

The Counties

(Continued)

Doomed Gabriel Dam

It took great mental courage on the part of Los Angeles County Flood Control Engineer E. C. Eaton last fortnight to condemn publicly the San Gabriel Dam site as unsuitable for building the proposed huge water barricade there. Reason: Los Angeles County had already spent more than \$3,000,000 on the project, thinking the San Gabriel Canyon site presented possibilities for a safe "high dam."

Last week, however, after State and county engineers and geologists had all agreed that solid rock for the foundation simply wasn't there, the County Board of Supervisors backed up Engineer Eaton, voted unanimously to abandon the high dam in San Gabriel Canyon. This decision was made only after intense deliberation and discussion on the part of the board, which naturally was loath to give up the project after so much time and money had been spent. But when Supervisor Shaw, after pessimistic reports from expert investigators that the foundation was unsafe, went out and saw for himself that the rock, which was to support a dam higher than any now existing, was rotten and veined with soft, blue clay, he advised the board to abandon the site permanently. From this and other reports the supervisors made a necessary decision which lost the county much money at present, but, in the case of future disaster, saved them many times the loss.

Still intent on placing some sort of flood control device in San Gabriel Canyon, the supervisors late last week were seriously considering an alternative plan offered by Engineer Eaton. The plan: to make a full survey of possible sites for a series of smaller dams higher up in the canyon on both forks of the San Gabriel River. Supervisors were of the opinion that a series of these smaller dams above the original site would be able to retain almost as much water as the huge structure which was to have been built.

Since the State, under State Engineer Edward Hyatt, conducted an official survey of the dam according to recent law enacted, Hyatt last week sent a bill to Los Angeles County for almost \$15,000 to pay the survey expenses. In a quandary, the county turned the matter over to County Counsel Mattoon whose legal advice is sought of the State. The board of supervisors therefore mailed to State Treasurer Johnson a check for the required amount.

Forests, Fires

A-visit in Southern California for the first time came California's State Board of Forestry last week. Still smoldering were the forest and brush fires which had raged in San Diego and Los Angeles counties for several days. The board spent three days surveying representative fire preventing measures, watershed protection needs in the Southland; utilized a fourth day to discuss findings; returned to the north.

The State Board was met at Saugus by a delegation of Los Angeles conservationists and foresters, who escorted the members through representative Southern California forest areas during the three days devoted to the survey. Inspected were the firebreaks, reforestation, and fire-fighting equipment in the Newhall and Santa Monica mountains area; the firebreaks above Black Star Canyon in Orange County; the California forest experimentation station; the firebreaks and trails in Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

During its stay, the Board was entertained by the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce at luncheon; mass-meet and dined at Riverside, at Hotelman's Mission Inn. Director Fred C. Stevenot of the California Department of Natural Resources addressed the Chamber of Commerce luncheon; declared he was in strong opposition to the proposed transfer of public lands from Federal to State control. (See "The Government"), that he believed such a move would set California's own forestry program back 100 years, would also hamper the present playground, oil, and natural-gas conservation program.

Much praise has been accorded Walter Mulford of Berkeley to offer Southern California on its treatment of the watershed control problem. He compared the Southland's accomplishments with the recent French reclamation and reforestation project. He pointed out that the Southern California problem was more important; more complex in that its watershed preservation



ELEPHANT BONES UNEARTHED AT LA BREA PITS

Once gigantic elephants roamed Southern California plains.

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means water preservation as well. Member A. S. Matthews of Berkeley spoke strongly in favor of a sound educational program to bring about a "forestry-minded" California citizenry; expressed the need for additional funds to carry out the State forestry program.

Members of the board in the surveying party included: Chairman George C. Pardee of Oakland, one-time Governor of California; (see "The Governor"); Berkeley's Walter Mulford; Camino's Major Swift Berry; Fresno's W. O. Blasingame; Orange's D. Eymann Huff; San Dimas' H. S. Gilman; Susanville's W. S. Matthews; State Forester M. B. Pratt.

Urged by Los Angeles County's Forester Spence Turner were Forestry Board efforts toward establishing a forestry school in Southern California because of the distance to the northern school of forestry at Sacramento.

Thieving Pelicans

Human individuals who balk the jurisdiction of the State are punished. This is a basic law of government. Last week, however, the State was in a quandary. It had been balked, but not by any human agency. It had been balked by a group of pelicans indulging in piscatorial pleasures.

The State Fish and Game Commission last week had planted 1500 striped bass in the Salton Sea, near the mouth of the Alamo River. On the same day, in the afternoon, to the Calpatra Gun Club came reports that several hundred pelicans had assembled at the point where the fish had been deposited and were feasting, gorging themselves at the State's expense. Not slow to take action against the law-breaking fowl, the State ordered several specimen pelican shot. Reason: to ascertain whether they were guilty of striped bass theft.

Harbor Improvement

Newport Beach voters have long wanted their harbor improved. Last week they passed, by a wide margin, harbor improvement bonds for \$200,000. Of this, \$150,000 will be used to dredge the channel at the harbor entrance to a depth of 15 feet at low tide, to a width of 250 feet. The remainder will be used to erect two rock groins at the shore end of the jetty.

Weed Patch

When the little community of Weed Patch was founded it was well named. But Father Time proved to be a builder, and the passing years brought increasing activity to the town.

Last week Weed Patch came under the focus of a state-wide limelight. By recent legislation a new judicial township was created for Kern County. Therefore, Weed Patch now has its own court and

Weed Patch's F. M. Parish has received the supervisory appointment as justice of the court.

County Supervisors have long contemplated a court for Weed Patch, which is now a well settled and prosperous place, one of the county's richest farming sections. Previously its court cases had been handled mostly in Bakersfield.

Oil

Slashed Prices

Because it is large and expansive the Standard Oil company holds a powerful hand on the control lever of the world's oil markets. Therefore, when Standard Oil ventures on any plan of action, other companies pay close attention.

Last week Standard Oil Company of California moved momentarily, culminating current grumbling of over-production, but placing the basis of its action on the failure of the oil-producing industry to support the State's conservation program. Standard cut crude oil prices drastically. At Santa Fe Springs field approximately a 50 per cent reduction of 70 to 75 cents a barrel was made; at Signal Hill and Seal Beach, prices were reduced 50 to 60 cents.

And while this surprising cut was being announced, other companies gathered together their boards of directors and went into serious debate, for Standard's move had direct bearing upon all of them. Two days later, after stock-holders had worried, and company directors had beetled their brows in concentration, announcement came from six large companies (part of "Big Seven" group of which Standard is included), that they would meet Standard's reductions. The six companies included Shell, Union, Associated, Texas, Richfield, and General Petroleum, and along with Standard, they control the destinies of the American oil industry.

Even on the next day after the amalgamation of the "Big Seven" on price cutting, curtailment of their oil began, to the extent of many thousands of barrels. This was their method of meeting the over-production menace which they thought threatened them.

Usually the "goat" when large oil companies indulge in schemes, the independent companies were in somewhat of a quandary; but there was little they could do against the big combine, and toward the end of the week a slight majority of them had signed an agreement calling for co-operative measures with the major companies.

The injunction proceedings brought by the State to halt gas wastage continued last week only until Tuesday, when Superior Judge William Hazlett adjourned the hearing until Oct. 31. At the time of adjournment, observing news-

gatherers thought the independent oil companies were ready to withdraw their spirited opposition to the injunctions against them and their Santa Fe Springs activities. Events that pointed to this prophecy were: 1) Standard's and others' price cut (see above); 2) announcement by the independent company's counsel that a gas-wastage agreement was about to be reached by his clients and the major oil companies; 3) Standard's declaration that gas wastage is responsible for over-production in flush and semi-flush fields (given as reason for price slash); 4) legal representatives of the 34 defendants in the injunction held numerous conferences in an attempt to rush mutual agreement on gas control methods and thus shorten the court proceedings.

Over last weekend, with many a conference held among the oil companies, it was thought some definite agreement would be ready for the re-opening of the trial this week.

In Santa Barbara County, Barnsdall and Rio Grande oil companies last week announced curtailment of production in rich Elwood field. These two companies are the major producers respectively in the field. Their official announcement said: Barnsdall and Rio Grande companies will cut production at Elwood field an additional 30 per cent. Production was voluntarily curtailed previous to this. Out of a possible 130 wells, the companies have refrained, during the past year and a half, from bringing in more than 13 from this prolific field. The companies at all times have been in hearty accord with the present conservation movement and believe the entire State will be benefited.

Catastrophe

Raging Infernos

While a... October sun last week bathed Southern California in the heat of its penetrating rays, bequeathing the balmy heat of Indian summers, crackling fires swept like heated tornadoes upon defenseless areas, laid terrible waste to thousands of fertile acres, threatened to devastate magnificent homes, national forests.

Throughout the week, forest and brush fires were reported in Los Angeles, Ventura and San Diego counties, and were brought under control only after desperate fire-fighting.

Flintridge (Pasadena), Pompano, bald-pated millionaires, their homes in the exclusive Flintridge area (northwest of Pasadena) threatened with destruction, took up wet gunnysack, spades, axes, other implements, and set out with 500 firefighters to battle flames burning over 1500 acres. The Linda Vista Hills west of the royal Seco. Starting just before

from the exhaust of a tractor ignited dried grass, the flames spread rapidly, burned one millionaire's home, threatened many another were brought under partial control 200 yards from the Flintridge-Biltmore Hotel, a \$1,250,000 structure.

Flaming up north of the Ross Bowl, the fire swept toward Millionaire, Freeman Ford's estate; then swerved off and destroyed a less expensive \$15,000 cabin. Valuable racing dogs, loosed from their kennels as the fire crept near them, were late recovered, re-kennelled. Rare birds, permitted to escape from fire-threatened cages, flew directly into the flames and were destroyed.

After it had leaped a ridge separating Linda Vista from Chevy Chase (Glendale), the fire was finally curbed within a quarter mile from the Chevy Chase Golf Club. Most damage was done to Pasadena's valuable watershed.

Fish Canyon. In the line of another serious brush fire, the Angeles National Forest was threatened by a blaze which scurried like mad down Fish Canyon, eight miles above Monrovia Dam. As it was heading directly for the tall timber of Angeles Forest, District Ranger Vetter of Santa Anita Canyon and several assistants rushed to the site, were not long in controlling the flames, only after 25 acres had been burned over. Volunteers watched throughout the following night for another outbreak, lest unguarded the smouldering sparks blow about and start another blaze more serious than the first.

San Diego County. Like a veritable tinderbox, San Diego County last week witnessed the spread of a large number of serious fires. Brush blazes flared up constantly and were brought under control only to break out again. Throughout the length of a 100 mile front east of San Diego city, forest fire, the worst in the section's memory, threatened to completely destroy the small town of Alpine, a mountain health resort. Late last week all the abandoned buildings of the Veteran's Hospital and many Alpine residences were completely burned. Townsman aided by 1000 recruits, were making desperate efforts to save the business district. In the Cleveland National Forest 12,000 acres of watershed were completely destroyed, while another fire burned 5,500 feet of the La Mesa-Spring Valley region flume. Still more fires, centering in the Highland Valley and San Pasqual regions, were eventually checked.

Ventura County. Six fires in the Santa Paula area of Ventura County and several in the vicinity of Moorpark last week burned over 75 acres of forest, destroyed two homes, threatened destruction to an oil field and a town before the flames could be stamped out. Probably the worst single fire was the one which burned 15 acres of grass and brush east of Hueneme, south of Oxnard, entered the town and destroyed two modest homes. At Newbury Park fire burned around several homes before it was controlled. At Santa Paula, one home was burned and the refinery grounds of the Union Oil Company were threatened. At Ventura, an impromptu fire brigade of women with buckets, brooms and garden hose, quenched a grass blaze in the east end of the city before the fire brigade could arrive. Commendable vigilance on the part of the Ventura County fire wardens checked several fires which broke out in Moorpark. Authorities last week believed the Moorpark blazes were started by one John Agurro, Mexican.

Hollywood. A serious conflagration in Hollywood's northern hills for a period of four hours caused a great deal of excitement, anxiety and great damage. So serious was it that all traffic through Chabugna Pass (traffic outlet to the north) was completely blocked. Household's seeing the flames, rushing upon them, carried their furniture to the streets. Invalids were prematurely rescued; no residence was actually set alight, although flames licked greedily. Most catastrophic of the damage done by Hollywood's fire was the destruction of the picturesque Pilgrimage Play Theater, when the wind took the fire as it was headed for world-famous Hollywood Bowl and swept it over the neighboring outdoor arena. More than half the Pilgrimage Play Theater's scenery, the stage, dressing rooms, property rooms, electrical control room and organ rooms were burned. Only a shell in front of the theater and the cross, emblematic of Christ, the central figure in the annual Pilgrimage Play, stood standing, after the flames had died away.