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Yellowtail Dam Ground Breaking Ceremony

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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This is indeed a momentous occasion. It is one of those events which come all too seldom in an individual's lifetime. The Yellowtail Dam ground breaking ceremony brings to fruition many, many years of hard work and dedicated service on the part of a large number of people. In a sense, the present Congressional Delegation in Washington is relatively new to this multi-purpose project. We are the fortunate ones to be associated with the project when it was destined to become a reality. The Yellowtail Project was authorized by Congress in 1944, but grass roots support for the proposal began long before then.

The late Senator James E. Murray was an outstanding supporter of the project during his career in the Senate. The earliest and the most important support from this project came from home, here in southeastern Montana. If it had not been for the tireless, unceasing effort of people like my good friends, Howard Bunston, we very likely would not be gathered here today.

The breaking of the ground here at Yellowtail will be what we hope is the beginning of a new era of developing and utilizing the resources of this part of the Treasure State. There have been delays, postponements and obstacles in the path of this proposal, but we can now put the past to one side and look to the future.
What does Yellowtail Dam and the Reservoir mean today and in
the future?

The construction of the dam and reservoir during the next five
years or so will mean employment, increased business for retail and wholesale
outlets and a general economic uplift for the entire area. In this regard, I
hope that the human resources of both the Northern Cheyenne and Crow Indian
Reservations are being utilized to the fullest extent. There is a natural boom
period associated with any project of this magnitude and the aftermath usually
requires some adjustment, but this need not be so abrupt. Plans should be
made now.

One of the prime purposes for this project is the generation of
hydroelectric power urgently needed to meet the severe power shortages in
eastern Montana. Rural electric cooperatives in the Upper Missouri River
Basin have been pleading for new power supplies. They frankly will not be able
to meet future demands without this new source of power. It is a known fact
that a large percentage of the power that will be generated at Yellowtail is
already committed to these preference customers. An increased supply of
power for these cooperatives will enable them as well as the private utilities
to negotiate with and attract new customers into eastern Montana.

Activity in the Big Horn area need not end with the completion of
construction here at Yellowtail. One of the major benefits of this project is
the huge reservoir it will create with a capacity of 1,375,000 acre feet. This
reservoir will provide sufficient irrigation storage for an irrigation project of 44,000 acres near Hardin, plus supplemental waters for pumping units on the Yellowstone, Tongue and Powder Rivers. Construction on the Hardin Unit can very easily provide for a leveling off period during which time the multi-purpose benefits of this project can be realized. I do hope that local interests will stimulate early discussions on the necessary planning and agreements which precede the construction of an irrigation unit.

In addition, the reservoir created by Yellowtail Dam will create new recreation sites along its shores as the lake extends into our neighboring State of Wyoming. An improved network of roads in this area is a most desirable goal. It is something that will take time and it will require the combined efforts of county, state and Federal interests. These matters are of considerable importance to your Montana leaders.

This is truly a great day for southeastern Montana. We are witnessing here the beginning of a large comprehensive project financed by the Federal government, in the name of the Bureau of Reclamation. These funds come from the taxpayers as administered by the central authority of the fifty States, our national government in Washington, D. C. Some people think this is bad. I do not.

The Federal government is constructing at this site a project with multipurpose benefits, assuring comprehensive development of existing resources. The Federal government is taking the lead, as it should in
areas where no one else is able or willing to do as complete a job of
development. The benefits that can be realized from Yellowtail are not
narrow in scope. This is an investment in the future. The taxpayers are
going to pay approximately $110,000,000 for the construction of this project,
but the U. S. Treasury, the caretaker of our tax money, is going to be paid
back, with interest, from power revenues and the like.

This is not an outright expenditure of Federal funds. It is
an investment in the future of Montana. This is very little different from
private investment and development.

In this particular area, it means full development and multi-
purpose benefits, or, in other words, good business.
I have said on many occasions that there is room for both private and public development of our natural resources, they both have a very important role to play. This arrangement has been working for years. Under our democratic system the people have charged the various levels of Government with the responsibility to do the things that they are able to do best. This applies to the local city government, the state and the Federal government. The Federal government stands at the end of the spectrum, but representative of all of us, each individual. The Federal government has vast resources at its command which can accomplish much, particularly in matters where development by others would mean incomplete and partial development. We know that the fifty states cannot go in fifty directions, we need a unifying and consolidating force. This is the important role played by such agencies as the Department of the Interior, an agent of our national government, which has done so much in behalf of the economic development of our state.

These Federal projects do not pay taxes as such to the state and local governments but this revenue is placed by the additional taxes derived from the expanded economic base associated with these large hydroelectric plants. In the case of the Hardin Unit, when the project is completed it will contribute greatly to the economic stabilization of the local community. This past summer when Montana was plagued with the drought and the grasshopper infestation it graphically illustrated the value of the irrigation projects in preventing economic chaos in these areas dependent on the local agricultural economy. These irrigated farmers in many instances had the only cash crops.
Yellowtail Dam is a symbol of comprehensive development of natural resources which abound in our state. These resources are being developed for the benefit of Montanans and to be used in Montana. At this point I wish to state emphatically that as far as I am able I intend to see that the power generated by the four units which will be installed in this powerplant is made available for use in Montana. This is a yardstick which was insisted on at Hungry Horse Dam. Montana interests must be given preference here at Yellowtail and this same philosophy must apply at Libby Dam in the northwest when it is completed. Historically the resources of Montana have been extractive in nature. For too long a period the resources of Montana have been taken from the state for processing and utilization elsewhere. If Montana is to develop and prosper we must make use of the many resources we have, right here at home. This is a goal to which Yellowtail Dam can make a major contribution.

In conclusion, I wish to say that it is wonderful being here in Big Horn County with such a fine assemblage, back again with my many friends and acquaintances. I am especially pleased that we have the very able Secretary of the Interior with us today and the many distinguished participants in the annual meeting of the National Reclamation Association now underway in Billings. The ground breaking here at Yellowtail is most appropriate and significant on the occasion of a nationwide meeting of those who are concerned with the orderly development and conservation of our natural resources.