Water Resources Conference to include Leland Olds as a contributor

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Leland Olds, former chairman of the Federal Power Commission, will be on the program of the Water Resources Conference that will be held at Montana State University, July 20 and 21, according to Conference Director Albert W. Stone of the Law School.

Olds, now with Energy Research Associates, Washington, D. C., will take the position that the "preference clause" guards against monopoly in the power industry, which, he says, is public rather than private in character. His speech will be given Saturday morning, July 21.

The preference clause was added to the Reclamation Act in 1906, Stone said. It resulted in a policy of giving preference to locally owned, non-profit power utilities in the distribution of surplus federal power. Power companies owned by cities benefited from this policy, Stone explained, and by 1939, cooperatives and other non-profit power organizations were receiving advantages from the policy, too.

The federal government has become a big producer of electric power in recent years, Stone pointed out. This fact has raised the question of whether the government should produce power in areas where private utilities are willing to supply power, he said. This basic question is directly related to the preference clause, according to Stone.

Private utility firms believe it is unfair to give non-profit power companies the advantage in getting surplus power from federal power projects; so they are against the preference clause. They say they should have an equal chance at getting surplus federal power or an equal chance to develop their own power. Groups in favor of the preference clause argue that federal power is the product of the natural resources that belong to all the people and it should be supplied to the people by public or non-profit utilities.

Both sides of the question will be discussed by representatives of public and private utilities at the conference, Stone said.
Olds made special economic studies for the Council of National Defense in both world wars. Besides serving two terms on the FPC, he was ex-officio member of the U.S. Committee of the World Power Conference; chairman of the Federal Inter-Agency River Basin Committee; vice chairman of the National Power Policy Commission; and consulting economist and power specialist for the National Resources Planning Board and for other federal and state commissions and agencies. He was one of the negotiators and signers for the United States of the formal agreement with Canada, in 1941, for the use of the waters in the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River Basin.

Olds did graduate work at Harvard and Columbia Universities after receiving an A.B. degree from Amherst College. He is a member of the National Planning Assn., the American Political Science Assn., the American Legion, and other professional and civic groups.

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