

STATEMENT OF STEWART L. UDALL, SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ACCOMPANIED BY FLOYD E. DOMINY, COMMISSIONER, BUREAU OF RECLAMATION; EDWARD WEINBERG, DEPUTY SOLICITOR; AND ARLEIGH B. WEST, DIRECTOR, REGION 3, BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

Secretary UDALL. Congressman, that is a question I never had put to me before. It is a very interesting question. Of course, some of the large California irrigation districts, such as Palo Verde, take out a large amount of water, but return a substantial portion to the river for reuse. The consumptive use is what is actually consumed. The natural drainage basin for the irrigation district is not to the river but to the Salton Sea. Those persons who have made developments and investments on the Salton Sea expect to have the drainage water go into the Salton Sea to maintain it.

On the other hand, I think this is a problem, primarily for California, rather than a problem for us, because California has a certain overall entitlement to water and it has, through the seven party agreement which was adopted by the Secretary of the Interior as a part of the Colorado River water contracts with California users, made the order of intrastate priorities.

If the State were to propose a project to accomplish what you suggest, thereby augmenting the supply, say, for the metropolitan area, I would assume that could be considered. I have never heard this proposed before, though.

Mr. TUNNEY. Well, I do not mean to be in any way tricky. But the point is that a statement was made recently by Mr. Les Alexander, who is the associate general manager of the Salt River project in Phoenix, Ariz., and I quote:

Perhaps the outstanding example of usable water being wasted in the lower basin is the 1½ million acre-feet which annually flows into the Salton Sea.

The point is if this is a true statement, why has not the Department come forward with a plan to get this water from the Salton Sea, or from the New River where it flows into the Salton Sea, up the 240 feet into the Colorado River?

I think the answer is quite clearly why you have not, because it has 3,000 parts per million of salt and it is not usable. Mexico rejects water which has a content of 1,500 parts per million. What I am simply trying to say is that some of the statements that have been made regarding the way we in southern California have wasted water by pouring it into the Salton Sea have no justification in fact.

Secretary UDALL. I would like the Commissioner to comment on this. I do know that particularly with the newer lands that do have a lot of dissolved solids, the leaching process does seriously deteriorate the quality of the water. There is no question that we have a real water quality problem concerning the water that moves across the border. The Commissioner would like to comment.

Mr. DOMINY. You are quite correct, Congressman Tunney, that this drainage water from the Imperial Irrigation District is not considered usable. It has a minimum of 3,000 parts per million of dissolved solids as it flows out of these salty lands of Coachella and Imperial. Many days, it runs about 4,000 parts per million. But as I explained