan plan, formulated by Colonel Lewis A. Pick of the Army Corps of Engineers and William Glenn Sloan of the Bureau of Reclamation, provided for the construction of a series of dams and reservoirs along the Missouri River to provide flood control, improved navigation, electricity, recreation facilities, and irrigation. Michael Lawson contends that the plan "did more damage to Indian land than any other public works project in America" and that the Sioux people derived little benefit from it. He charges that the U.S. government was insensitive to Indian needs and rights. For example, it illegally condemned Indian land for the project and approved the Pick-Sloan plan before it was ever presented to the Sioux tribes. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Lawson argues, was ineffective at protecting the rights of its wards.

The author begins with a clear, concise survey of the history of the Missouri River basin, the Pick-Sloan legislation, and the land and people of the five reservations. He then summarizes and analyzes the development of the federal water projects, sometimes linking the developments to broader issues in federal-Indian relations such as termination. *Dammed Indians* traces the role of the tribes, legislators, lawyers, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Corps of Engineers and shows their interaction. Finally, there is a careful, detailed description of the negotiations and settlements concerning the plan, which is organized chronologically.

The impact of the projects was great. Pick-Sloan reduced the total land base of the five Sioux reservations by 6 percent and forced one-third of the population to relocate. The best land on the reservations was flooded and residents were moved to barren upland regions. When construction began, tribes lost the bottomlands that provided trees for shelter, shade, and fuel; game; and natural food sources such as beans and berries. The damage caused by the projects touched every aspect of Indian life: social, political, economic, and religious.

Dammed Indians is a well-documented account of a sad chapter in the history of federal-Indian relations. The author makes extensive

use of oral interviews and manuscript collections, but for the most part he fails to include material from the papers of prominent South Dakota legislators or lawyers who were involved. Lawson uses vivid language and strong evidence to show his contempt for the Corps of Engineers. Although his rhetoric makes enjoyable reading, it sometimes prevents the reader from reaching his own conclusions and making his own analysis. Yet, the book is significant not only because it documents the implementation and effects of Pick-Sloan but also because it touches on other contemporary problems. Historians have paid too little attention to Indian affairs in the twentieth century, and Michael Lawson has opened up new avenues for research into such problems as water rights, a shrinking land base, and violation of trust responsibility.

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