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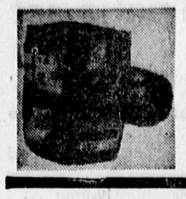

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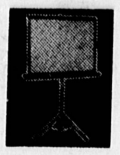

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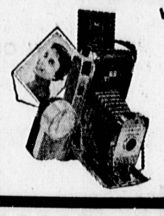

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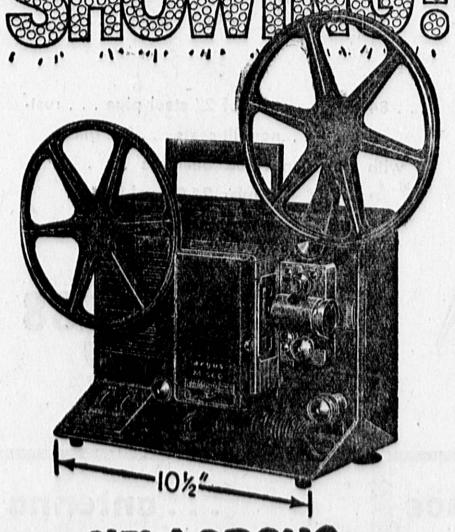

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Value of 'Delta Pool' Outlined By Torrance Area Assemblyman

By VINCENT THOMAS
Assemblyman, 68th District

As yet, not many Californians are sufficiently aware of the basic importance of the Delta Area to successful operation of the projected statewide water system. As now planned, the complex network of waterways and fertile islands which make up the junction of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers will be transformed by massive engineering into the "Delta Pool," to receive, store, and transmit water from the Feather River and associated projects to the southern and western parts of the state.

At our recent special session the Assembly adopted a resolution which called the Delta Pool the "heart of the water transportation facilities" the state will construct, and which authorizes an extensive study of plans for the Pool, its operation, finance, and related problems.

This study was asigned to the Assembly interim committee on water, and the group has just wound up the first of a series of hearings on the matter. Prior to the hearing, committee members made a tour of the area to familiarize themselves with its physical features.

* * *

BEFORE PROCEEDING to matters discussed at the hearings, it might be helpful to describe the Delta Area briefly. Instead of one flowing directly into the other as is usually the case, the Sacramento and the San Joaquin Rivers divide into numerous and separate channels, which eventually unite in such a way that the waters of the two rivers gradually commingle.

The multitude of islands within the channel network are mostly below sea level, but are extraordinarily fertile and productive. However, their soil is frequently peaty, and this condition creates extensive problems of water seepage into farm lands, subsidence of land surfaces, and infiltration of salt water. All of these factors must be taken into account in planning for the Pool and its structures.

* * *

ANOTHER PROBLEM which is also troublesome is of a slightly different character. It arises from the fact that release of wastes into the San Joaquin and its tributaries reduces the quality of delta water. To stop this, it will be necessary to construct a sizeable San Joaquin drainage system, properly tied into the Delta Pool and the statewide water plans.

At its hearing, preliminary information was given to the committee as to the estimated cost of the Delta project. Total costs are now fixed at approximately $83 million, to be financed from the proceeds of the $1.75 billion bond issue which will appear on the November ballot. Preliminary data as to estimated revenues, allocation of costs between various types of users, and the price of Delta water, were also reviewed.

* * *

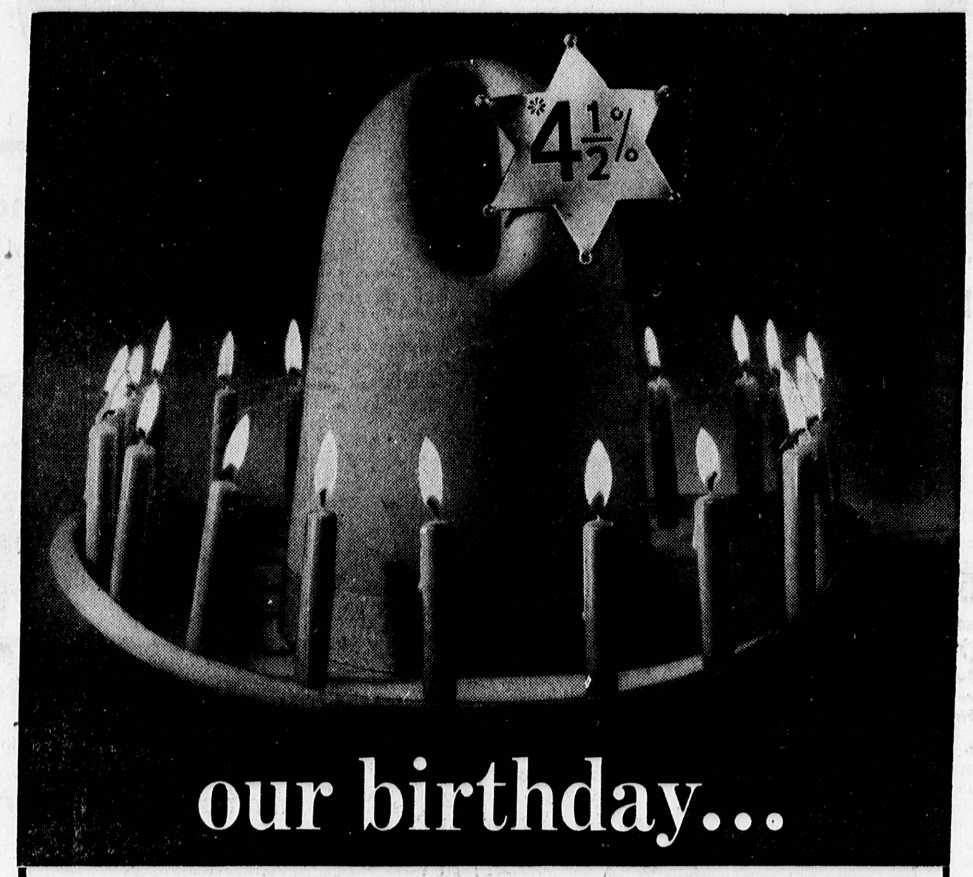
THE COMMITTEE was informed that the construction of the Delta Pool must be integrated with that of other features of the whole statewide system. If the project is authorized, and if properly coordinated arrangements can be worked out with local agencies and interests, it is anticipated that construction would extend over the 20 year period from 1932 through 1982.

Another important matter touched upon was the amount of usable water which will be salvaged if the Pool structures are engineered to present plans. Earlier estimates were that some 937,000 acre feet could be saved annually. Later estimates, based on revised plans, place the figure at two million acre-feet per year, a very considerabe increase.

Later meetings of the committee will receive testimony from interested local agencies as well as additional information on the points I have referred to here. From what I have written, it should be obvious that the Delta Pool will be an important topic at our 1961 session.

Equitable Senate Foes Organized

Walter S. Johnson, San Francisco business and civic leader, has been named temporary chairman of a Northern California group organized to oppose reapportionment of the senate as proposed in the 20-20 plan authored by Supervisor Frank G. Bonnelli.



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