

This compact was negotiated by a group of irrigators and left the irrigators out

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This water compact is a Cyprus moment right here in Montana. Property values will go down, crop production will go down, income levels will go down, not because of the people involved, but because the government is involved. One government making a deal with another, picking the pockets of the people, to fill the pockets of the rulers. Both sides have rulers, and the irrigators on both sides are having their pockets picked. Pockets being picked to maintain a native fishing heritage that's been gone for generations, makes no sense to me.

It's amazing how history is always so relevant. This is a quote from Thomas Jefferson.

The two enemies of the people are criminals and government; so let us tie down the second with the chains of the constitution; so that the second does not become a legalized version of the first. Thomas Jefferson

Apparently my own government has been working on giving away my water rights, rights that were established and deeded before Montana was even a state. The state established flow rates, set them artificially high, to maintain an aboriginal in-stream flow that will "call" on every water right in western Montana 9 out of 10 years. In turn, giving the water rights to the Tribe through an 1855 treaty, then the tribe turns around and sells these "in stream flows" back to the federal government for 4.5 billion dollars and now wants to have joint ownership, State tribe and federal government, seems a little fishy indeed.

Everyone's happy with this "joint ownership" except the irrigators, whose lives will be forever changed. These irrigators that will have little if any water, will become full sellers, as their land will become worthless without water. Sellers to a "Sovereign nation" that just so happens to have pockets full of money, after making a deal with another government, for confiscating the water that was deeded with the very land they're now buying.

I just wonder, how much of that 1855 treaty is still relevant? I wonder is it still the tribes desire to do away with ardent spirits on the reservation? That too is part of the 1855 hellgate treaty.

This issue ties directly into keeping the development rights we have. What good will our farmland be if the Federal government decides the water's best left for in stream flows? How many tons of hay will be grown on un-irrigated ground? It'll become unfeasible to farm in western Montana.

People that have bought in and are still trying to sell these conservation plans, in the end, will be dead and gone, it'll be their kids that suffer the penalty for their ignorance. Same today as yesterday, we're to trust in people we do not know. Trusting their "good intentions". Trusting in organizations you know nothing about to hold your property in trust, in this case it's the water. Putting your trust in people you know nothing about is foolish indeed. I learned as a young boy, anybody, that loosely uses the word TRUST, you want to stay as far away from as you can.

America is entering dangerous territory, when our citizens are signing away their freedoms for a handful of dollars. Giving away their property rights, in this case it's water rights, to people and organizations they know little about, is equivalent to handing a stranger on the street a briefcase full of money, walking away and expecting him to return it to you intact. He knows not where to return it, he has no phone number, no address, all he knows is you were wearing a nice suit and tie and had fancy looking shoes on. Once you take the bait, there's no looking back, you're at the mercy of the fishermen, trusting he'll release you, simply because it says so in that treaty.

So what was the purpose of the original 1855 treaty, was it to reserve hunting and fishing access. Or was it to reserve an in stream water right? Since water rights had yet to be established until after the civil war, would we assume it be for hunting and fishing access? Or was it to keep the tribe from drinking itself to death as article 9 of that treaty states in not so few words. Here we are picking and choosing which statements in certain treaties to follow, picking and choosing which parts to obey and which parts to ignore. Is it not then right if we're going back to 1855 to assume article 9 be held in the same regard as article 1 & 2? None of which have anything to do with water rights.

Testimony of John Plogher of Potomac

John Plogher