

origin in battles with the powerful water developers in the southern part of the State.

The Owens Valley has had most of its water diverted to Los Angeles, its farmlands have shrunk, its once-bright future dimmed to an uncertain and certainly unhappy prospect.

The story of the Owens Valley is embedded on the minds of those persons in California concerned with the survival of its free-flowing rivers, the great San Francisco Bay-Sacramento delta system and of southern California itself.

Recently, I was sent a copy of an article written by Mr. Aubrey R. Lyon of the Concerned Citizens of Owens Valley Organization.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that every Member of Congress should read this story and give consideration to the points it raises.

The article follows:

#### THE OWENS VALLEY TRANSFORMATION

(By Aubrey R. Lyon)

Any discussion of prevailing political and economic conditions in the Owens Valley seems naturally to revert to a review of its past history covering a period of sixty years, or since the time when the City of Los Angeles began its campaign to acquire water from the Owens River Basin and export it to their incorporated area.

It is not the purpose of this article to recount in detail the events of the past, which has already been so well done by competent writers and historians in publications such as "The Story of Inyo" by W. A. Chalfant and the "The Waterseekers" by Remi Nadeau. Action now, should pertain to the future.

About the year 1910 a group of influential and ambitious people in the City of Los Angeles concluded that the limited amount of water available in their own jurisdiction definitely limited the potential for population, industrial, and commercial growth. They advanced the theory that surplus water was flowing down the Owens River and being wasted into the saline water of Owens Lake; that this surplus water could be captured and put to beneficial use by construction of an aqueduct from a point downstream from most of the Owens Valley irrigated lands; that the water would flow entirely by gravity to the City of Los Angeles, and in addition, provide power drops for hydro-electric generation.

On the representation that only surplus water, to be measured at Charlie's Butte would be appropriated, the Federal government was induced to cooperate with the plan by making sales and grants of federal lands for right of way, and land use for both water and power purposes.

Meanwhile, the citizens of Owens Valley were alarmed at the many rumors circulated about this development. They were unorganized, isolated, with no funds for organized resistance, and very limited means for communications with Sacramento and Washington. Inyo county comprised about 10,000 square miles in area, with a population of less than one person per square mile. The topography was mostly mountainous, foothills or desert, with an average annual rainfall of less than six inches. Nearly all of the agricultural production was in the Owens Valley and dependent upon irrigation by runoff water from the eastern slope of the Sierra range.

About 1913 the aqueduct was completed and Owens River water poured into a prepared reservoir at the north end of San Fernando Valley. Vast areas of inhabited land

was annexed to the City of Los Angeles and a great land and population boom was born.

Competition developed between the citizens of the Owens Valley and the City of Los Angeles for the available surface water. Extreme fluctuations in the amount of precipitation and runoff on the eastern slope of the Sierra range, coupled with increasing demands for water in Los Angeles, resulted in the adoption of a land purchase program financed by bonds to buy out the Owens Valley irrigating landowners and then retire the land from production, thereby increasing the amount of surplus water available for export. This policy expanded by stages until practically all of the irrigable and habitable land in the Owens River basin in Inyo county was under the ownership of the City of Los Angeles. Deep wells were drilled and when the surface flow was inadequate, water was pumped from the underground basin for export.

Political and financial power grew in proportion to the population increase, and the imported water provided the basis for industrial and commercial expansion. Public laws were enacted withdrawing Federal lands from public entry, together with Executive withdrawal orders which gave the City of Los Angeles effective control over any development of Federal lands located between their lands on the valley floor and the boundaries of the National Forest. These withdrawals were allegedly for the protection of the water supply of the City of Los Angeles.

The demand for this high quality and comparatively cheap water continued ever to grow. In 1937 a project was under way to acquire and appropriate water rights in the Mono Lake basin. An aqueduct was constructed to capture and divert this water to the headwaters of the Owens River for export. In 1966 plans were announced for the construction of a second barrel to the Owens River aqueduct which would increase the export capacity by approximately fifty percent from an existing capacity of 320,000 acre feet per annum. It was planned to substantially reduce any irrigated acreage in the Owens Valley, and to pump from the underground basin to supply the demand for increased water export. This, very briefly, is the history of Owens-Mono water development to date.

The result of this water management program by the City of Los Angeles, has been the gradual deterioration of environment. Land resources have reverted to desert type plants, barren and sterile areas, and the deterioration or destruction of habitat for the once abundant fish and wildlife populations.

The monopoly of land ownership in the Owens Valley has resulted in the creation of a virtual Colonial Empire, where it no longer seems possible to elect qualified citizens to public office who can function objectively in the public interest, because of the necessity for land leases from the City of Los Angeles. Many of the churches, two golf clubs, the KIBS radio station—even the Safeway Store in Bishop are built on City of Los Angeles land. Other leases are too numerous to mention here. Leases are short term and restrictive. Under these circumstances, tenants are subject to coercion, intimidation, or economic reprisals by a landlord who controls the economic future of the entire valley.

This land monopoly has interfered with the free play of the law of supply and demand; has restricted trade and commerce, and caused extreme inflation in the value of what little land is available for individual or private ownership. The condition is completely Un-American and illegal.

After ten years of surveys, inventories and studies, the California legislature in 1957 adopted a Master Water Plan known as Bulletin #3. There was much suspicion and controversy between Northern California, the area of surplus water, and Southern California,

the area of deficiency. Some legislators referred to the Owens Valley as a horrible example of injustice and inequity which should never again occur in the State. Policies and principles were clearly expressed in the introduction, synopsis and conclusions of Bulletin #3 before its acceptance and adoption. Its express guidelines, and quoted from the State Constitution and Water Code emphasizing that "all water both surface and underground belongs to the people of the state", that the plan applies to every area and every watershed within the boundaries of the State that no water may be exported from an area of surplus to an area of deficiency unless it be classified as surplus to the needs of the area of origin; that areas of origin have a prior right to all water that can be put to beneficial use. It further declared that the intent and purpose of the plan was that the State thru this plan would provide all future water needs for Southern California.

Conservationists who had pled and argued with governmental officials including city, county, state and federal—for the preservation of fish and game habitat, recreational opportunities and a good quality of living environment for humans—were without success after more than twenty years of continuous effort. They were inspired with new hope when the Master Water plan was adopted. While they realized that such a Plan is not retroactive, it was felt that the resources of land and water were so abundant, that when the plan would be implemented, it would provide a good future.

Fourteen years have passed since the adoption of this beautiful plan, but it has not been implemented and operative in the Owens River basin. Is it possible that we have so far strayed from the policies and principles of democracy, a republic form of government with local jurisdiction over local affairs and the day to day life of its citizens—that there is no orderly, peaceful recourse to injustices and inequities? Is it possible for a municipality thru sheer political and financial power to go beyond their political boundaries to appropriate basic resources from their weaker neighbors? Are municipalities exempt from the provisions of anti-trust and anti-monopoly laws which declare such operations to be against public interest? It is obvious that individuals or sparsely populated low tax base governmental agencies dare not try to engage in long and costly litigation.

If we are to preserve our political freedom and independence someone better come up with the answer—and soon. How can we discover and elect public leadership who will base their actions and decisions upon what is in the best public interest in the long view, and thereby reverse the philosophy of personal gain, special privilege, and political power which seems so prevalent today in many areas throughout our Nation.

Current events should warn us that the generation now in High School and College are not happy with what will soon be their political heritage. When we send our armed forces beyond the boundaries of our own country to protect political freedom and the integrity of political boundaries, and to prevent the aggression of the Strong and weak nations—and at the same time permit the establishment of a Colonial Empire in the heart of our own country, they cannot understand how this can be consistent with our oft repeated standard of "Equal justice and equal opportunity for the individual". They have a word for it. They call it hypocrisy.

Can we of the older generation change the course of events before they become completely unmanageable and lead to violence and strife?

Our society is too sophisticated to submit meekly to conditions motivated by greed and ignorance.