WASHINGTON----United States Senator Thomas H. Kuchel of California today urged the Interior Department to postpone awarding of a contract for building Glen Canyon Dam, one of the main units of the Upper Colorado Storage Project, until Lower Basin agencies have received a hearing on objections to certain features of Reclamation Bureau plans which have caused fear of severe injury to interests of California and Arizona.

Following up protests from the two States about particular proposed specifications, Senator Kuchel wrote Secretary Seaton he believes the apprehensions and objections from California and Arizona should receive careful consideration before the go-ahead signal is given for work on the Glen Canyon structure.

Kuchel voiced alarm that plans for impounding water during the construction period will further curtail power production and jeopardize required water releases at downstream dams and also noted engineers have challenged the adequacy and safety of the design of Glen Canyon Dam.

The Glen Canyon structure, scheduled to create a 26,000,000 acre-foot reservoir, would be located in northern Arizona about 13 miles below the Utah-Arizona boundary and 15 miles above Lee Ferry, division point between the lower and upper basins. Bids on the project were opened by the Reclamation Bureau field office last week and currently are being reviewed by engineers and attorneys.

To emphasize the reason Lower Basin groups wish to be heard about construction plans, Kuchel revealed he has been advised by California authorities that Hoover Dam power already has been cut back sharply because of low flows, Lake Mead is only a little more than one-third full, and present water requirements from dams further downstream are materially greater than the 1,000
to 3,000 second-feet volume due to go through diversion tunnels during construction of Glen Canyon.

The potential damage to Arizona and California caused concern after officials in the Lower Basin studied and analyzed revised specifications which were the basis for the bids just opened by the Bureau. The greatest concern resulted from disclosure the Bureau expects to fill the Glen Canyon reservoir to an elevation of 3,400 feet—equal to 3,000,000 acre-feet of storage—while construction is in progress.

The text of Senator Kuchel's letter to Secretary Seaton is attached.
You are fully aware, I know, of the urgent concern of water and power users in California that construction and operation of Glen Canyon Dam and power plant might adversely affect their supplies of water and power derived from the Colorado River. It has been gratifying to me to note Commissioner Dexheimer's press release of April 10, 1957, stating that the requirements and rights of lower basin interests will be respected in the construction of the Glen Canyon unit.

Without in any way disparaging the reassurances expressed by officials of your Department, nevertheless, it seems to me that the extreme gravity of the matters involved warrants more direct treatment of the protests made by our California water representatives. I need not detail to you how vital to California people is the uninterrupted flow of water and power from the Colorado River. Nor, is it necessary to recall the many binding safeguards provided in law and compact which are designed to protect established rights under the law of the River and the contracts with the United States - including the most recent one explicitly provided by the Colorado Storage Project Act which authorizes construction of the Glen Canyon unit.

Specific exception has been taken by California interests to certain elements in the specifications for construction of Glen Canyon Dam. It has been asserted that construction pursuant to those specifications could result in severe curtailment of water and power supplies that are assured to California by laws and contracts. Such curtailment would be unlawful. It would cause grievous injury to 7 million people living in Southern California and would wreak disastrous damage to the agriculture and industry of the State.

A question has been raised about certain aspects of the structure design as they may bear on its safety, stability, or effectiveness.

Of course, I do not attempt to evaluate the technical engineering questions that may be involved in this problem. This is for
engineers to resolve. It is, however, of immediate concern to me as a member of the United States Senate from California, that your Department should not start construction of a tremendous dam while the interests most vitally and most immediately affected have any reasonable basis for fearing great potential damage therefrom. In addition to my primary concern for the potential damage to people and property in California, I am mindful that any revisions of plans necessary by reason of the validity of these considerations should be made prior to award of the construction contract. One reason for this is that, were such revisions delayed until after award of the contract, the United States might be liable for substantial increases in construction costs.

All these reasons are persuasive to me that your Department should promptly seek composition of the views of the interests affected - and I refer specifically, but not exclusively, to the California interests. It is possible that such a composition of views might be effected readily. That is my sincere hope. In any event, I believe that such composition of views should be effected prior to any contractual commitment that might obligate the United States with respect to construction of the dam and power plant pursuant to the specifications to which objection has been taken. I have great confidence that you will agree with me in this view.

To this end, I respectfully urge that you withhold the award of the construction contract pending resolution of the objections of Arizona and California to the designs and specifications. It would be my hope that this would not extend unduly the time normally required for contractual procedures leading to award of a contract of this magnitude. However, the possible adverse consequences of the present specifications are so great that the time afforded to such composition of views should be adequate for the possibly complex technical consideration that may be required.

My recommendation in this regard is that you provide for two stages of consultation with affected lower basin interests. One stage should be at the Secretarial level for Departmental determination of the policy foundation relative to administrative actions in construction and operation of the Glen Canyon unit, the most important of which would be assurance that progress of the work would at all times be consonant with proper protection to established rights of the lower basin.

A second stage of consultation should be at the technical level. This could be accomplished by collaboration by the engineering representatives of the lower basin interests with your Chief Engineer,
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members of his staff and the board of consultants that I understand you are providing.

I am informed that the Colorado River Board of California is in a position to represent California interests in this matter. They will exert every energy to bring to rapid conclusion a satisfactory composition of views to the end that construction schedules may not be disrupted.

I am very hopeful that the recommendations I have urged will be followed, as I feel they offer a prompt and equitable method to resolve the issues I have presented.

May I hear from you.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas H. Kuchel
United States Senator