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1912-12-19

Letter from Brand Whitlock to Robert Underwood Johnson, 1912  
Dec 19.

Brand Whitlock

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Executive Offices  
The City of Toledo  
Ernest Whitlock, Mayor  
Ambrose A. Moody, Vice Mayor  
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Bernard Dailey, Secretary

19 December, 1912

Robert Underwood Johnson, Esquire,  
Editor The Century Magazine,  
New York City.

Dear Mr. Johnson:-

After I left you the other day, recalling your interest in the water supply of San Francisco, I was sorry that I had not called your attention to what London is doing in this respect. As you no doubt know, the Metropolitan Water Board, which controls the water supply of Greater London, acquired the undertakings of eight metropolitan water companies which had supplied London with water before that time, at a total cost of nearly 50,000,000. The board which already supplies 7,000,000 people with filtered water, is now making a scientific study of the problem of the future supply of the metropolis, and it is in connection with the decisions the board has reached with reference to the future supply that I think you will find your position on the subject in San Francisco fully and authoritatively, and, I should say, finally substantiated. The board for a long time considered going to Wales for future sources, but this plan has been abandoned as a result of scientific research, and the board will look for its future sources in the Thames valley. Doctor Houston, the board's eminent bacteriological expert, has been making an exhaustive series of experiments on the filtration and storage of water, and he has

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Robert Underwood Johnson #2.

demonstrated that the storage of water for a period of time has the effect of purifying it. The large storage reservoirs used in London were constructed for the purpose of conserving water when it was abundant against the time of relative scarcity, and Doctor Houston discovered that this storage reduces the number of bacteria of all sorts, devitalizes the microbes of water borne diseases, reduces the amount of suspended matter and has a tendency to lengthen the life of the filters. The storage of raw water antecedent to filtration enables him now to supply a potable water of a purity which satisfies the most exacting scientific tests. The water board, therefore, has adopted what is known as the Staine's Reservoirs Extension Schemes for the provision of additional reservoirs in the valley of the Thames. In this chain of reservoirs the raw water will be taken in and decanted from one reservoir to the other, and finally be filtered. Calculations already made show that the water so impounded will last until 1941, with an estimated population of twelve millions of people. The advantages over the Wales scheme - which is such a one as you are opposing in the Yosemite - are overwhelming. The construction of conduits of maximum capacity for maximum future supply, of course, would be tremendously expensive, whereas reservoirs and filters can be constructed by units, - we do that here, and as need arises new units may be added.

If you care to know more about this whole subject, I am sure that if you were to write to the Metropolitan Water Board at the central offices, Savoy Court, Strand, W. C., London, they could tell you all about it. The clerk there is Mr. A. B. Pilling, F. C. I. S., and the bacteriological expert is Doctor A. C. Houston, M. B. D. Sc.. He may be addressed at 20 Nottingham Place, West.

Yours very sincerely,  
(Signed) Brand Whitlock.

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