"We dedicate ourselves to the complete abandonment of our State's past leisurely attention to and consideration of its water problems, and in lieu thereof, the adoption of the strongest possible program, to the end that the fullest development of our water resources shall become the first order of business of the entire state and of all its people." (Constitution of the Colorado Water Congress)

THE BIG FIGHT OVER POWER . . . What's it all about?

What does it mean to Colorado water users?

It's a continuing war between opposing philosophies that has been going on for a generation. It's back in the hot war stage now, due to circumstances which include the new administration's strong emphasis on public power development.

There are many battlegrounds. In the Pacific Northwest it's Nez Perce Dam (public) against High Mountain Sheep Dam (private). Both sides have applications pending before the Federal Power Commission ... There's Burns Creek (cost split 98% power, 2% irrigation) now before Congress for authorization as a reclamation project and vigorously opposed by investor owned utilities ... There's a big public v. private fight over appropriations for the proposed world's largest nuclear powerplant (750,000 kw, $95 million) at Hanford, Washington. It would generate energy from heat produced at Atomic Energy Commission's $145 million plutonium-reactor, would feed this energy into the big federal Bonneville Power Administration system.

A hot potato cooking on federal power burners is the study underway to interconnect all major federal power systems into a nationwide power grid in order "to make possible the maximum use of power resources". Immediate emphasis is on a proposed federal extra high voltage common carrier power intertie between Pacific Northwest and Pacific Southwest, with completion of study set for November 1, 1961 . .
Another hot potato is the possibility of firming up federal hydropower systems with steam powerplants, like TVA is now doing.

In the Southwest, It's USBR's proposed Bridge Canyon Project against City of Los Angeles and Arizona Power Authority who want to build Marble and Bridge Canyon Dams. On Capitol Hill, there's an all-out congressional battle over FPC appointments, with Senate Minority leader Dirksen of Illinois saying the debate on Joseph Swidler's nomination as FPC chairman may lay the groundwork for a possible court case if the nomination is made . . . Growing strength of the REA's is adding backstage fuel to the power fight.

Biggest power fight of all is in Colorado water users' back yard . . . the Colorado River basin. Controversy centers around who should build the backbone transmission system for the billion dollar Colorado River storage project. Battleground: House Appropriations Subcommittee on Public Works, where hearings are underway on USBR's request for funds to build an all-federal transmission system.

Supporting the all-federal system: Colorado River Basin Consumers Power, Inc., which includes 150 consumer-owned electric utilities in the five state area. Secretary Seaton of the last administration, favored the all-federal system. So does Secretary Udall. Opposing: Public Service Co. of Colorado, Arizona Public Service Co., Utah Power and Light Co, Pacific Power and Light Co. (Wyoming), Public Service Co. of New Mexico. They want to build a large portion of the backbone transmission system.

Claims by both sides are far apart, with little middle ground showing. Basic facts are complex, highly technical. Sometimes it appears that opposing sides may be using different yardsticks to measure monetary benefits.

Colorado's blue chips in the transmission line fight: Maximum power revenues for financing construction of participating irrigation projects. Construction of the backbone transmission system must be started soon, must go forward with all possible speed in order to market the energy that will be available when Glen Canyon powerplant goes on the line.
Point of decision: Probably the House Committee on Public Works Appropriations. It has the ball. Its decision will be known when the PW appropriations bill is reported to the House . . . sometime this summer. Amendments during House floor debate probably will be attempted, but changes may be difficult to make.

COLORADO SUPREME COURT rendered a significant opinion last April on the Surface Creek case. Background: Orchard City Irrigation District had a Surface Creek decree for 3400 acre feet for filling Fruit Growers Reservoir, with reservoir capacity designated as 3400 acre feet. Fruit Growers Dam washed out, was rebuilt to 4500 acre feet capacity, but a decree was not sought for the enlarged capacity. In 1951, controversy arose over the filling of Fruit Growers Reservoir.

Surface Creek question: Could Orchard City Irrigation District store the maximum amount of water under each decree (6270 acre feet total) in a reservoir with capacity fixed and determined by both decrees to be 3400 acre feet? OCID said it could, appealed in 1955 to State Engineer Whitten. Whitten said total storage was limited to 3400 acre feet. OCID took the issue to court. District Court dismissed OCID's complaint and OCID appealed to State Supreme Court. It upheld the District Court.

Supreme Court: "A reservoir is limited to one annual filling from whatever source the water may be derived . . . the decreed capacity of a reservoir controls and limits the amount of water that may be stored therein . . . plaintiff's claim of the right to store the maximum amount of water under each decree is entirely without merit."

Grand Valley underground water case has been postponed several times in recent months. Case is now set for July 13 . . . Court battle over adjudication of water rights in Water District 43 has been postponed until Sept. 25 in the district court of Rio Blanco County. Principals: Rocky Mountain Power Co. of Denver, Yellow Jacket Water Conservancy District and users along the White River near Meeker.

RMP Co wants a conditional decree for its proposed Sweetwater Hydroelectric Project so that it can divert from South Fork of the White into Sweetwater Creek, a Colorado tributary entering above Dotsero. Power would be generated at two hydroelectric plants. Storage water would be available for municipal, industrial and irrigation
purposes, either directly or by exchange.

YJWCD wants a senior decree for its proposed Yellow Jacket federal reclamation project, fears Sweetwater Project will take some of Yellow Jacket's water supply.

Attempts have been made to settle the controversy out of court by stipulation. Agreement seemed near, then negotiations bogged down. RMP Co agreed to let Yellow Jacket project have senior priority. But Colorado River Water Conservation District isn't completely sold on Sweetwater Hydro. Also, White River water users are becoming concerned about Sweetwater's possible effect on various existing ditches.

Colorado ground water law was amended slightly by the last legislature. Time limit for well registration was extended to December 31, 1961 for wells existing on May 1, 1957. Included: All irrigation, municipal, industrial and commercial wells not previously registered ... except wells used solely for stock water wells, domestic wells and small artesian wells. State Engineer's office has registration forms.

Other states have been active on water legislation. Texas legislature considered 164 water bills, enacted ninety ... Nevada legislature enacted nine significant water bills, including establishment of a state flood repair and disaster relief fund. Whenever the water distribution system of a government subdivision in Nevada has been damaged by flood or other acts of God, resulting in an emergency condition of water shortage for public use, the governing body may apply for a state loan to assist in repairing the damage...

Mesa County is having sewage problems ... raw sewage dumped into the Colorado River in Grand Junction. County commissioners say its a state health department problem. Health Dep't says it won't do anything about the problem until U.S. Public Health Service completes a pollution survey of the entire Colorado River basin. Health Dep't is re-evaluating Colorado's stream pollution laws which it considers "inadequate."

Frederick, in Weld County, recently suffered $300,000 flood damages from two heavy rains. It was Frederick's second major flooding in three years. CWCB and SCS are cooperating with Army Corps of Engineers in a survey of Frederick's flood problem.
Objective: Feasibility indication, development of a flood prevention project under Small Flood Control Project Act. If project cost is under $400,000 congressional approval won't be required.

Boulder county has been urged to adopt flood plain regulation to protect property from flood damage. Urger: Herbert Noble, civil engineer, in a talk before PLAN—Boulder's County Committee. Noble approach: Zoning, building codes, subdivision regulations, land acquisition . . . Greeley switched to CBT project water supply (Horsetooth Reservoir) recently when Cache la Poudre water became temporarily discolored from fine sandstone washed into the North Fork by heavy rains . . . Colorado Springs has awarded a $101,000 contract for extension of its Blue River transmountain collection system to Spruce Creek.

Trinidad needs flood control. Representative Chenoweth recently urged a House Appropriations Subcommittee to vote $200,000 for continuation of Corps of Engineers studies of the proposed $20 million Purgatoire River flood control and irrigation project . . . Chenoweth also recommended $30,000 appropriations for Corps study of a project to protect Los Animas from floods . . . Hail and rain recently caused over $1 million crop damage in Prowers County, in the Arkansas Valley.

Grand County citizens are attempting to develop a County Chamber of Commerce, "to pool our knowledge, money and energy and unify our efforts to develop and improve Grand County's natural and potential resources."

Garfield County has formed a weed control district. This clears the way for mandatory weed control on all land (except federal) within the district . . . Utah State Weed Committee held an important meeting last February which was well attended by water users from most of Utah's counties.

Utah Water News: "Very worthwhile information was given out by the various companies that are interested in the development of chemicals to help solve the weed problems in our canals and ditches . . . We trust that the information . . . will take root and that the irrigation companies will immediately start a program of weed control and elimination along their ditches and canals."

Nederland Lion's Club has developed a money-making water project . . . its annual water derby. Contestants guess the time that Barker Dam starts to spill. Winner gets
a prize, net proceeds go into community projects. Last year's dam was June 5, this
year June 10. . . Colorado Fuel and Iron Company of Pueblo recently received the first
USBR negotiated equipment contract earmarked for an area of substantial labor surplus
($98,000 for steel strand to be used in the Glen Canyon-Shiprock 230 kv transmission
line) . . . Orchard City Irrigation District (Delta County) recently submitted a Notice
of Intent to apply for a loan under the Small Reclamation Project Act of 1956.

U. S. Forest Service is making a safety inspection of the 330 small reservoirs
located within the Grand Mesa-Uncompahgre National Forest. Each reservoir will be
classified according to condition by the Forest Service. Enforcement of required dam
maintenance is the responsibility of the state engineer . . . Grand Junction will open
bids soon on a $176,000 microstrainer treatment plant.

COLORADO DAMS: Construction of Florida Project's $5 million Lemon Dam will get
underway soon, following award of construction contract to an Englewood firm . . .
Greeley-Loveland Irrigation Co's new $62,000 diversion dam on the Big Thompson River
west of Loveland is now in operation. G-L water irrigates 16,000 acres in Larimer and
Weld Counties . . . Delta is constructing a municipal water supply reservoir, initial
step in a four-year development program to be financed from water department revenues.

Crested Butte is awaiting action on reconstruction of the dam at Lake Irwin,
source of the town's water supply. Colorado Game and Fish Commission owns the dam,
has postponed action until July. G & P is awaiting recommendations from CWCB . . .
G & F Commission's summer plans include construction of a dam on Lester Creek, (23 miles
north of Steamboat Springs) to create a 185-acre fishing lake, third largest body of
water in northwestern Colorado, if Middle Park is excluded. Larger: Trappers Lake
and Vega Reservoir.

Cal Queal (Denver Post): "The Bureau of Reclamation has long considered
placing an irrigation dam on famous Trapper's Lake on the White River
east of Meeker . . . We vote a loud "NO" on a dam for Trappers Lake.
The lake and its cutthroat trout have a fishing reputation known
throughout the region, even nationally. Let's keep this gem of the
high country just as it is." (3-12-61)
Vega Reservoir is a key feature of USBR's Collbran Project, now under construction near Grand Junction. Vega is filling for the first time, will provide at least 16,000 acre feet to project irrigators this summer on a temporary rental basis. .. Bonham Dam (Collbran Project) rehabilitation contract has recently been awarded to a Salt Lake City firm . . . Workmen are rushing to complete Paonia Dam . . . Curecanti Dam core drilling is underway at the Blue Mesa site. Construction will start next spring.

Fryingpan-Arkansas Project authorization is nearing the critical stage. Fry-Ark hearing is set for June 21, is expected to be reported out the same day. About two weeks will be required for Interior Committee's formal reports on the Fryingpan. Next: House Rules Committee, where Fry-Ark and New Mexico's Navajo Juan Chama will probably be considered at the same time. No Rules Committee trouble is anticipated.

Fry Ark's major battle: House vote. No trouble is expected in the Senate. Navajo-San Juan Chama will go to the House floor first . . . probably about August 1st. N-SJC's House vote will be carefully watched by Colorado's congressional delegation. If N-SJC doesn't make it, Colorado's congressional water quarterback (Wayne Aspinall) might decide to wait, rather than risk a Fry-Ark House vote this year.

Fry Ark has a brighter outlook than Navajo-San Juan Chama. It's less costly, has less non-reimbursables, has bipartisan sponsorship. Fry Ark is being pushed on the federal reclamation timetable by a backlog of Western Slope projects ready to go, one at a time. Fry Ark has solid intrastate backing. Even Aspen Times now favors it, seems a little sorry that Aspen lost her Fry-Ark replacement reservoir.

Denver Post: "The Southeastern Colorado area needs the water, the West Slope has the water to spare and, for once, Colorado is fully united on the desirability of the diversion." (Editorial 6-4-61)

Aspinall's proposal for a long-range outlay for reclamation of $300 million a year seems to be receiving increasing congressional support. Commissioner Dominy: "We can't run a big construction schedule up and down like a yo-yo without great difficulty and waste". . . Senate has approved legislation ($ 650) which would permit privately owned irrigation companies to qualify for long-term, low interest SCS loans for improvements to their water systems. House action comes next.
Gordon Allott has submitted amendments to Senator Anderson’s version of the Wilderness Bill. Amendments would require congressional action to establish wilderness areas, would also require resource inventory statements from interested agencies.

WATER PEOPLE: Harry Sittser, 44, office engineer on State Engineer’s staff for 14 years, was found dead of a heart attack while on a fishing trip in South Park. Ralph Williams, newspaperman and former secretary of the (now dissolved) South Platte Water Conservancy District, has returned to the USBR regional information job in Denver that he left 8 years ago. Gerry Sampson (former engineer on CBT project construction) has been named Project Construction Engineer for the $18 million Cheney Division of USBR’s Wichita Project. Ted Zorich of Walsenburg, recent civil engineering graduate at CSU, has received highest engineering honors, including the Parshall Award in water resources and irrigation engineering. Zorich was partially paralyzed five years ago by a severe polio attack.

Harry Caperton succeeds Harold Lee as USBR’s regional supervisor of power in Denver. Oscar Chapman, former secretary of interior from Colorado, received an honorary degree from Western State College in Gunnison. Chapman was instrumental in initiating studies on the Smith Fork Project, now under construction near Crawford. Peter E. Black of CSU has received the nation’s first doctor of philosophy degree in watershed management. Black’s thesis: "Timber and Water Resources Management: A Physical and Economic Approach to Multiple Use of Denver’s Municipal Watershed."

Bert Hanna, Denver Post Staff Writer, has written another series of excellent water resource articles. Hanna surveyed the problems, purposes and policies in development of the nation’s natural resources. Bill Nelson, Associate Editor of the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel and CWCB member, is credited with effective testimony at recent Fry-Ark project authorization hearings in Washington.
Mrs. D'Arcy McNickle (Pres., League of Women Voters of Colo., Boulder): "Through Bert Hanna's excellent series of articles on natural resources development, the Denver Post is performing a real public service in informing its readers about the lack of coordination in federal resource activities . . . With water rapidly becoming the nation's No. 1 resource problem, the need for continuing collection of information on the state of our water supplies, for appraising proposals and making sound over-all plans, becomes daily more imperative." (Denver post 6-10-61)

Grand Jct Sentinel: "Since 1938 the Sentinel has assigned a man to the subject of water almost exclusively . . . Proudly, and with no regrets, The Sentinel has invested time and effort as well as money totaling well over $100,000 in Western Colorado's fight to protect the future of this country and the future of its water supply. During the past ten years Bill Nelson has become recognized, not just in Western Colorado, but throughout the West and in Washington, as one of the foremost water experts in the region. This is quite a record for a layman."

WATER QUOTES: "The Colorado is the most overworked and underfed river in the United States" (Rep. John Saylor of Pennsylvania) . . . "Water—more important than your money—it is YOUR LIFE" (Texas Water) . . . "I have never seen one of these government departments that wants to be coordinated" (Sen. Clair Engle of California) . . . "I can't give you the formula for success but I can give you the one for failure—Try to please everyone! "(Motto in the office of George Clyde, Governor of Utah) . . . "The lack of participation (in the provisions of the Small Reclamation Projects Act) from so many states indicates general apathy and points to the possibility that perhaps the program has failed to reach the small private organizations for whom it was intended." (Senator Bible of Nevada, in the National Rivers and Harbors "Reports")

MEETINGS: Colorado Water Conservation Board, July 12 in Denver . . . Western Resources Conference, August 7-11, Colorado State University, Fort Collins.

PUBLICATIONS: "Inventory of Water Facilities in the U.S." by U.S. Public Health Service lists the water facilities of about 20,000 U.S. communities, gives detailed information on ownership, equipment, source of supply, treatment, etc. Four volumes now available of a nine volume set. Each volume cost less than a dollar (Sup't of Documents, Wash. 25, D.C.) . . . "A Primer on Water" by U.S. Geological Survey is understandable, good water reading for 30 cents (USGS, Federal Center, Denver or Supt of Documents, Wash. 25, D.C.) . . . "Reclamation Project Data" is an 873 page reference book on 145 federal water resources project ($6.75 Supt of Doc., Wash. 25, D.C.)
How A Bill Is Passed

(From "DENVER...this week", publication of the Denver Chamber of Commerce)