

KHS “Looking Back” Column for *The Kimberley Echo*, Thursday May 5th 2011

On May 3rd 1961, the Minister for the North-West Mr. Court, was to submit to Cabinet a proposal for, “..the development of farms around the Ord River diversion dam,” to begin once the dam was complete in 1963. Mr Court said, “..it was expected 10,000 acres would be opened up at first. Similar areas would be opened up in 1964 and 1965” At that stage farm size had not been determined but was expected to be between 500 and 1000 acres. He said that, “..by 1965-66, the Government would be in a position to present a fully documented case to the Commonwealth for the Greater Ord Scheme —a £20 million dam to irrigate 200,000 acres and a hydro-electric power plant.”

The same day, Frank Wise, MLC, delivered a speech at Winthrop Hall about “How we can develop our empty spaces.” He saw road development right across North Australia as, “a vital national need.” Large projects like damming the Ord he said were “daring in their conception,” and that, “Much has been proven in the field of research by the C.S.I.R.O., but I know of no officer who would commit himself to the economics of agricultural production in the Northern Territory or in North-West Australia at this stage after long years at trials. He proposed that all territory north of the 26th parallel in WA, the whole of the NT and an area of Queensland, should be declared a tax-free area for a period of 20 years.



1961-04 - Bandicoot Bar with river flow at end of Wet Season - Initial Access to Bandicoot Bar made by Rhodes Contractors by early May 1961 – Uffe B. Hansen Photographic Collection

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