

Independent Journal

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TODAY'S EDITORIAL

Special June Water Session Might Make Solons Act

Last January, as the current session of the state Legislature got under way, it was about unanimously agreed that the most important thing which might come out of the session 120 days would be an agreement on water.

Water is vital to California's continuing growth. California has plenty of water, but unfortunately 80 per cent of it is north of Sacramento, while 80 per cent of the need is south of the capital city.

Problem is to assure the southerners that they will have a reliable supply from the north, while also insuring that the northerners will have enough of their own waters when they need it.

A lawyers' committee, which Gov. Goodwin Knight hoped would come up with a solid solution, only brought forth a mumble, not acceptable to northerners and only partially acceptable to the southerners. It looks as though water legislation in this session of the legislature may die unborn.

So Governor Knight announced definitely (see adjacent MacArthur's column) that he would not call a special session on water either this fall or spring. Apparently he hopes that the knowledge he won't make a special call and the solons' own knowledge of the need for a water agreement will bring the opponents together.

We agree that no agreement is great. The proposed Orville dam, the

San Luis project and even the North Bay Aqueduct, which would bring water to Marin, are endangered by the lack of agreement.

But we think Governor Knight has an even stronger hand than he has played. Instead of saying he wouldn't call a water session, he should say he will call a special session—but not this fall or next spring. He should promise to call a special session on June 13, the day after the regular session ends—and keep the legislature in session until agreement is reached.

This would have two good effects. First, it would give the legislature a choice—either come to agreement now, or stay after school until they do. Second, if they decided to stay for the special session, the water problem could be taken off the already crowded agenda of both houses.

Only three and a half weeks remain in the present session, many of the nearly 8,000 measures proposed this year have not even been considered—and obviously won't be in the closing days. If the water measures were taken out of this logjam, it would loosen it slightly.

And if the water session started in the present session, it would be a move. We hope the governor considers such a move.

An Adequate Hospital

Adequate hospital facilities are something which seldom consider until we need their services. Happily, Marin County is blessed with three major hospitals being operated with the patients in mind.

They have their problems, as you don't, one of which at present is a shortage of beds. But the hospital managements, one a district, one a group of doctors and the third a private individual, all are seeking to provide facilities and care which Marin wants and needs.

It is therefore a pleasure to salute them during this National Hospital week.

PUBLIC'S RIGHT TO KNOW

Open Meetings Legislation Work In 4-Year Trial; Some Exceptions

California's four-year-old statute against non-public meetings of local legislative bodies, known as the Brown Act, has been declared a success by virtually all of some 85 California newspaper editors in a recent poll by the Bureau of Public Administration, University of California, Berkeley.

However, about one-third of the newspapermen felt that the spirit of the law is being violated by some kind of informal, non-public session in which differences are aired and decisions made without the public's knowledge.

THE U.C. BUREAU survey is part of a detailed and impartial study of the 1953 Brown Act that has just been issued as the seventh in a current series of legislative problems prepared at the request of the state's lawmakers. Written by Albert G. Pickens, associate professor of journalism, and Edward L. Feder, public administration analyst, the study presents the opinions of the two

major groups most actively concerned with the vital problem of "freedom of information" as applied to the Brown Act—newspaper editors and public officials.

Regarding the latter group, the survey reports that many of California's city attorneys felt that the mandatory features of the Brown Act frequently place the governing body of a political subdivision at a considerable disadvantage.

ABOUT ONE-FOURTH of the attorneys thought that the "executive" or "study" sessions should be conducted, or that closed sessions should be permitted when the legislative body determines that a public discussion of a problem would be detrimental to the welfare and interests of the community.

The newspapermen's chief complaint was that such executive sessions as closed press conferences, "advised" meetings, "private" consultations, and the like, resulted in public meetings becoming mere formalities, conforming

to the provisions of the Brown Act. They should be amended to permit specific kinds of executive sessions other than those now stipulated, i.e., to consider employment or dismissal of a public officer or employee, or to hear charges or complaints against him.

ABOUT ONE-THIRD of the attorneys who answered thought that the law should be modified to permit non-public discussions of (1) the purchase of property, eminent domain, or condemnation proceedings; and (2) lawsuits and other kinds of litigation.

THE NEWSPAPERMEN expressed the opinion that the closed-meeting system of

THE HITCH THAT HAULS LITTLE

HATED STIRRETH UP STRIFES
—PBB, 10-12



WHAT OUR READERS SAY

Post Office Is Public Service

EDITOR: Independent Journal.

I am enclosing a copy of a letter sent to Postmaster William H. Williams in answer to his article in Saturday's 13 May 11th entitled "No Mails Can Go Through."

Many points covered in your article in Saturday's 13 May 11th are very true while others are misleading.

There has been a reduction in the deficit the past several years, true—but you mentioned only decentralization as a major reason.

Why didn't you tell about the increase in parcel post, second and third-class postage rates over that period? Third class was increased 50 per cent. Why didn't you say that during that period the post office finally agreed not to include in its deficit the hundreds of millions of dollars of free government mail they had been calling post office expense.

Why has the post office lost money? In questioning my friends in and out of the post office, I find them completely ignorant of the volume of mail being delivered. I have no argument there.

More recently the Congress has shown great interest in the welfare of "small business." Hundreds of thousands of small businesses depend on the mails to carry their story to customers—often so scattered there is no other way. Their mail is read and sells billions of dollars worth of goods.

From the post office's perspective, Congress has encouraged our nation's magazines and newspapers with very low postage rates—less than one-half of the rates for other non-postal services that do not begin to pay their way.

Architects Kirby and Mulvin of San Francisco were appointed by the San Rafael board of education to study plans for a swimming pool at San Rafael High School.

THE ST. FRANCIS DRAKE Highway Improvement Association to support Marin County supervisors in their request for federal aid in re-aligning the White's Hill road between Bolin and Woodacre.

Further development of Marin County requires formation of more civic-minded groups. Robert Fouke, president of the California Junior Chamber of Commerce, told the San Rafael 20-30 Club.

An absent-minded professor was attending a convention in San Francisco, and became so engrossed in a discussion he failed to notice that the hat-check girl had given him an overcoat about five sizes too large for him. He even continued taking the coat behind him on the floor, and only returned to the world of reality when he tripped on it and fell flat on his face. Back he marched to the hat-check girl and complained. "There's a pair of gloves in the pocket of this

Consolidation of School Districts Works, At Least It Did In Utah

Word is that it may be only a matter of a week or so before the Marin County School District Organization Committee comes up with a report on proposed changes in district boundaries.

Just how far the committee may go in recommending consolidations remains to be seen when the report appears. The possibilities are about as endless as the county's present assessment of 28 school boards.

All of which reminds me that way back when I was knee-high to a horse, my native state of Utah consolidated its school districts by state law.

Elementary and high school districts were merged. Out went all the rural districts with three-man boards administering one-teacher schools.

A half dozen "first class" cities each got a city of the future (Wood High School).

DICK LAVMAN, 13 copy editor, got to researching among the yellow pages of the new telephone directory and came up with the enlightening (?) information that advertisers on its pages 77 through 78 illustrate their appeals with 12 pictures of bulldozers and earth movers, plus school busses, school buses, five dump trucks, four graders, one trenching machine and a concrete mix truck. And never a checkmate!

TRUTH IN ADVERTISING: A card on the cash register at San Rafael's Courthouse Creamery informs customers: "Coffee 12 cents a cup. Crime marches on."

Which reminds me that the nickel cup of coffee still exists in Marin County—at the snack bar of San Quentin Prison. Darned good coffee, too.

INTRIGUING WANTED ad in the Bayview Press at Point Reyes Station: "Wanted: a 14-foot aluminum boat. Must be in one side. Reward."

HENRY MACARTHUR

Knight May Be Slightly Desperate In Decision To Hold No Water Session

SACRAMENTO (CNS)—There was a slight hint of desperation in the pronouncement made by Gov. Goodwin T. Knight in a recent press conference that he does not intend to call a special legislative session this fall or next spring on the subject of water.

With continuing indications that the Legislature will not approve a constitutional amendment deferring water rights of the north and southern portions of California, the governor perhaps feels that some more of his legislative prerogative is about to be relegated to the "bottom of the bar" (the description of dead issues by legislators) and now seeks an out on the Legislature.

WHEN THE governor made his entry to the press conference, he had with him a prepared statement concerning the water issue.

This is somewhat unusual, but the press conference was the governor for the benefit of half a dozen publishers who were invited to attend and watch the proceedings.

TRY AND STOP ME

BENNETT CLIFF

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REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

By BRYCE W. ANDERSON

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