

TESTIMONY

BY

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Before the

Subcommittee on Energy and Power

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Mr. Chairman, I was happy to join colleagues from my region in submitting a joint statement of support for H.R. 3508, the Northwest regional power bill.

The bill before you solves most of the basic energy questions facing my region -- power allocation, supply, cost, conservation and long-range planning.

The rate-payers of my area need a bill of this kind. Electricity consumers of my area need a bill of this kind.

The region's economy needs a bill of this kind.

Thus, with some important changes, I support this bill. I do recommend major changes, however, because of my belief that revamping the Pacific Northwest power system will either promote -- or ruin -- the special character of this region.

This is because energy decides not only if things are going to be done. It also decides how things are going to be done.

We simply cannot lose track of that fact as we develop this legislation.

I recognize that this is a regional bill but it's important that any regional power bill protect states like Oregon in the very special way they have chosen to map their growth.

In fact, the greatest tragedy of all would be if the Congress passed a version of this bill that would set up an administrative colossus that would encourage energy technologies of a scale and of a nature that would be out of character for states like Oregon.

It would be an equal tragedy if the Congress passed a bill that mired that planning and delivery of power in minutiae, for it's the nature of our region to face problems head on, find solutions, then implement them in a timely, workable way.

Work still needs to be done on this bill to ensure that compatibility with the region.

What has made the Northwest the Northwest is a number of things that have become the envy of the country. We need to develop an energy delivery system that preserves these things, while meeting the region's growing need for jobs and commerce.

The things I'm talking about preserving are salmon runs. Forests. Clean air. Fresh water. Open spaces. Outdoor recreation. Good hunting; good fishing. And cities -- large and small -- that are still communities, not inhuman places where success is measured by simple survival.

But more than any of these physical things, the Northwest, especially Oregon, has been a very particular way of thinking. It's been a symbol of innovation, creativity, and pioneering better ways of doing things.

I urge this committee as strongly as I can to do nothing that would upset that tradition with regard to energy, which is the basic issue that will shape the future of the region.

That leads me to my first recommendation, which deals with nuclear power.

I ask the committee to adopt amendments to allow the BPA's broad purchasing authority to be used for nuclear plants only after there is a national policy providing a solution to the problems of; 1) transporting radioactive wastes; 2) the storage of those wastes; 3) emergency evacuation procedures in the vicinity of plants; and, 4) the operation safety of the plants, themselves.

In addition, it's important that language be retained from the Senate version of the bill that requires the complete cost of nuclear plants -- including waste storage and shutdown costs -- to be calculated in the cost-effective test which the regional agency would apply to any proposed new plants.

Let me be frank about why I think these changes are needed. Public opinion is so sharply divided, I do not believe there will be any additional nuclear plants built in the Northwest, or at least the state of Oregon. And it's extremely important for the utilities -- both public and private -- to know that.

Because of that, and because of the major uncertainties of nuclear power itself, this bill should not hold out the hope of easy financing for nuclear plants. It should instead direct the utilities into alternative energy development and meaningful conservation -- leaving the nuclear power option open only after those conditions I mentioned have been met.

If you do this, you'll give the region a chance to continue to be a pathfinder -- in this case in the area of energy. With our network of hydroelectric dams, the Pacific Northwest could be a national model for alternative energy.

Power sources of all kinds -- including solar -- could be used and plugged into the BPA system. And as that power is being used, water could be stored behind the dams to use later. This would not only accelerate alternative energy development, but it would allow the region to stretch out its cheap hydro-electric power to the maximum possible extent.

This innovation, this determination to find better and different ways of doing things is the tradition of the Northwest, and it's the tradition of Oregon. And this bill ought to respect that tradition.

I want to move now to the make-up of the council. As the committee knows, public participation is a continuing issue with this bill. With one exception that I'll mention in a moment, I want the committee to know that I'm willing to support the proposal of the region's governors, calling for a council consisting of the BPA administrator, with the governors of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana each appointing one member. This strikes me as having three advantages; 1) it allows the public, not the utilities, to make energy load forecasts and to develop plans to meet those forecasts; 2) it provides a council approximately large enough to represent the major local interests of the region, and 3) it avoids being unwieldy.

Of prime importance here is the development of an independent regional load forecast. This is vital for the certainty of any regional energy planning and implementation. People simply must have faith in the load forecasting that may call for expensive new power generation, so they are convinced they are getting the best bargain for their energy dollar. Load forecasts are not oracles, however, so an effort should be made to present these forecasts to the public to show the causal relationship between development a certain way and energy demand. This is an excellent means to draw more public participation in the processes that lead to regional energy decisions.

However, the key is to make sure that the council is not a paper tiger, where the real power is held, almost unchecked, by whoever the BPA Administrator is.

The Senate version of the bill effectively gives the Administrator veto power within the council on energy plans adopted for the region as well as on the approval of specific, new plants to be built. Some will object to even this much strength on the part of the Administrator. I do not. My feeling is that you cannot run the region's power system by committee; you have to enable the Administrator to exercise his duties decisively.

However, another provision of the Senate bill does go too far. I refer to a provision which would allow the Administrator to approve new plants -- on his own -- even if they were missing from the regional plan.

The only check on this authority is the requirement that a plant approved in this way be subject to the subsequent approval of the Congress, but only through the appropriations process.

I believe that this is almost no check at all on the Administrator's preemptive powers. I believe that this has the potential to render the plan -- and the council -- meaningless.

I say this for the simple reason that an appropriations bill on the floor of the House is almost like an iron fortress. It's practically impossible to amend. And, in my experience, those amendments that are adopted are usually ones that have the ability to attract wide interest. Clearly, the approval of some plant proposed in the Pacific Northwest does not fall into this category.

And so I believe this bill ought to specify that congressional ratification of a unilateral action by an Administrator must win approval in an authorization bill produced by a policy committee of the Congress, not a funding committee. This will make Congressional approval more difficult. But that's good because it would help ensure that such authority, if needed at all, is attempted only in extraordinary circumstances.

Let me return briefly to the one proviso I mentioned in support of the governors' recommendations for the make-up of the regional council. I urge your committee to add one additional voting member -- either the regional director of the National Marine Fisheries Service or one of the state fisheries directors agreed to by the governors for a rotating term.

I make this recommendation as a member of the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee who is convinced that the time is come to make our fish runs a priority again.

Federal dams on our rivers of the Northwest have depleted salmon runs seriously.

No counts exist on how many adult salmon and steelhead once returned to the Columbia River system. But a century ago one can account for catches of 7 million fish a year. By contrast, in 1975, 1.5 million fish returned (for both harvest and propagation) to the Columbia River.

In more recent years, the Columbia River run of summer chinook has plummeted from 123,000 fish in 1938 to 44,000 fish in 1975. Figures for summer steelhead mirror those for chinook, showing a drop from 250,000 fish in 1938 to 84,000 fish in 1975, in both cases reductions to about one-third of pre-dam levels.

Collectively, the dams have eliminated more than half the salmon and steelhead spawning grounds in the Columbia River system.

Moreover, each dam kills 15-20% of all juvenile salmon and steelhead heading downstream.. Losses as high as 30% have been recorded under particularly adverse conditions at individual dams.

Cumulative mortalities can be catastrophic. In 1973, for example, more than 95% of all Snake River juvenile salmon and steelhead were killed before reaching the lower Columbia River.

In addition, ~~the~~ dam claims an average 15% of all upstream salmon and steelhead attempting to pass it.

Finally, there is the matter of compensation. Compensation for salmon and steelhead losses has been woefully inadequate. The Four Horsemen of s has been have been "Resistance," "Delay," "Little," and "None."

Delays of several years have been the best of circumstances. Retroactive rule under never provided. Compensation programs have been subjected to far more rigorous economic scrutiny than the dams creating the need for them.

For example, there has been little compensation for salmon habitat lost to Bear No McNary, and The Dalles Dams. John Day Dam neville, in 1967. Compensation was not fully implemented until almost ten years later, and it was not repealed until

It was only after the dams were retroactive. began to realize what happened to the fish that people once abundant. Now salmon stocks are in runs that were supply, an intense and increasingly bitter competition is raging among all user groups. In view of this history, the council will ensure that past mistakes are not repeated.

I am aware of the fact that my colleague on the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, Congressman Bonker, has prepared amendments laying down procedural requirements to also protect the region's salmon runs. I have also been developing amendments concerning this problem.

I have not had time to study the Bonker proposals but I urge the committee to closely examine them. I intend to submit my proposals well before your committee marks up this bill. Some of these may differ somewhat. The goal will be the same -- to protect the salmon. It is truly one of the treasures of the Pacific Northwest. We must not only prevent the decline of its runs; we must also build up those runs for the benefit of all user groups.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my remarks. I have not tried to speak to every provision of the bill before you. Nor is my list of suggested changes necessarily complete. Today I have attempted only to deal with the broadest outstanding issues connected with the bill. After further study, I may forward other suggestions to your committee before your mark-up session.

I repeat that passage of the regional power bill is of greatest importance. I stand ready to work with your committee to develop the legislation into the most possible form.

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