STATEMENT BY GOVERNOR DAN THORNTON

COLORADO'S WATER

Now let's have an intelligent and honest talk about Colorado's water. In the first place, it is too valuable and too vital an asset to be used as a political football. All Governors of Colorado, Republican and Democratic alike, have been able to keep the development of our water resources out of politics. I intend to continue to do so. In the second place, these great conservation and flood control developments are not accomplished overnight. Only the uninformed or political demagogues will tell you anything different.

I am proud to be able to tell you that I voted in favor of the Upper Colorado River Compact when I was a state senator and that Democrat Lee Knous, then Governor, approved it. We all worked as a team. Politics did not enter the picture. That compact was very favorable to Colorado, giving us over 55 percent of the upper basin water even though five states shared in that water. No informed person has since said that Colorado could have done any better.

It is rumored by certain alarmists that Colorado must put all this water to use by 1963. Such a statement is not true. That water has been allocated forever. Colorado has its water in the bag, and if by chance any surplus water should be developed by 1963, Colorado cannot be hurt, but will be in there pitching for more water. Political critics should first learn the plain facts of life about this situation before they make wild statements.

This water which Colorado has in the bag under the compact is being and will continue to be put to use under plans that have been developed under my administration. Our plans are completed and the projects are moving along just as fast as the various agencies and Congress will act. You know, of course, that the Colorado State Water Board, headed by Judge Clifford Stone, who incidentally is a Democrat, is recognized nationwide as the most efficient and effective organization of its kind in America, and I pay tribute at this time to the great job that it is doing and the real help that it has given me.

I mentioned the fact that these projects are not created, financed and built overnight. In order that all may understand what has to be done and the time it takes on any of these projects, I would like to point out that after those in the particular area decide that they want a project, it takes at least three years to work up the preliminary plans and surveys and investigations. Once the report is in shape and the local people have ironed out their differences, the plan must be submitted to all the states in the river basin. In fact the Frying-Pan-Arkansas project had to be submitted to nine states. Then the plan must be approved by the water officials of all of these states as well as by their Governors, and considered by many interested federal agencies. These are requirements not of our choosing, but requirements set up in Washington. Then, when all are satisfied, we face the Federal Bureau of the Budget and then Congress, because the funds have to be voted by Congress before any construction can be started. Again, I tell these political critics that they should take a course in learning the countless steps that must be taken before a project becomes a reality. BUT, I'm not through. The construction takes time. In fact, the Big Thompson project was started back in 1938 and it won't be finished until next year. During most of that time, Colorado's governors were Democrats, so you can see that these things go about so fast, no matter which political party is in power.

Another thing I want to tell you. In 1937, Colorado was at the bottom of the list of 17 reclamation states so far as projects were concerned. Today, Colorado ranks third in number and cost of projects. Don't let anyone tell you that we have not been on the job. Today, Colorado has 12 reclamation and flood control projects with a total expenditure of about 61 millions of dollars. All but two of these have been built since 1937. We have 3 more
projects under construction, including the Big Thompson. The total expendi­
tures on these is about 197 million. Five additional projects have been authorized for construction and about 69 million will be spent on them. And a most important fact, in view of the way that the Demo­
ocratic administration throws money away, is that all of these projects except those for flood control, will be repaid by the water users. That is America in action - yes, sound and sensible action. And another thing that you folks should know is that it is conservatively estimated by informed persons that it will take at least 25 years in which to complete the proposed Colorado River water storage project. But Colorado, along with the other Upper Colorado River Basin states, has been for many months taking steps to start construction. I cannot help but wonder about the sincerity of certain persons who have the nerve to tell you during a political campaign that this water situation can be cleared up and completed immediately.

I am very proud of what my administration has done on water matters in the past 22 months and one of the reasons is that well informed, competent and sincere citizens of Colorado, both Republican and Democrats, have put our important water problems completely out of the realm of politics.

I am also proud of the fact that I have only one position and one speech on this subject of Colorado's water and I do the same thinking and I make the same speech both in Western Colorado and in Eastern Colorado. If other people did the same thing, those farmers and water users whose very existence and future depends on beneficial use of water would have a better understanding of this important problem.