COLORADO RIVER STORAGE PROJECT

Statement by C. H. Jex before the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, in Hearing on H.R. January 18, 1954

My name is Clifford H. Jex. I am Engineer for the Western Colorado Water Association, a non-profit corporation representing water interests of Western Colorado. I have lived in Western Colorado at Grand Junction the twelve years since 1942.

Western Colorado urges the construction of the Colorado River Storage Project as planned by the Bureau of Reclamation and discussed throughout Western Colorado in 1951 and 1952 by the officials of the State of Colorado and by Mr. Larson, Director of Region 4, Bureau of Reclamation. We oppose the inclusion of the Denver-Blue River Diversion in the project at this late date. The City of Denver has destroyed unity within the State of Colorado in this attempt to secure for itself a diversion of water on which it has never, to our knowledge, been able to submit a complete engineering report showing either a need for the water or the feasibility of the proposed plan of construction.

Western Colorado is relatively young in water development. Settlement of the basin started about
In recent years we have witnessed the uncommitted water supply of the basin dwindle from millions of acre feet to a few hundred thousand. It is now very evident to us that every section of the State is competing for this resource and attempting to set up large reserves for future development. If a condition of unengineered and hasty competition is allowed to prevail unchecked in the future allotment of this vital water resource, we may handicap forever the development of a basin to which this nation must turn for its future oil from shale and uranium so vital to the security of the nation.

Study of recent agricultural development within the basin has shown that within the past fifteen year period an expansion of 18.8% has taken place by private initiative. If water is permitted to remain available in the natural streams of the basin, this expansion will continue and large acreages of land will come into production without Federal assistance.

As regards the City of Denver-Blue River Diversion, we hold the view that if the City of Denver's only desire is to provide municipal water for its citizens, a diversion of not to exceed one-third the 177,000 acre feet as now proposed would supply requirements beyond the year 2000. By Denver's own testimony
in present pending litigation, the City now holds command of sufficient water for a population of 777,000 people. The proposed diversion would add to this sufficient water for an additional 750,000, for a total of 1,527,000 people. In light of the information at hand, we are compelled to conclude that although the diversion is presently under the sponsorship of the City, the water in large measure can only be used for irrigation purposes.

As further support to our belief that the diversion will largely be used for irrigation, Denver has never, to our knowledge, prepared complete engineering studies of alternate opportunities for the diversion of water to meet only its municipal requirements. The only information now available to us is the announcement that it is Denver's intention to construct a trans-mountain diversion tunnel from Western to Eastern Colorado, which happens to be the key unit of the Blue-South Platte Diversion Project, as studied over the last ten year period by the Bureau of Reclamation. The Blue-South Platte Project would divert a total of 430,000 acre feet of water to Eastern Colorado.

The Report of the Bureau of Reclamation on the Blue-South Platte Project, dated June 1948, shows that Denver will require 49,000 acre feet of additional
water for its use by the year 2000. A study of the total subsidy to irrigation under the Blue-South Platte Project after allowance of water user repayment is $1320. per acre for the lands irrigated. This is three to four times the present value of irrigated land in the South Platte River basin with a full water supply.

In the interest of a proper and economic development of one of the nation's few undeveloped river basins, we should not permit the starting of a plan of construction which will later require costly adjustments and which in over-all conception is contrary to that which will best serve the interests of the citizens affected.