

City's Foresight Pays Off in Water and Power

BY ROBERT E. G. HARRIS

A mechanically organized structure of technical processes forms the backbone of any community's material welfare. In the Los Angeles area much of this structure is given over to supplying two necessities most people take for granted: pure water and low-cost electricity.

To supply these necessities for a sprawling metropolitan region with a continually growing population is a tremendous task. Locally this task occupies more than 10,000 highly skilled workers—employees of the Los Angeles city-owned Department of Water and Power.

Today, largely because city water and power planners have refused to rest on their oars, Los Angeles is in good shape to step up its industrial output for defense. In a recent report, Samuel B. Morris, the department's general manager, stated that 290,000 kilowatts of generating facilities have been added since the end of World War II. This represents an increase of 42% in power generating capacity in the Los Angeles region as compared with a nationwide average expansion of 25%.

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Meanwhile, thanks to the Colorado River Aqueduct, completed in 1941, Los Angeles is finding it possible to fill the widening gap between the maximum capacity of the Owens River Aqueduct and a steadily mounting rate of daily water consumption.

For almost 50 years Los Angeles has been working well in advance of needs to provide the water and power a great city requires. Soon after the turn of the century local civic leaders recognized that water supplied by wells and the undependable Los Angeles River could at best support a population not to exceed 250,000.

It was at this time the Owens River Aqueduct was planned and started. Its completion in 1913 and extension into the Mono Basin in 1940 added enough water supply to what Los Angeles County already had to provide for the needs of a city of 2,000,000.

To the citizens of 1913, the Owens River facilities probably looked like the answer to all future needs. But if the planners of the Metropolitan Aqueduct hadn't gotten busy in the 1920s to work for new water lines—and if the Colorado River Aqueduct hadn't been built—Los Angeles today would be faced with a desperate water crisis like some of the smaller cities of Southern California.

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Likewise, the great surge of power from Hoover Dam which first began to arrive over the Boulder transmission line in 1936 made possible the Los Angeles area's new, vigorous industrialization beginning with World War II.

While the war was still under way, the Department of Water and Power engineers started construction of the vast Harbor steam plant. With a generating capacity of

355,000 kilowatts, the plant now greatly augments the output of 495,000 kilowatts Hoover Dam supplies for the Los Angeles area. The steam plant's much needed energy thus has become available just in time for another big period of expansion as Los Angeles industry participates in the great national program of rearmament.

Statistics and facts best paint the picture of the Water and Power Department's size and complexity. Last year the department installed 21,381 new water meters, extended electrical service to 38,455 new residential and industrial accounts. Technical assistance was provided for 180 new industries and 345 expanding plants. Over 13,000 stores and factories were helped with special lighting problems. Also during the year a Water and Power transportation fleet consisting of 2061 passenger cars, trucks and trailers was kept in service. This fleet traveled a total of 18,215,600 miles.

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During an average 12-month period the department makes nearly 300,000 separate laboratory checks, investigations and analyses and examines more than 21,000 samples of water for purity.

Water and Power Department printers turn out 19,300,000 copies of printed forms each year. Office personnel sends out annually over 5,000,000 bills to customers. In a year's time the department handles approximately 25,000 requisitions for materials with a purchase value exceeding \$50,000,000 and issues 122,000 requests for bids.

Even with the tremendous growth of service and the inflationary cost of materials, the Water and Power Department charges rates which are the second lowest of any major city in the nation. The average Los Angeles electric bill totals \$2.77 per month, bettered only by the Washington (D.C.) average of \$2.74 monthly.

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Water and Power technicians point out that recent water famines in other Southern California communities stem from lack of planning plus unwise water use. A great deal of the difficulty arises out of excessive pumping for agricultural purposes. The falling water table which has caused shortages is simply a case of water being taken out of the ground faster than nature can replenish the subterranean pools, streams and rivulets that seep precious moisture into the earth to fill wells and reservoirs.

Present critically water-shy regions of Southern California are the city of Santa Barbara, Antelope Valley and the Ventura-Oxnard areas.

The two vital commodities without which Southern California's continued growth and prosperity are impossible are water and power. They are the prime community builders and the determinants of economic and social progress for every citizen.

PWS-0059-0001