STATEMENT OF FRED McLAUGHLIN

My name is Fred McLaughlin, my residence Basalt, Eagle County, Colorado, and my occupation cattle rancher. I am a member of the General Assembly of the State of Colorado.

In June, 1953, I appeared before this committee as a witness in opposition to the approval by it of the Frying Pan Arkansas Project, together with others, representing affected interests in Pitkin County, Colorado. At that time we represented to the committee that there had, as yet, been no study made of the amount of water available for exportation from the Colorado River Basin, or of the present and future water requirements in Western Colorado for agricultural, municipal, domestic, industrial and other beneficial purposes. We said to this committee that we were opposed to any trans-mountain diversion scheme until and unless it be established that there is in the affected streams, and in the entire Colorado River system, sufficient water to supply the requirements of present and future users in the Basin itself, with a surplus left which could be exported, and second, that the proposed diversion plan be feasible and practicable.

Since that time a survey has been made, which we consider to be incomplete, and in some instances and respects inaccurate. We now submit that that report establishes beyond question the fact that this project should not be authorized by Congress.
The report to which I refer is entitled "Report of Depletion of Surface Water Supply of Colorado, West of the Continental Divide", and was prepared, under the direction of the Colorado Water Conservation Board, by the engineering firm of Leeds, Hill and Jewitt, of Los Angeles, California. It is commonly known as the Hill Report. On page 57 of that report it is said: "Further depletions of the flow of the Colorado River by trans-mountain diversions will thus be dependent upon the extent to which new projects may be subsidized". Then follows a discussion of the matter of subsidies to irrigation; and on page 60, Mr. Hill, who compiled the report, says:

"Should subsidies as great as $600.00 per acre, be permitted, the resulting stream depletion at sites of use might reach 800,000 acre feet per annum".

On the same page, Mr. Hill says:

"Even if subsidies as great as $600.00 per acre were permitted, the total of all new trans-mountain diversions for all purposes could not be more than 300,000 acre feet per year".

Again on the same page, Mr. Hill says:

"If no greater subsidies were to be allowed, the potential depletion caused by expanded irrigation on the Western Slope and by trans-mountain diversions would be in excess of the supply of water available to Colorado".
The following conclusion is reached by Mr. Hill on page 35 of the report:

"If there should be no limit upon subsidies to irrigation, then the entire surplus available to Colorado could be consumed by irrigation of new lands".

This last statement should be read in connection with the one made by Mr. Hill, and quoted above by me, to the effect that if subsidies to irrigation be limited to $600.00 per acre, the total of all new trans-mountain diversions for all purposes could not be more than 300,000 acre feet per year. (Page 60).

We think it to be a safe assumption that any subsidies greatly in excess of $600.00 per acre would be considered by Mr. Hill to be "unlimited".

We want now to call the committee's attention to the subsidies to irrigation contemplated by the project now before you. The subsidy to irrigation comprehended in the Frying Pan Arkansas Project is $1,700.00 in round numbers, per acre. (This figure compiled from statement by Clifford Jex, water expert, of Grand Junction, Colorado, and prepared for Colorado Newspaper and Radio Reporter's Forum, Colorado Professional Chapter Sigma Delta Chi, Feb. 19, 1954.) (Copy attached hereto as Enclosure A). At this point, let me say that we who are here opposing this project, and those whom we represent and for whom we speak, have not the financial resources with which to cause detailed engineering costs and other estimates and data to be made and compiled. We must depend on the work done by others. The figure we here submit is arrived at by individuals whom we consider both competent
and honest. If this figure be inaccurate, we assume that the proponents of this Bill will very promptly call the inaccuracies to the attention of the committee, and state specifically what the subsidy to irrigation is, according to their views, in the Frying Pan Arkansas Project.

Assuming then that Mr. Hill is correct in his statement that an unlimited subsidy to irrigation, allowed in connection with Reclamation projects, would result in the absorption of the entire so-called surplus of water in the Colorado River, leaving none for trans-mountain diversion, and assuming that we are reasonably correct in our statement that a subsidy of $1,700.00 per acre would be, in Mr. Hill's opinion, "unlimited", let us further analyze the Frying Pan Arkansas Project now before you for approval.

Mr. Hill intimates, although he does not say, that there is a serious question as to whether or not a subsidy in excess of $600.00 per acre is either practicable or feasible. If that is true, we cannot escape the conclusion that this project is neither practicable nor feasible. I know that, in your consideration of, and deliberations concerning this as all other projects, it is always in your minds that you are requested by the proponents to advance money which belongs to the taxpayers of the United States of America to construct the works involved in it. As trustees of public funds, we submit that merits of the project from other standpoints than that of irrigation should be carefully scrutinized by you before you authorize the expenditure of these funds in the construction of a project which is not feasible otherwise.
On the other hand, if a project is feasible and practicable even though it comprehends a subsidy of $1,700.00 per acre to irrigation phases, then, according to Mr. Hill, there is and can be no water available in the Colorado River for the project itself. We do not know which horn of this dilemma the proponents will choose or accept. All we can say is that, when facts and economic and financial conditions and principles are considered, in either event this project should not be authorized by your committee.

Perhaps it will be said to you that the Arkansas Valley should have the water the proponents here seek with the aid of Federal funds, regardless of whether or not the exportation of the water from the Colorado River drainage basin will leave a deficit in the River to supply present and future requirements of Western Colorado. In answer let us point out that, every pronouncement we have heard relating to any project which comprehends the exportation of water from the Western to the Eastern slope of Colorado, it has been said and reiterated that there is no intention or desire on the part of the proponent to take waters which are, and can, and should be used in the Colorado River Basin itself. The argument has always been made that the diversion of the amount of water involved in the various projects which come before this committee will not "short change" the Western Slope. The Hill report explodes that theory of the quantity of water available; and the diversionists must now demand that they be given water without regard to the needs or requirements of the Western slope.
Let us in that connection, keep this proposition in mind: Theoretically, the cost of the construction of diversion, storage, transmission and distribution works in any irrigation project will be about the same, whether that project be located on the Eastern or on the Western slope of the Rockies. We have, in any trans-mountain diversion scheme, to the cost of construction of the diversion, storage, transmission and distribution costs to add the cost of construction of tunnel and conduits whereby to get the water on the other side of the hill. Hence, a project to irrigate new lands in Western Colorado where tunnels are not needed, will always cost less than projects to irrigate lands on the Eastern Slope. Since there is not sufficient water to irrigate all of the irrigable lands on both slopes, and we believe that even the proponents of this scheme will admit that fact, it is only good business and "horse sense" to build the ones which will cost the least to accomplish the same purposes.

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