

July 25, 1946

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ZONE 1 REACTIONS

PEOPLE of the Ventura-Ojai section, Zone 1 of the flood control district, are intensely interested in the financial bottleneck into which their water project has run. They are doing a lot of talking about it.

This we know from the comments we have heard that followed publication of news stories concerning the greatly increased cost of Matilija dam and certainty that the \$3,400,000 bond issue is not going to complete the water system as outlined.

We find that many citizens sympathize with Consulting Engineer Warren in having his cost estimates go haywire; everybody is familiar with rising prices, and it is easy to see how figures compiled in 1945 would be all wrong in 1946. However, we think it is equally true that a great many taxpayers are not ready to forgive him for being as far wrong as he was.

We find numerous persons saying that the bond issue submitted last October ought to have been for \$5,000,000 instead of \$3,400,000, that it would have carried just the same. In light of present circumstances, that doubtless is true. However, that's a case of hind-sight. Almost anybody editing yesterday's paper, after it is printed, can do a better job than the editor could when his deadline was pressing him.

We find, almost universally, a demand for all the cards being laid on the table. People want to know the unadorned facts. They want to know the worst. Fortunately, this same sentiment was expressed at Monday's courthouse conference by the county supervisors, by members of the advisory committee, and by Engineer Warren. On the latter's suggestion, his figures as to present estimates were made public. As the advisory committee digs into the subject, we feel certain it will keep the public fully informed.

A reaction from organized labor was one of resentment that the whole onus of the increased costs was being laid on higher wages. You may be sure that union representatives will be presenting figures to show that this is true only in part.

We also have heard this sentiment repeatedly expressed: That water conservation is an expensive business, that there has been too much tendency in the past to minimize costs and to "kid" people into a belief that it can be done cheaply. This area has to have water, and whatever it costs we shall have to pay. It's time to face the facts that Zone 1 will need another million, perhaps more than that, to produce water satisfactorily for its supply.

Furthermore, these citizens say, that will be only a starter for the county. Zone 2 and Zone 3 will soon have to undertake construction of a really big dam on the Sespe, and other dams also will be needed as the years pass. All this, they argue, will be costly—but it will be worth the price.

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3rd Person
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