

OPENING STATEMENT
BY
HONORABLE JOHN D. DINGELL
CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
ON
WPPSS HEARING

September 14, 1983

I COMMEND YOU MR. CHAIRMAN FOR INITIATING THESE HEARINGS TODAY INTO THE ISSUES SURROUNDING THE WASHINGTON PUBLIC POWER SUPPLY SYSTEM'S (WPPSS) CURRENT FINANCIAL PROBLEMS, PARTICULARLY AS THEY RELATE TO WPPSS NUMBERED 1, 2 AND 3.

AS YOU KNOW, I STRONGLY URGED SUCH HEARINGS WHEN A FEW WEEKS AGO WE BOTH LEARNED THAT A LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENT RELATING TO THE FINANCING OF WPPSS PLANTS HAD BEEN ADDED, WITHOUT HEARINGS, TO AN APPROPRIATION BILL IN THE SENATE. THAT BILL HAS STALLED IN THE SENATE BECAUSE OF THAT PROVISION. I HOPE THAT THE PROVISION IS DROPPED ON THE SENATE FLOOR. BUT SHOULD THE BILL ARRIVE IN THE HOUSE WITH THAT PROVISION AND BE ADOPTED IN ANY FASHION AFTER A HOUSE-SENATE CONFERENCE, I WANT TO ASSURE ALL PRESENT TODAY THAT IT WILL ENJOY SUBSTANTIAL OPPOSITION IN THE HOUSE.

ASIDE FROM THE FACT THAT SUCH LEGISLATION DOES NOT BELONG IN AN APPROPRIATIONS BILL, IT DESERVES TO BE ABANDONED BECAUSE IT IS

VAGUE AND AMBIGUOUS AND WILL SURELY MAKE BANKERS AND LAWYERS WEALTHY AT THE EXPENSE OF RATEPAYERS IN THE NORTHWEST AND POSSIBLY ALL THE NATION'S TAXPAYERS. THE MISCHIEF THAT MIGHT RESULT FROM SUCH A PROPOSAL, WHICH HAS APPARENTLY BEEN EMBRACED BY THE TREASURY DEPARTMENT, IS TO THIS DAY NOT FULLY UNDERSTOOD. BUT I BELIEVE WE WILL KNOW BETTER WHEN THESE HEARINGS ARE COMPLETED.

I AM SYMPATHETIC TO THE NEEDS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST. I SUPPORTED THE EFFORTS A FEW YEARS AGO OF MY VALUED AND DISTINGUISHED COLLEAGUE FROM WASHINGTON, CONGRESSMAN AL SWIFT, IN ENACTING THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST ELECTRIC POWER AND PLANNING CONSERVATION ACT. I CONTINUE TO BE INTERESTED IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION.

I AM NOT OPPOSED TO LEGISLATION TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS RESULTING FROM THE FAILURES OF THE OVERLY AMBITIOUS WPPSS POWER DEVELOPMENT, IF IT CAN BE SHOWN THAT SUCH LEGISLATION IS TRULY NEEDED. BUT THAT LEGISLATION MUST EMANATE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES OF JURISDICTION, BE REASONABLE, FAIR, CAREFULLY CRAFTED, LIMITED IN ITS SCOPE AND EFFECT, AND ENJOY A TRUE CONSENSUS OF SUPPORT IN THE REGION. MOST IMPORTANTLY, IT MUST NOT IN ANY WAY ADVERSELY AFFECT THE TREASURY OR RATEPAYERS OUTSIDE THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST.

THE HEARING TODAY AND IN SUBSEQUENT DAYS, TOGETHER WITH OTHER STUDIES NOW UNDERWAY IN THE REGION, CAN PROVIDE THE BASIS

FOR SUCH LEGISLATIVE ACTION OR SHOW THAT NONE IS NEEDED. IT IS THE PROPER APPROACH. I HOPE THE PROPONENTS OF THE BLANK CHECK AMENDMENT IN THE SENATE WILL HEAR THIS MESSAGE AND URGE THE SENATE SPONSORS TO ABANDON THAT EFFORT. CONTINUED EFFORTS TO PURSUE THAT COURSE WILL CERTAINLY MINIMIZE ANY SYMPATHY I MIGHT HAVE FOR PROPER LEGISLATION.

I AM SKEPTICAL THAT THERE IS A NEED FOR A FEDERAL "FIX" AND I WARN THAT SUCH A FIX MAY INCLUDE CONDITIONS THAT THE REGION MIGHT FIND DISTASTEFUL. THERE IS NO ASSURANCE THAT EVEN IF CONGRESSMAN OTTINGER, SWIFT, WYDEN, AND I COULD AGREE ON LEGISLATION THAT A MAJORITY OF THE HOUSE WOULD ALSO AGREE. IN SHORT, I URGE THE REGION TO TRY TO SOLVE ITS PROBLEMS IN THE REGION AND TURN TO CONGRESS ONLY WHEN IT IS CLEAR THAT A FEDERAL SOLUTION IS NEEDED AND WARRANTED.