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MONTANA POWER PREFERENCE

Mr. President: From time to time, I have addressed the Senate on the wealth of natural resources that we have in Montana. Water is considered by many to be the most important. The rivers of Montana have provided sites for some very important and successful hydro-electric power projects, both public and private. These generating facilities have supplied the energy to meet the local demands, but also have provided the additional incentive to bring new industry into the State and the resulting benefits. In addition, these projects have contributed to the overall generating scheme of the Columbia and Missouri River Basins.

Montana is an upstream State, and because of its developed and undeveloped reservoir sites, it contributes a great deal in power generation and flood control downstream. Montana is a State which is just beginning to flex its muscles in its transition from a largely rural State to one with growing metropolitan areas and potential industrial development. Many of us see low-cost hydro-electric power as one of the major instruments in this development. Therefore we have come to be sensitive about keeping a reasonable amount of the power generated at these large upstream projects for use within our own State and not merely permit the energy and benefits to flow downstream.

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This attitude may appear to be somewhat parochial, but I am sure that my colleagues here in the Senate find similar attitudes in each and every State. If they have a resource of which they are justly proud, they want to see that the major benefit is realized in their own immediate area. This statement is not being made without a full awareness of the problems that arise from regional development and cooperation. We live in a Federal system and the interests of our sister States must be and should be considered.

The people of Montana want to be placed on record stating that they are willing to cooperate, but they will not stand idly by while their resources are drained off for the benefit of those downstream. As I indicated some months ago, I intended to introduce legislation which would give Montana a preference for at-site power and a portion of the benefits realized downstream at all new Federally-constructed projects in Montana. I have today sent to the desk such a proposal. I realize full well that it will be opposed in certain quarters of the Executive and Legislative Branches of the Government, but it is a matter which should be discussed. It is a subject of considerable concern to the Montana Congressional Delegation and to the people of Montana.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have the text of this bill printed at the conclusion of my remarks in the Congressional Record.