

Udall in Doghouse For Entering Squabble

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Washington (Special) — In the doghouse with most members of the Federal Power Commission for injecting the federal government into a number of controversial river development squabbles after the headlines for such intervention.

A series of such episodes was climaxed last week by Udall's petition to intervene in the Snake River case as an advocate of a federal dam, urging the FPC to reject the application of Pacific Northwest Power company for High Mountain Sheep dam and the rival bid of Washington Public Power Supply system for Nez Perce dam.

"Unfortunately, late appearances appear to be a way of life for the secretary," wryly observed Commissioner Charles R. Ross of Vermont in a recent opinion approved by four of the five-man FPC.

Udall's lone defender at the moment is Commissioner Howard Morgan of Oregon.

Growing Annoyance

While a 4-to-1 indictment to the real issues which divide powerful private utilities and public power advocates, the growing annoyance with Udall by a majority of the FPC indicates little solicitude within the FPC for the cause of government dam building which Udall serves.

One thing is certain. President Kennedy, given the opportunity of appointing five new FPC commissioners since assuming office, has not packed it with a strong pro-public power team, as some utility executives feared he would when he named Joseph Swidler of Tennessee, an ex-TVA official, to head this key regulatory agency.

Swidler, in the view of many Washington observers, has leaned over backward to subdue any suspicions that he is a public power champion, so much so that public power interests are openly disappointed in his performance to date.

President Eisenhower's FPC appointees were decidedly pro-private enterprise, evoking constant criticism from liberal Democrats in Congress and public power groups for such decisions as their licensing of Idaho Power company for private dams which precluded a federal dam at Hells canyon on the Oregon-Idaho border.

Since none of the controversies pending before the present FPC has been decided, no definite analysis of the philosophical makeup of the Kennedy-appointed FPC is possible.

Two important cases now pending will test the new commissioners. Both involve major river development schemes in which local utility authorities, some private, some public, are seeking licenses to build dams. In both instances Udall is seeking to persuade the FPC to reject these applications and to recommend that Congress authorize federal dams built by the Bureau of Reclamation.

The first is the Marble Canyon case on the Colorado river in northwestern Arizona. The Arizona Power authority, a state agency, wants a license to build a 510,000 kilowatt hydroelectric dam in Marble Canyon 12 miles north of where the Colorado enters Grand Canyon National park. The reservoir of the proposed dam would extend 55 miles upriver to the Glen Canyon dam which the Bureau of Reclamation is now building as part of the massive Upper Colorado Storage project.

The City of Los Angeles opposes this application on grounds that it would only partially harness that stretch of the Colorado. It claims that in addition to the Marble Canyon dam, a diversion tunnel extending 44 miles due west to Kanab creek would permit construction there of additional hydroelectric facilities which would boost the total installed capacity to 2 million kilowatts.

Los Angeles doesn't want a license to build such a project, but wants the FPC to recommend congressional authorization by the bureau of reclamation. The National Park service has opposed this alternative be-

cause the diversion tunnel would cut across five miles of the national park.

The FPC's examiner, who presided at hearings in which these counter proposals were aired, recommended a license for the Arizona Power authority. He concluded that the opposition of the Park service and organized conservationists dimmed prospects for congressional authorization of federal dams.

Habitually Tardy

At this point Udall asked to intervene in behalf of federal projects, thus provoking the comment from Commissioner Ross that he is habitually tardy. The FPC, with Morgan dissenting, rejected Udall's request that the hearings be postponed for testimony supporting a federal development plan; instead, it granted Udall the right to file a brief taking exception to the examiner's decision and to be heard when all parties make their oral arguments before the five commissioners.

Morgan wrote a stinging dissent, chastizing his colleagues for refusing to allow Interior department witnesses to testify in behalf of their plan. While believing the rules of timeliness should be followed, especially in rate regulation cases where errors subsequently discovered can be corrected even retroactively, Morgan argued that a few months delay to hear Udall's witnesses is a minor consideration for a hydroelectric project.

"Once built, a project erroneously conceived and licensed is not even correctable by the courts. Nor will it be correctable by any members of the five or six generations of people, at a minimum, who

must somehow manage to live with an error enshrined in steel and concrete during the whole of its usable life," said Morgan.

Rival Applicants

The second major controversy is the Snake river case where public and private utilities are rival applicants. In this case, the FPC examiner has recommended in favor of Pacific Northwest Power company's bid for High Mountain Sheep dam, and against Washington Public Power Supply

system's request for Nez Perce dam.

Udall agrees that Nez Perce should not be built because it would block the valuable migratory fish runs into Idaho's Salmon river, but he wants the government rather than the private utility to build Mountain Sheep dam.

Having been denied the request to reopen the Marble Canyon case for further testimony, Udall sought only the privilege of filing exceptions to the examiner's Snake river

decision and making oral arguments. Having granted this much in the Marble Canyon case, the FPC is likely to grant the same request for the Snake river case.

The forthcoming final decisions by the FPC in these two major controversies will do much to shape the record and public impression of the Kennedy Administration in the field of western river development before President Kennedy must go before the voters in 1964.

CAP Members To Portland Meeting

Seven senior members of the Medford squadron, Civil Air Patrol, attended the Oregon Wing CAP conference in Portland recently.

Attending were Maj. John Keener, commander; Lt. Jack Hall, Lt. Mary Lou Hall; Warrant Officer Lucille Keener, Warrant Officer Nancy Weber, and Sgt. Jack Weber and Mary Housell.

Also attending were two Air Force Reserve Liaison officers attached to the Medford squadron. They were Lt. Col. R. E. Nelson and Maj. R. E. McIntyre.

Emphasized at the conference was emergency service training which included the CAP and Civil Defense emergency procedure.

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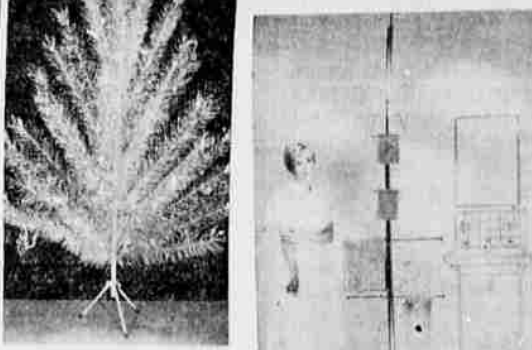
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