

The Southern Counties

Pyromaniacs

Two horse cowpunchers, "Minda drunk" wandering in the vicinity of Witch Creek and Rancho, promiscuously threw several matches to the ground last fortnight and caused the worst forest fire in the history of the year in the San Diego County.

These and other facts were disclosed at the trial of Ben Ponchettl and Valley Mitchell, accused as responsible for deliberately starting the recent disastrous San Diego fire which burned several thousand acres of the Cleveland National Forest and was only quelled with the aid of a providential rainfall (News Review, Sept. 23-29).

When they first questioned the two cowpunchers, Blake Mason and Luther Gordon, deputy sheriff and County fire warden, respectively, did not receive any good reason from the accused for lighting the fire. Therefore, the two investigators immediately suspected incendiarism. Finally Mitchell admitted he was "kinda drunk" that he had thrown lighted matches into the brush at intervals. Said the cowpuncher: "I never thought nothing about it. I just saw some likely lookin' places to toss matches and I had some matches in my pocket." Tried by the County courts and found guilty, the two firebugs were sentenced to six months imprisonment, but will work it out at the County road camp.

Mexican Schools

Last week at Sacramento, State Attorney-General U. S. Webb informed the State Department of Education that separate schools for Mexican school children are not provided for by the laws of California, that they are illegal.

Webb's ruling: To make it easier for Mexican and other children at work on farms, schools may establish special class hours; may permit student-farmers certain privileges. But no schools are to be restricted to Mexican pupils only.

The Attorney-General's decision, asked by the State Department of Education specifically in the cases of an Orange County district and a Carpinteria Union School, will especially affect schools in Southern California and the San Joaquin Valley where presence of large numbers of seasonal laborers is creating a crisis in educational fields.

The Orange County case arose from the fact that a Mexican school was opened one month earlier than that for native-born youngsters, then closed for a month to permit children to engage in fruit picking, reopening later for the balance of the normal school year. Mexican classes, however, under the Orange County plan begin an hour earlier.

The Carpinteria case did not involve the labor-education problem. It was the outgrowth of a fight to force the board of trustees of the Carpinteria Union School to admit three Mexican children who had been ordered transferred to a special Mexican school. The three children were sired by Frank Montoya, who is of Mexican parentage but who was born within the State. The children also were born in California. Thus Attorney-General Webb ruled that these children were being discriminated against.

Goodwill Trek

Las Vegas is an important city in Nevada. Being the closest city to Boulder Canyon, it will soon become a still more important city. Largest of all cities in close range of Boulder Dam, is San Bernardino, significant railroad and industrial center, focal point for construction of the gigantic Colorado Aqueduct. Between San Bernardino and Las Vegas there has been no friction, no disagreement. But now that the Boulder Dam project is soon to unite them more closely, business leaders of the two cities declare last month that a stronger economic friendship should be built up between the two centers.

Thus last week 60 business and civic leaders of San Bernardino and the surrounding valley embarked on a goodwill trek to Las Vegas. Some were in the special Pullman cars sponsored by the San Bernardino Chamber of Commerce, many traveled by private automobile.

Again, Hueneme

For many a month strife has been rife among Ventura County citizens over the proposed County harbor at Hueneme. (News Review, Sept. 23-29.) Citizens of the City of Ventura, representing the oil interests, want the County harbor to be located on their waterfront; citizens of Oxnard, Santa Paula, Moorpark, Fillmore, representing vast agricultural interests, want the harbor to be located at Hueneme, which, according to their claims, is a more accessible point for the shipping of the County's agricultural produce, yet. Close enough to Ventura of fields to facilitate the shipping of petroleum products.

The County Harbor Commission, whose duty it was to select a port site, chose Hueneme in preference to Ventura; set about to hear customary protests, as legally necessary preparatory to the calling of a bond election to finance the \$2,000,000 project. But last month the activities of the opponents of the Hueneme harbor and legal peccadilloes in the procedure of the Commission combined to delay the calling of the bond election.

Last week the Harbor Commission, undaunted by the political strife raging in the County, set to work again. In 10 minutes' time the commissioners crafted a resolution which would start the \$2,000,000 Hueneme bond issue proceeding on their way for the second time.

Chairman of the County Board of Supervisors and the County Harbor Commission is T. G. Gabbert. Of wrathful citizens opposed to the Hueneme harbor location, he last week begged for calmness, patience. Said he, in effect: Before deciding upon the Hueneme harbor location, the Harbor Commission called in competent authorities, made lengthy surveys, investigations, found that in its opinion the Hueneme site was best suited for County purposes.

The Harbor Commission has no intentions of cramming its selection down the throat of County taxpayers. The Commission merely wants to put the matter of its selection to a vote of the people. This is only possible through the calling of a bond election.

Antelope, Deer

Early California settlers, exploring Los Angeles County, found great herds of graceful antelope leaping lightly over the rolling hills and rich plains of the northern regions, named the territory Antelope Valley.

But no longer is the name appropriate. Last week County Game Warden Turner filed his annual report with the Board of Supervisors; stated in it that no antelope had been seen during the past year; that the animal was now extinct in the valley named in its honor, six had been seen.

No decrease was noted by County Game Warden Turner in the number of wild deer in Los Angeles County. One ranger had glimpsed 34 in Angeles Forest during several hours, indicating that the forest abounds with them, despite legalized hunting, preying mountain lions.

More lions evidently abound in Los Angeles County than had previously been estimated, the game warden's report inferred. A total of 26 were killed during the past year, saving the lives of approximately 2000 deer. Nearly \$2000 in bounties were paid by the County, the State.

Distinctive Enforcement

Only lately, in an era of colored typewriters, colored fountain pens, colored kitchen utensils, a new State motor vehicle law has made it compulsory to introduce the color motif into law enforcement.

On the motorcycles and automobiles of the newly-formed California Highway Patrol the State motor vehicle act now requires paint of a distinctive shade. But as is usually the case, many a citizen failed to understand this new scheme, had doubts. Even slightly belligerent became Glendale's Chief-of-Police J. D. Fraser. Misunderstanding the law, he flatly refused to change the colors of Glendale's police cars which are now black and brown.

Miguel Fiesta

With the breath of "old times" in the air, residents of San Miguel, after the style of other California cities, last week brought back the colorful Spanish past. Under the shadow of old San Miguel Mission, one of the few early Franciscan missions yet retaining its original form, citizens turned back the pages of the years, staged a fiesta Spanish in its nature that strangers at the gates of San Miguel were amazed, intrigued.

Strangers saw colorful senoritas and caballeros mingling with Indians from San Antonio Mission, just as they had done - the old days, when the mission at San Miguel was at the height of its glory.

A play, directed by one Father Felix, depicted the founding of the mission, conversion of the Indians, early Spanish days and the fall and rescue of a mission. All was nostalgically spent in money was donated for the restoration of the ancient edifice.

Miniature Soviet

Up in the lonely foothills of San Bernardino, not in the general limelight of humanity, a children's camp last summer attracted a number of youths eager to spend the summer out of doors. But lonely and aloof as the camp was, not long did it remain thus. As a result of rumors in the camp, the Attorney's office came prowling the representatives of John Law to the outskirts of the camp. From an extended flag pole glared at them a Red flag, symbol of Communism.

Further investigation brought information that the children sang Communist songs, recited each morning a Communist pledge. Immediately the camp was broken up, the leaders arrested. (News Review, Aug. 25-25.)

Last week the alleged Communists were being tried in Superior Judge Charles L. Allison's court at San Bernardino, seven of them charged with raising the Red flag of Communism. Especially interesting in the trial was the fact that the large part of the State's witnesses were little children. Reluctantly, tiny Harvey Baron, one of the campers, testified that daily, as the flag was hoisted, the children



T. G. GABBERT
... he begged for calmness.

were asked, "Comrades, are you ready?" and answered, "We're always ready." Child Camper Baron said that every day there were conferences at which there was talk about Russia, Communism, war and about "workers being slaves." Emily Trey, another child camper, readily identified the Red flag in question. At times, said Emily, the children were taught about Lenin, famed Communist figure. Another inmate of the camp said that her camp chore was to raise the Red flag.

An employee of the camp denied seeing the Red flag, but could readily tell the meaning of the symbols on it. She said it meant the redness of humanity's blood, symbolic of universal brotherhood. She admitted that the camp was organized by Los Angeles Communist sympathizers.

Tourist Inspection

At the Yuma Highway entrance to Southern California, approximately 250 automobiles from the East now pass by each day. As winter travel increases, the number will be raised to 350 or 400 daily. Up until the present, incoming automobile tourists were informed that they were within the borders of California only by means of a sign. Last week, however, a group of State officials met at Calexico and completed plans for an attractive inspection station and guest house on the Yuma Highway at the border of California.

The station building and property will contain twenty-four separated lanes through which incoming tourists will drive, be inspected, further investigated and completed plans for an attractive inspection station and guest house on the Yuma Highway at the border of California.

Final arrangements for the new venture were completed last week when a party of State officials, including Frank G. Snook, State Motor Vehicle Chief, Senator Lyman King, formerly of the State Finance Department, and A. C. Fleury, senior quarantine supervisor in California, spent a whole morning inspecting the site for the new structure. The total cost of the inspection station is estimated at between approximately \$15,000 and \$25,000.

Frequently, unprincipled people transport stolen goods, banned material, in and out of Imperial County. Also included in these nefarious transportations is infected fruit. Worried citizens of Imperial Valley last week met at Westmoreland to solve this problem.

At their monthly meeting, the Associated Chambers of Commerce proposed plans for a permanent inspection station to be maintained near Trifolium Bridge, on the Salton Sea Highway, to prevent the bringing in and going out of contraband goods, produce. Now citizens await validation of the proposal by the governing bodies in the County administra-

tion. The resolution by the Chambers of Commerce asked the Board of Supervisors, the Sheriff, and the horticultural commissioner to unite forces in the maintenance of the station. It was asserted by those sponsoring the plan that hay and other crops have been stolen from fields in Imperial Valley, trucked out to Los Angeles markets where there is no opportunity to identify them. It was also stated that seed plants and pest-infected perishables enter the County by truck without proper inspection. If the station was erected, it is thought that the horticultural commissioner would have an opportunity for closer inspection.

For several weeks the proponents of the present scheme have operated a station similar to the one they propose, have pronounced it a success, think the expenditure justifies making it a permanent project.

Simple Formula

A simple chemical formula, in the last few years, has brought about many a court suit, political tangle, dam and reservoir construction, death-dealing flood, life-giving product. The simple formula, namely, H₂O (water) raised problems in many a Southern California community, brought about the inauguration of surveys, law suits, the construction of dams, etcetera.

Los Angeles. Because the City of Los Angeles' present water supply will not be sufficient for expected increases in population, because all things point to an acute water shortage between now and the time the Colorado Aqueduct is completed, Mayor John C. Porter made three recommendations to the Board of Water and Power Commissioners. The recommendations:

1. To acquire the water rights of Mono Basin, a territory east of the Sierra Nevada, north of Owens Valley.
2. To conclude negotiations with the Board of Owens Valley looking toward the purchase of the existing water rights there which are not within the Los Angeles system. (News Review, Sept. 2-8.)
3. To construct additional works in Owens Valley to increase the storage capacity of the aqueduct system.

San Gabriel Dam was still recovering from its recent calamity, a slip of many thousand tons of sand and rock. Suspicious because of the asserted rottenness of the rock at the dam site, the State, through its Department of Public Works, started to make a thorough inspection, will pass either favorably or unfavorably on the suitability of the site, from an engineering standpoint. Accompanying State's Engineer Hyatt and B. Meek, of the Department of Public Works, in the inspection was Flood Control Engineer E. C. Eaton, head of the San Gabriel Dam building project. (Recent legislation makes a contractor for the State engineers to inspect all dams.)

San Diego's water problems are of an international nature. An international treaty by which San Diego municipality could develop a water supply on the Tia Juana River (Cottonwood branch) is sought by San Diego citizens. They expect the negotiations to be completed by Dr. Elwood Mead, chief of the United States Reclamation Bureau. This was the information divulged last week in a report from the progress of the negotiations through the International Water Commission by Hydraulic Engineer H. N. Savage.

Santa Barbara and Montecito city governments were faced with a water suit brought by some nearby residents of Santa Ynez Valley. The people of Santa Ynez seek to restrain the cities from taking their (Santa Ynez') water supply from the watershed of Santa Ynez. The suit also asks that the defendants take down the Gibraltar Dam or pay damages for the water taken therefrom. Some fifty witnesses are to be called by the Santa Ynez people. H. H. Henderson, expert witness for the plaintiff, is financing the suit. He will retain one-half of any damages received.

Ventura is looking forward to finishing, within the next year, a flood control dike along the Santa Clara River. Surveying parties from Los Angeles were engaged last week in locating best positions, jetties and all structural work, extending for almost fourteen miles. This preliminary work will take ten days to