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Hydroelectric Power - The Key to Montana's Future

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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Statement of Senator Mike Mansfield (D., Montana)

HYDROELECTRIC POWER, THE KEY TO MONTANA'S FUTURE

Mr. President, the past one hundred years are unsurpassed in history for the great multiplication of mankind's abilities to produce for his needs. This multiplication of abilities is due in large part to the increasing use of power sources additional to human and animal power. First it was steam. Then came electric power. In fact, throughout the world there is a close identity between the per capita use of electricity and living standards.

Electric power is now an essential of a modern diversified economy. An abundance of assured power is indispensable for the continued growth of the economy of each of the 49 states. Assured power supplies are a prerequisite to the establishment of a firm industrial base in the Western States. Insufficient supplies of electric power now restrict Western areas, rich in raw materials, to what are, essentially, exploited economies whose potentials for serving the peoples of these areas and the entire nation are scarcely tapped.

My home state of Montana is an example. It is, in an economic sense, a nation within a nation, with a great future. Its growth is dependent on the equitable and proper exploitation of its abundance of resources. That, in turn, depends on an adequate supply of hydroelectric power. Industry and commerce follow the transmission lines; they come after, not before, the power that they need.

Montana, today, does not have adequate electric power. The inadequacy is reflected in the small number of manufacturing and processing industries. And, today, it is also reflected in Montana's high rate of unemployment.

What we lack in Montana is not power potential but power development. Montana is richly endowed with hydroelectric resources. Great rivers rise in my state. Out of the mountains, the waters of the Columbia and the Missouri River systems plunge down steep grades through deep canyons and gorges along which are many sites suitable for reservoirs.

Regretably, these great hydroelectric resources are largely undeveloped Less than 15 percent of Montana's 6,650,000 kilowatts potential has been harnessed. According to the Federal Power Commission, there are, in the State, some 70 potential power projects with an aggregate capacity of over 5 million kilowatts.

In Montana there are several sites which cry out for Federal development at an early date; Libby Dam, Yellowtail Dam and the proposed Knowles Dam are examples. We already have Hungry Horse Dam and the Fort Peck Dam. If we add to them the others I have cited, we will assure an adequate supply of power for present consumers, and preference customers, and we will provide the incentive for new industries to move into one of the most seriously underdeveloped areas of the nation.

Just one-fourth of this 5 million kilowatts of hydroelectric potential, which I have just mentioned, would double Montana's entire supply of electricity from all sources. If this additional power can be put in service, it would

convert communities now stagment with unemployment into prosperous centers. One-fourth of the undeveloped hydroelectric potential of Montana's rivers would bring diversified industries to our towns. It would bring diversified markets to our farms and ranches. It would do much to restore, on a sound and continuing base, a measure of prosperity for Montana and it would, at the same time, add to the strength and security of the Nation.

We have seen this happen in one portion of my state. In 1952, the generators at Hungry Horse Dam went into service. By the terms of the Congressional authorization, Montana has preference in the use of Hungry Horse Power. This great energy supply has brought industry and commerce to the western part of the State. Following the flow of power, came the Anaconda Aluminum plant, the Victor Chemical Company, the Diamond Match Works and expanded lumber activity. Around these clustered new shops, new homes, new services and new trading centers. In addition, the new power made possible the extension of rural electrification to the farming and ranching areas of western Montana.

Mr. President, there are two significant observations to be drawn from the Hungry Horse experience. First of all, we had to develop the potential power resource--that is, we had to build the dam and install the generators. The second is that the power had to be reserved by a preference to the State of Montana where it was produced; that is what brought industry to the area. This was done by the authority and guidance of Congress. By way of clarification, I ask unanimous consent to have printed at the conclusion of my remarks, the

February 19, 1959 letter of the Assistant Secretary of the Interior, reciting the manner in which this preference works out.

The Hungry Horse story is a happy one. Unfortunately, we also have an unhappy story, involving another large multipurpose project, Fort Peck Dam in eastern Montana. This great project was authorized in 1938 and was intended to supply power for meeting Montana's needs. The records of the Senate show that this was the original intent, but unfortunately, the Congressional authorization was not explicit in fixing the preference. As a result, today, with 175,000 kilowatts capacity being installed at Fort Peck, Montana will receive less than 24,000 kilowatts of the power which will be drawn from its reservoirs. This is the allotment decided upon by the Administration, not by Congress. It seems to me, persuasive evidence that allocations should be fixed by Congress rather than left to the discretion of the Department of the Interior. It is a consideration which will be upper most in my mind in considering any future legislation which authorizes additional development of Montana water resources. Montana must have a first and definite claim on all waters rising within the State.

There is one final point I would like to make. In seeking to assure to the people of Montana a fair share of the benefits of the State's resources, I do not intend to ignore the needs of neighboring states. We are all citizens of one nation. The people of Montana have no desire to be less generous in their attitudes towards others, than others are towards them.

By building Hungry Horse to its maximum effectiveness, benefits have accrued, not only to Montana, but also to downstream neighboring states. This

approach, I believe, ought to be the key to future public power projects. By full development of each site, it will be possible to share the benefits widely and generously. As we move forward with water resource programs, I believe we must, to the fullest extent possible, seek the benefit of whole regions of the Nation. No state will suffer if the needs of all are met. No State, in the long run will gain, if the needs of any are ignored.

Mr. President, in conclusion I want to say that any multi-purpose project in the State of Montana must have the following prerequisites:

1. Montana must be given primary preference on the order of the Hungry Horse project.

2. Any proposed project must be feasible and economically sound.

3. Any proposed project must have the approval of the majority of the people directly affected by its construction.

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION, FROM SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

February 19, 1959

Dear Senator Mansfield,

In your January 30, 1959 letter pertaining to Hungry Hourse power for the State of Montana, you ask if the legislative history regarding this project did not firmly establish a power preference for the State of Montana and if the Department of the Interior translated this preference by engineering and administrative computation to be the at-site capability of Hungry Horse under ccordinated operation. Your statement appears to be substantially accurate. The legislative history and the Hungry Horse Act of June 5, 1944 did firmly establish a power preference for the State of Montana.

Numerous studies were made as to the amount of power that should be included in such a preference. It was obvious that the at-site isolated generation of about 90,000 kilowatts would be too small and not in keeping with the legislative history or the economy of operations. Also, it would be uneconomical to bring large amounts of power from downstream plants for sale in Montana. The at-site capability of Hungry Horse under coordinated operation is approximately equal to the transmission capability that was economically feasible. This is the transmission system that was constructed to tie in the Hungry Horse project with the balance of the Federal Columbia River power system.

Sincerely yours,

(sgd) Fred G. Aandahl

Assistant Secretary of the Interior

Hon. Mike Mansfield
United States Senate
Washington 25, D. C.