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FPC Asks Staff To Make Early Ruling On Blue Ridge Dam Project

By Larry Chambers

WASHINGTON -- Appalachian Power Co. "laid it on the line," at a hearing last Thursday, to the Federal Power Commission to act one way or the other concerning its Blue Ridge Dam Project. Appalachian attorney, A. Joseph Dowd, told the staff of commissioners that now was the time to act so that people affected by the project would know one way or the other what their future was going to be.

Dowd called the modified plan for the Blue Ridge Project one of the best laid out projects ever to come before the commission for approval.

Several roads in the project area will be affected by the dams, Dowd said, and Appalachian Power is paying for the relocation of 62 miles of primary highway and 55 miles of secondary roads. This will provide a better road system when the project is built and decrease the travel time from the cities and towns in the area, Dowd commented at the hearing.

In his closing remarks, Dowd urged the staff to give full consideration to the project. "Grant us the license if you will--so that we can get about the business of constructing the project at the earliest practicable date, or, believe it does not meet the standards of the Federal Power Act. At least then our Appalachian's key people who have been involved in this project for years, will be able to

devote themselves to more productive pursuits. The dead hand of uncertainty will have been removed from the project area, and the construction of needed roads and other improvements, which have been held in abeyance for the last ten years, may once again move forward."

Dowd was the first of several people who testified concerning the project during the special hearing which lasted almost eight hours.

Ashe and Alleghany Counties in North Carolina and Grayson County also had representatives at the hearing. Lorne Campbell, lawyer for Grayson County, urged the commissioners to have an "on-site" hearing and get the views of the people on the project. He also said that a Bi-State Authority had been set up with North Carolina to work out any problems concerning the dams project.

Edmund Adams of Sparta, lawyer for Ashe and Alleghany Counties, also urged an on-site hearing so that the commission could get the full story of the project.

Adams said that thousands of acres of land would be flooded in North Carolina and most of it was rich bottom land where farmers made their livelihood.

In his closing remarks, Adams said that the two counties he represented found the modified project totally unacceptable.



TALK OVER CHANCES -- Paul Johnson, Hydroelectric Superintendent for Appalachian Power Co., talks with W.S. (Pete)

White, vice-president, at the FPC hearings held in Washington last Thursday.

Charles Phillips, Charles

Sparta lawyer representing the North Carolina and Alleghany Farm Bureau, said that people in his area had heard a lot of talk about the benefits of the project but no reality had been shown on how the area could develop.

North Carolina and Virginia shouldn't be penalized to help West Virginia, Young commented, and urged the FPC staff to use "horse sense" in making its decision.

An assistant attorney general for North Carolina, Miller

Rich, asked that the project be licensed promptly, but without the pollution dilution storage.

Rich pointed out that the FPC record did not justify the project to clean up the chemical industry's pollution of the Kanawha River at Charleston, W. Va.

Andrew Miller, attorney general for Virginia, told the FPC that it should consider "the extraordinary coincidences" that all three states involved are opposed to the

project and have similar positions.

Miller said the FPC cannot legally require water storage at the Blue Ridge Project for pollution control--or even reserve space there for future storage--because it has not been established that chemical plants at Charleston are providing adequate at-source treatment of wastes.

Miller added that the FPC could resolve its problems over the Blue Ridge case by



DISCUSS DAMS -- Paul X Bolt of Independence, talks over a point with Virginia Attorney General Andrew Miller at the FPC hearing in Washington last Thursday. At right is Chauncey Browning, Jr., Attorney General for West Virginia.

simply licensing the project without the pollution dilution storage.

West Virginia Attorney General Chauncey Browning Jr. once again deplored the 1966 data on which the Interior Department based its

argument that the Kanawha River cannot be cleaned up without the dilution water.

Browning said the Interior Department's estimates on present and future waste dumping at Charleston are only if the pollution dilutes

plan is scrapped. He said the FPC has not given adequate study to other sites in the Kanawha Basin where water could be stored for dilution, if needed, without the environ-

ment. (Continued on Page 6A.)

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mental damage inherent at Blue Ridge.

Calling for a reopening of hearings, Browning said parties in the case should be allowed to subpoena and cross-examine witnesses regarding the environmental statements filed in the case by the power company and federal agencies.

Browning commented that the FPC should prepare a detailed environmental statement, circulate it among affected federal, state and local agencies, and allow hearings on it.

Secretary of the Interior Curtis Bell defended the pollution dilution plan, saying they are urgently needed to clean up the Kanawha River and allow the economic growth of the region.

Bell said the information on which Interior has based its plans is, contrary to Browning's charge, "the best that we have at this time ... the most complete available."

The Blue Ridge case is now in the hands of the full FPC Commission, which is under no deadline to make its decision. It could act on the case in the next few weeks or it could call for more hearings or studies. At some point, the FPC will have to file its own environmental statement on the project and submit it to federal agencies for review.