June 18, 1974

Statement of Jerry Goldsmith, President of Club 20, also Chairman of the Land Use and Water Development of Club 20

During the past several years, the salinity problem on the Colorado River has been used as a subterfuge for the national Administration's refusal to release funds authorized by Congress for construction of upper basin water development projects. The Environmental Protection Agency has adopted a standard that the salinity concentrations in the river not be allowed to rise above the levels present in 1972. Since any additional use of water affects its quality to some degree, this policy has effectively blocked construction starts on the Savery-Pot-Hook and Fruitland Mesa projects in Western Colorado, which have been authorized since 1964. Trans-mountain diversions also aggravate the salinity problem by taking high quality water off the top of the watershed, which otherwise would dilute the more saline waters reaching the river at lower elevations.

The increasing salinity of the Colorado River has been a point of contention affecting United States relations with Mexico. Even though the 1944 Mexican Treaty made no references to water quality, the governments of the United States and Mexico last year negotiated an arrangement whereby the United States would build a desalinization plant near the border and carry out costly control measures extending into the Mexicali Valley to improve the quality
of water delivered to Mexico under the international compact. The Administration introduced a bill in this year's session of Congress to fund and implement the agreement with Mexico, but the bill included no provisions to relieve the serious problems plaguing Colorado River water users in the upper and lower basins. Consequently, senators and representatives from the seven Colorado River basin states introduced a substitute bill providing for the installation of control measures at various salt loading points on the Colorado River, to the end that the lower basin salinity can be maintained at or below present levels, while the upper basin continues to develop its compact apportioned waters. This bill has been supported by the Upper Colorado River Commission, the State of Colorado, and our Western Colorado water agencies.

Club 20 strongly supports the concept that the salinity question is a basin-wide problem, and therefore favors the solution arrived at by the Congress. We do not presume to comprehend the mysteries of international diplomacy, but find it easier to accept the rationale of cleaning up the water we are delivering to our Mexican neighbors, than the idea of spending untold millions of the U. S. taxpayer dollars to put weapons of war into the hands of both our friends and enemies in the Middle East and in other parts of the world. If this salinity control program will make possible the completion of the water development programs in the upper basin, then the American taxpayers will bene-
fit through increased supplies of food, fiber, and energy, as well as additional employment and recreational opportunities which come from natural resource conservation and development.