

Nevada May Lose Early Dam Power

By A. E. CAHLAN

Will Nevada get Boulder dam power as soon as any is generated or must this state wait until the reservoir is filled to the 1,005 foot level?

Will the city of Los Angeles and the Southern Sierras Power company have a supply of power at a cost of a half mill per kilowatt hour for anywhere from a few months to a few years while Nevada sits back hoping the reservoir will hurry up and fill so power will be available in this state at 1.63 mills per kilowatt hour—three times as much as the other two agencies will be paying in the meantime?

In short, is Los Angeles to be given a head-start on the cheap power from Boulder dam, while Nevada holds the sack?

These and other questions are being asked this morning by those in close touch with the Boulder dam power situation, and as a result, steps are being taken to determine Nevada's position with relation to the "interim power" contracts which have been drawn up between the interior department on the one hand and the city of Los Angeles and the Southern Sierras Power company on the other.

The main Boulder dam power contracts, negotiated originally when Ray Lyman Wilbur was secretary of the interior, do not become effective until there is sufficient water stored in the reservoir to insure the delivery of 1,250,000,000 kilowatt hours of power per year to the city of Los Angeles.

This point will be reached, bureau of reclamation engineers estimate, when the stored water reaches the 1,005 foot level and 8,200,000 acre feet of water are stored. Generation of power can be started when the water reaches the 900 foot level, and have a considerable volume at the 940 foot level with 5,500,000 acre feet of water are stored.

Storage of water will start late in December of this year, according to Walker R. Young, construction engineer in charge of the project for the government, and the generation of power will start as soon as the reservoir reaches the 940 foot level, which is expected to be some time next fall. The power generated from that time until the 1,250,000,000 kilowatt hours a year are available, is being referred to as "interim power."

Representatives of the city of Los Angeles, Southern Sierras Power company and others, recently concluded a conference in Washington with Dr. Elwood Mead, commissioner of reclamation, following which it was announced that an agreement had been entered into by the two concerns to take "interim power" at secondary power rates, or 0.5 mills per kilowatt hour.

According to all information available here, including that gathered from summaries of the proposed contracts, the states of Arizona and Nevada are not mentioned, and are seemingly without any rights to the "interim power."

Reclamation bureau officials estimate that it will only be a short time after the big turbines start generating power until the 1,250,000,000 kilowatt hours are ready for delivery to the city of Los Angeles and the original contracts, wherein Nevada and Arizona are protected, become effective. They hope it won't be more than five or six months. But they admit it may be two or three years.

The uncertainty, of course, is caused by the lack of water in the Colorado river during the past year. For it is necessary to fill the reservoir with 8,200,000 acre feet of water before the first unit of power is ready for delivery un-

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der the original contracts. Ordinarily, of course, it would take less than a year to accumulate that much, for prior to 1934, the lowest flow of the river ever recorded was 8,000,000 acre feet. The normal flow was 16,000,000 acre feet and the maximum 25,000,000.

But up to October first of this year, only 3,750,000 acre feet had come down the channel, and it wasn't expected the total for the year would be much more than 5,000,000, if that. So previous calculations have had to be tossed overboard, and reclamation bureau officials are frank to admit they don't know what to expect.

"These extremely dry years have caused a generally dry condition all along the river," they state.

"No matter if we do get a sizeable flow next year, much of the water will be soaked up by the dry ground before it ever reaches here."

In addition to this factor, approximately 5,000,000 acre feet must be fed into Imperial valley each year for domestic and irrigation purposes, whether any power is generated or not, and this amount must be deducted from the flow the first year as water that is stored. The Imperial water can be used for generation of power after the reservoir is built up but not until then.

If the flow of water for the next three years should approximate that of 1934, there would be no power generated, for all the water would have to be sent into the Imperial valley for their use. Under certain other conditions the flow

for the next three or four years could be sufficient to start generating power, but not enough to fill the reservoir to the point where the 1,250,000,000 kilowatt hours of firm power necessary to the operation of the original contracts, is available.

If the latter should happen, it is feared that under the terms of the "interim contracts" the city of Los Angeles and the Southern Sierras Power company would have power at the half mill rate during this period, while Nevada and Arizona would be unable to obtain any of the power except by purchase from either of these agencies at an increased rate.

And so Ed W. Clark, Clark county's veteran Colorado River Commissioner, has moved in to determine just what it's all about, and has wired Commissioner Mead for

a statement as to Nevadas' position.

"Nevada will be ready to use some of this power as soon as it's available," Clark points out, "and I am sure there is some provision in these interim contracts to take care of us."

Clark said so far as he had been advised Nevada had never been

consulted on the question, or even advised that any interim contracts were contemplated.

According to information available here, these contracts must be signed by November 15.

Bureau of reclamation officials expect the first power to be ready for delivery late in 1935 or early in 1936.