WASHINGTON--The Colorado River Basin States are at an impasse.

Even after two weeks of hearings before the House and Senate Interior Committees this spring and literally hundreds of thousands of hours of meetings of experts of the seven states and the federal government, they are farther apart today than they have been in the past two years on resolving outstanding problems in the Colorado River Basin.

Moreover, the one point that they do agree on--that the water in the Colorado River Basin must be augmented--they are in opposition to the stand taken by the Administration and the powerful conservation groups.

They want to build a dam at Bridge Canyon on the Colorado River to provide a kitty for augmenting the water supply of the overworked Colorado River and its tributaries. The Administration and the conservationists don't. Interior Secretary Stewart L. Udall shocked many of his fellow Arizonans by stating at recent Senate hearings that the Pacific Northwest regarded a dam at Bridge, as proposed, as "a gun pointed at her head." He added that he did not expect to see a trans-basin diversion of water from the Northwest to the Southwest occur during his lifetime.

The Colorado River Basin states have other problems too. At 89 Sen. Carl Hayden, D-Ariz., chief sponsor of the Senate version of Colorado Basin legislation, will not be able to carry the battle for Arizona as he has in the past. New Mexico's Hooker Dam on the Gila river, the only non-Arizona feature of the Central Arizona Project, has drawn fire from the conservationists because it would back water into a peripheral area of the Gila Wilderness in Southwestern New Mexico.
Charles F. Luce, the Interior Department's ace negotiator, leaves on July 15 to become the chief executive officer of a big Eastern utility, thereby leaving the Undersecretaryship at Interior open. Many had hoped Luce would ultimately become the catalyst to bring the Northwest and Southwest together on mutually acceptable legislation so that Colorado River Basin development might go forward. That's no longer in the cards.

Because of lack of unity on just about every key issue and major differences between the House and Senate versions of Colorado River legislation, mark-up is no time soon. Information from both Committees on May 10 was that there would be no action in either Committee this month. The Senate hearings were held from May 2-5, and no priority has been set on their printing, so that will take 30-45 days. House hearings were held March 13-17, the hearings have been printed, but all committee time has been booked to other matters this month.

AIR OF OPTIMISM

Yet most of the old hands who have worked on Colorado River Basin state matters continue to be optimistic in the face of the above facts. The seven states have some factors going for them too, as the saying is. Hearings actually have been held by the Senate Committee, which didn't bother to hold hearings in the last Congress.

New Mexico finally has been energized and Chairman Clinton P. Anderson, D-N.M., of the Senate Water and Power Resources Subcommittee issued a strong statement on May 2 in favor of CAP and Hooker Dam. So did Sen. Joseph M. Montoya, D-N.M. Anderson was a key factor in the Upper Colorado authorization in 1956.

Colorado's interest has intensified in the legislation with the implementation of an oil-shale development policy announced by the Interior Department on May 7 and with backers of authorized and (more...
prospective Eastern Slope diversions realizing how important this legislation could be to them. Frank Delaney of Glenwood Springs testified that if the $100 million West Divide project on the mainstem of the Colorado River is authorized and constructed, up to 120,000 acre-feet of water will become available from it and changing water uses in the area for oil-shale development.

The Eel River offer of surplus Northern California water initially made by the Eel River Association on March 25 to Chairman Wayne N. Aspinall, D-Colo., of the House Interior Committee was not repeated in the Senate hearings. But it was much discussed by the Colorado River Basin witnesses who took it to mean that areas of water surplus are NOT monolithic in their opposition to exporting water to the Colorado Basin.

But nothing has given the seven Basin states more of a shot-in-the-arm than the proposal put forward by Floyd L. Goss, chief electrical engineer for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, to build a pumped-backed storage unit into Bridge Canyon dam with a combined kilowatt capacity of 5.1 million KW. Several respected engineers representing area public and private utilities and the Interior Department question whether the Goss proposal is actually feasible. Sen. Gordon Allott, R-Colo., has introduced an amendment to his own Colorado River Basin bill to give the Interior Department 18 months to study it.

Meanwhile, Chairman Henry M. Jackson, D-Wash., of the Senate Interior Committee may have offered the Southwest a way out its current impasse. Jackson repeatedly asked Colorado River Basin witnesses about foot-dragging on the Northwest-Southwest intertie. It is understood here that Luce completed the drafts on 10 contracts between the Bonneville Power Administration and other utilities before he became Undersecretary last year. To date only two have been signed. The first segment of the big intertie lines, a 500 kilovolt line from Round Butte,
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Ore., to Round Mountain, Calif., will be completed next month. Up to 1,418,000 kw. of power will be surplus to Pacific Northwest needs in the 1967-68 year, even under critical hydro conditions, according to BPA sources. The contracts represent purchase and exchange agreements totalling 2,166,000 kw. of power from the Pacific Northwest, Interior sources said here May 10. As Bonneville stands to receive $12 million on the annual average from the intertie, and as this offers it the only chance to keep its power rates low, Jackson wants action now on those contracts.

California and Arizona interests can help move them along. And while taking a look at both the Goss proposal and Jackson questions about the intertie, Interior power experts are taking a look at the entire Colorado River Basin grid. Some changes may be made in that too.

HEALTH VS. BEAUTY

The proposed regulations that Labor Secretary W. Willard Wirtz issued on May 5 regarding the health and safety of uranium miners has posed the issue of health vs. beauty. Wirtz favors open-pit mining of uranium ore because studies indicate such mining is less injurious to a miner's health. The conservationists, however, oppose open-pit mining because it scars the landscape. Wirtz's new regulations have raised a storm in the industry and among members of the Joint Atomic Energy Committee. Conservation groups will have their say too. All interested parties have 60 days to comment, from May 5, before the new regulations go into effect.

LITTLE TRAIN

The Interstate Commerce Commission on May 11 dismissed an application of Thomas T. Hinman of Upland, Calif., to run a summer tourist train from Alamosa, Colo., to Chama, N.M.
ICC said it acted on Hinman's request. Hinman had been unable to work out an agreement to lease the narrow-gauge tracks and locomotives from the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad. ICC had given him a deadline of May 12 to do so. Otherwise it told him it would dismiss his application, originally filed on Jan. 17.

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INDIAN NOTES

The adequacy of health services and facilities for Indian school children will be the subject of a meeting to be held in Washington on May 15-16 by the Division of Indian Health of the U.S. Public Health Service and several cooperating organizations. Among those who will attend are Dr. G. D. Carlyle Thompson, Utah State Public Health Director, and Dr. David S. Post of the LaMesa Medical Center in Albuquerque, according to USPHS.

Three youths of Indian descent who have been stars on the baseball team of the Bacone, Okla., Junior College recently have been signed by major league teams.

The Chicago Cubs have signed James Dunegan, pitcher and first baseman who has been batting .402, a native of Burlington, Iowa, who is one-quarter Cherokee. The Atlanta Braves have signed Travis Washington, a left fielder from Gould, Okla., batting .390 who is one-half Choctaw. The Cincinnati Reds have signed Gary Ratliff, a center fielder from Tulsa batting .337 who is one-half Cherokee.

The MLA Manufacturing Co., a manufacturer of pre-fab houses, is locating a plant on the Colorado River Reservation in Arizona which will employ 170 Indians and put out 4,000 pre-fab houses annually when it is in full operation. A house will be given away annually to a needy Indian family on the reservation. And the tribe gets $10,000 annually from the long-term lease to MLA.