

Letter from S. R. Logan to Clifford Davis, September 15, 1962

*Lake County, Montana
September 15, 1962*

Hon. Clifford Davis, Chairman
Subcommittee on Flood Control
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Davis:

. . . I think at least 90% of the opposition to this Knowles-Paradise project has been manufactured by the Montana Power Company. This has been accomplished largely through misrepresentation, arm twisting, and large-scale expenditures financed by their captive customers. . . .

The company's management has waged an unceasing 15-year war against the Knowles-Paradise project. . . . In recent months the company has kept one or more of its officials campaigning in the counties immediately affected . . . as part of a well-coached team of four or five speakers. . . . They have also solicited and secured permission to speak to all kinds of organizations and groups. Local assistants have been enlisted to canvass every community, every organization, and every citizen. . . . The company's agents and officials have assisted in the preparation of fantastically exaggerated and cunningly contrived estimates of losses, . . . omitting all gains. . . . High company officials have continuously held top offices in the state chamber of commerce, and have succeeded in keeping many local chambers in line. . . .

It is interesting to note, however, that the total membership of [their] organizations . . . is but a small fraction of the total membership of the organizations which have consistently supported the Knowles-Paradise project. . . .

In addition, the Montana Democratic platform for years has included specific endorsements . . . and Democratic candidates . . . have stressed . . . this plank.

There is reason to believe that the company does not seriously expect to secure a license to build at . . . Buffalo Rapids which would block multi-purpose, full development permanently. Its promises of prompt construction, large additional taxes to Lake County, and large rental payments to the Indian Tribes who own the sites are probably a ruse to enlist local support to kill or delay the Knowles project. . . . The company's last ditch opposition to Hungry Horse and its fifteen year war on the Knowles-Paradise project are due to the determination of its officials to keep low-cost, prime power out of Montana as long as possible, and to strengthen its domination not only of the electric power business, but of business and government generally. As a means of acquiring and maintaining such domination, its officials strengthen their hold on political parties, candidates, chambers of commerce, the utilities commission, the legislature, the state administration, the media of communication, educational institutions, and all groups which might be useful to it. . . .

Finding the national level of our federal system of government less manageable than state and local levels, the company's propaganda impugns the integrity and competence of Congress, the Executive and our National governmental institutions generally. . . . Its supporters capitalize on geographical and class suspicion and jealousy, implying that supporters of multi-purpose, full development are indeed "socialists" and "socialism is communism in a white collar." . . . A monopoly, with the governmental power to condemn and take

property, it poses as a paragon and champion of free, private enterprise, fighting a rapacious, far-away government to preserve . . . property and freedom. . . .

I advocate both public and private development of our rivers, but I deplore the success of the “private” power monopolies in brainwashing so many businessmen into believing the nonsense that regulated monopoly is “tax-paying, free, private enterprise.” Through public participation in the development of our public-owned rivers, we promote both competition and conservation and we foster and multiply free, private enterprise. . . .

Respectfully,
S. R. Logan

Source: *Frances Logan Merriam Papers, 1948–1972. Manuscript Collection 58* [box 10 folder 2]. Montana Historical Society Research Center. Archives. Excerpted in *Not In Precious Metals Alone: A Manuscript History of Montana* (Helena, 1976): 264–65.