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Statement of Senator Mike Mansfield (Democrat, Montana) May 21, 1962

S. 3153 -- Northwest Power Preference Legislation

Mr. Chairman, it is a pleasure to come before the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee this morning to discuss a matter of extreme importance to the Northwestern States and matters of more limited and primary concern to Montana.

The hydroelectric power interconnection between the State of California and the Bonneville Power Administration has been a topic of discussion for a number of years. It now appears to be a most reasonable solution in meeting power shortages in California and firming up markets for power supplies in the Columbia River Basin. During the years that the intertie has been under discussion the major consideration in the Northwest has been the protection and preservation of a power resource so important to the continued development and growth of the Northwest.

The language of S. 3153 provides the solution to the problem. The Bonneville Power Administration is willing to make Federal power available to California because of its present shortages, but we cannot make a long term commitment in our own self-interest. This bill, if enacted, will guarantee electric consumers in the Pacific Northwest first call on electric energy generated at Federal plants in that region. This solution can be beneficial to all concerned.

If there is to be a California Intertie then we must have this protection as proposed by the Secretary of the Interior in S. 3153.
I raise but one qualification. In this, as this bill is concerned.
The bill as written will make a partial modification of the geographical
preference in the Hungry Horse Dam Act. As the Members of the Com-
mittee know, all power realized at Hungry Horse Dam is reserved for use
within the State of Montana. The preference favors the entire State of
Montana, even though it is all being sold in western Montana at the present
time. In view of the fact that only western Montana, that portion included
in the Columbia River Basin, is incorporated into the provisions of this
legislation, I would oppose any interference with this reservation. At
sometime in the future, it is quite possible that some of this power realized
at Hungry Horse will be marketed in Eastern Montana.

An appropriate amendment has been submitted to the Committee
for its consideration. The amendment of Section 9 of S. 3153 will protect
the existing Montana preference at Hungry Horse Dam. I ask that this
amendment be favorably considered.

Montana is one large topographic and political unit, but in many
ways its interests are divided into east and west. Montana is in two major
river basins, the Columbia and the Missouri. Hydroelectric power supplies
are currently adequate in the western portion of the State. In eastern Montana,
our cooperatives are desperate for new supplies of power. The Hungry Horse
experience has proven that large multi-purpose Federal projects will attract
new industries into the State. Montana needs new industries and the economic
development of the State is dependent to a degree on the attraction of low-cost
energy. Naturally, Montana must look to its new sources of power in the State and those which are reserved for use within the State when needed.

An interconnection between the Columbia and the Missouri River Basin is one possibility which would be of considerable value to eastern Montana as long as these transmission lines could be tapped for energy where needed in the State.

Montana needs to grow. Water is one of its greatest resources. The storage reservoirs now in Montana and proposed for the future provide the sites for the generating facilities creating the power and energy which industry needs. I consider it essential that this resource be made available for use within the State.

Montana's problems are many and varied. I am not advocating a Chinese wall around the State. The Treasure States association with her sister states of Idaho, Washington, Oregon and other neighboring States has always been most pleasant and beneficial. I support S. 3153 with the Hungry Horse amendment. But I also wish to state that the future of Montana will give rise to discussions of Montana power preference at projects now under construction or proposed, such as Yellowtail, Libby, and Knowles. The people of Montana ask understanding in these matters.

I have set forth my thoughts on this subject in more detail in a communication recently addressed to the Secretary of the Interior. Also,
I discussed this general subject at greater length on the Senate Floor in March of 1959. I ask that both of these documents be incorporated as a part of my testimony today.

Mr. Chairman, this concluded my statement this morning, and I hope that the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs will be able to act expeditiously on this important preference legislation.