

# Water in Antelope Valley

In March of last year our Board of Supervisors enacted Ordinance No. 4457. This prescribed a term in jail or a fine for anyone drilling a water well in Antelope Valley except one for domestic use or to replace a well that had gone bad.

The ordinance states, "The Board of Supervisors of Los Angeles County hereby finds that the water table in that portion of the country described in Section I of the ordinance is now so low and is continuing to drop so rapidly that if restrictions upon the drilling of further water wells are not effective within the next 30 days the whole of such portion will be rendered unfit for agricultural use."

The reaction of our people to this was, "They can't do this to us!" At least that is the only way to account for the unparalleled well-drilling spree starting immediately after the ordinance went into effect. Some people actually secured permits, but a great many openly defied the ordinance.

The official report of Antelope Valley production for last year shows a total of over \$8,500,000. Of that, over \$3,000,000 came from irrigated alfalfa hay and about \$3,500,000 came from poultry and eggs. We think that is a first-class job of putting out, in our last war year, and all this in spite of the dire prediction of our

Supervisors that we were going straight to pot within 30 days.

In a recent mass meeting in Lancaster, protesting this and further restrictions upon us, a Deputy County Counsel advised us that in his opinion the ordinance was unconstitutional. A few weeks later the Supervisors revoked it.

A short time ago Supervisor Jessup told me that the ordinance was adopted upon the insistent request of Bob Perry, who is in charge of our local U.S. Soil Conservation Service. Until that time we never knew who was its sponsor. In a report by this bureau, in a weekly farm paper, dwelling upon certain methods of tillage in the valley, Mr. Perry is quoted as one who can now make water walk instead of run and the article winds up with the statement that "they believe the valley will eventually be saved." Probably you can also read the fine Italian hand of something or other in these bureau reports.

Of course we have a water problem. It is simply that we have more land than we have water for. We are bending every effort to stimulate our future growth toward the poultry industry and other lines of agriculture with low water requirements. Yes, we have a water problem. But it cannot be alleviated by any crackpot rule or unenforceable regulation that destroys the very confidence of those it seeks to help.

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