

# Water Plan Gives Cause for Concern

## Feather River Project Report Tells of Heavy Advance Commitments

BY ED AINSWORTH

Southern California will have to commit itself, in advance, to take certain quantities of water from the Feather River Project beginning in 1976, whether it needs the water or not.

This is one of the statements in the report of the Bechtel Corp., consulting engineers, to the State Legislature, released Monday.

Analysis of the report, presented to the Joint Committee on Water Problems headed by Sen. J. Howard Williams and Assemblyman Harold K. Levering, continued yesterday. It shows that financing of the project depends upon firm contracts entered into by responsible agencies with the State prior to construction.

### Situation Explained

This means that in 20 years—in 1976—Southern California would have to agree to take 200,000 acre-feet a year for the first five years; 600,000 acre-feet for the next five years; 1,000,000 for the next five; 1,300,000 for the next five; 1,600,000 for the next five, and, finally, the ultimate capacity of the facilities, 1,800,000 acre-feet a year.

The reason for this is made plain in the report.

It is assumed, apparently, that the so-called high-line route over the Techachapis at an elevation of 3400 feet would be used. This would mean an enormous outlay for pumping costs for the high lift. To compensate for this, revenues would be sought from the development of electrical energy in a power drop on this side of the mountains.

### Question Involved

The question that has plagued economists and engineers, however, has been this:

What would happen in a series of wet years when nature supplied the water needs of the Southland, and there was little demand for imported water?

The Bechtel report makes it plain that, for the Feather River Project to be financed by general revenue bonds, the imported water would have to be bought anyway to keep the power facilities operating on a continuous basis, and the water dumped in the sea if necessary.

One immediate reaction to the report was that it will deal a heavy blow to the proposed Federal San Luis Dam and Reservoir project now being urged in Congress by a Fresno County group.

### For State Ownership

The Bechtel report goes all out for State ownership and operation of the San Luis Dam and Reservoir, which would form a vital storage link in the Feather River Project for the San Joaquin Valley, including Kern County, and for Southern California.

This is expected to give great impetus to new legislation being prepared by Southern California Congressmen headed by Craig Hosmer, Glen Lipscomb and Edgar Hiestand. This legislation provides Federal approval for State ownership of the San Luis facilities and authorizes a

more contractual relation with the State if the Fresno people want a Federal project of limited scope. Such legislation would prevent possible Federal domination of the San Luis portion of the Feather River plan.

### Antelope Valley Issue

A point on which the Bechtel report differs completely from that of the State Engineer is in regard to the possible use of Feather River water in the Antelope Valley, which is at a high elevation and would get only high-priced water. The Bechtel people adopt the findings of the Stanford Research Institute on this matter, and the report says:

"The State Engineer's Feather River report places the use of 600,000 acre-feet of the 1,800,000 acre feet to be delivered to Southern California in the Antelope Valley-Mojave Desert area. The institute's report finds that the price which irrigation can afford to pay in this area is materially less than the price at which project water can be delivered (\$25 to \$45 per acre-foot). It also finds that industrial and municipal use for many years to come can be met from local sources and would furnish only a limited market for project water."

### Estimates of Cost

Cost estimates of the Bechtel report run, in general, from 3 to 8% higher than those of the State Engineer, a variance which is said to be expected in many cases.

The overall price of the Feather River Project under the Bechtel report is some \$128,576,000 more than the \$1,594,908,000 set by the State Engineer.

Reports which have been current concerning the possible unreliability of the foundation for the main storage dam at Oroville are set at rest in the report. It is stated that the contemplated structure could be built there safely.

### Important Aspect

One important aspect of the report is that it indicates there could be an immediate start on those portions of the project which would relieve the dire water shortage in the San Joaquin Valley, if the State decides to go ahead. Many sponsors of the Feather River Project have contended this relief could be given much faster by the State than under any Federal plan.

Meanwhile, yesterday, the hearings before the Williams water committee continued in Santa Ana, following the furor caused by the delivery of the Bechtel report to the committee Monday afternoon.

### Crooke's Report

Successful efforts to replenish ground water resources of Orange County were related to the committee by Howard W. Crooke, secretary manager of the County Water District. He said that by August, 1955, a total of 31,898 acre-feet of Colorado River water had been bought from the Metropolitan Water District and placed in the underground storage basins.

Members of the Williams committee will start today on a three-day tour of the MWD Colorado River Aqueduct and Hoover Dam.

## Stanford Club to Hear Talk on Feather River

"Southern California Looks to the Feather River for Water" will be the topic at a luncheon meeting of the Stanford Club of Los Angeles next Monday at the University Club. The speaker will be Marion Rice Kirkwood, dean emeritus of Stanford Law School.

Kirkwood is a nationally known authority on water rights law. All Stanford alumni and their friends are invited. Reservations may be made with H. Melvin Swift Jr., club treasurer, 458 S Spring St.

## Symphony Orchestra in Hunt for Conductor

STUTTGART, Germany, Jan. 10 (AP) — Wanted: A conductor for a symphony orchestra. The orchestra is that of the U.S. 7th Army. It was founded in 1952 and has played throughout Western Europe.

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