



**THE INLAND EMPIRE.**—Map shows Southland's Inland Empire, larger than Illinois, in shaded section. The diagonal lines mark Antelope Valley.

# Inland Empire Boosters Assail Growth Forecast

**Research Council's Study Draws Faulty Conclusions, Regional Group Asserts**

**BY RAY HEBERT, Times Urban Plans Editor**

A exhaustive study which belittles the future growth of Southern California's Inland Empire has drawn the fire of progress-minded North Los Angeles County.

The Antelope Valley Progress Assn. disagrees with the report published recently by the Southern California Research Council.

"The report is a brilliant academic study, but it does not coincide with the facts of professional surveys undertaken by the Regional Planning Commission and other groups," says Clifford Rawson, the progress association's executive director.

## Called Unrealistic

"Our belief here is that it does not present a very realistic or very practical analysis of an area like this."

Among other things, SCRC, an independent organization sponsored by Pomona and Occidental Colleges, refused to go along with the generally accepted belief that a massive population spillover will help the Inland Empire to reach full bloom in the next 20 years.

"SCRC assumes that most Inland Empire communities lie too far from the heart of commercial and industrial activities in the Southern California metropolis to enjoy the status of residential suburbs..." the report said.

"It will take more jobs to attract more people to the Inland Empire."

It called the potential population spillover a myth. It predicted a slowing down of the so-called "flight to the suburbs" and the development of high density living patterns in Los Angeles and other urban areas.

The Inland Empire, as defined by SCRC, encompasses a broad area extending over 36 million acres of high and low desert and mountain terrain from Santa Barbara County and mountainous Inyo and Mono Counties to the Mexican border. Illinois would fit inside its boundaries.

It includes roughly 90% of Southern California's land area. The remaining 10%—the coastal region from Santa Barbara to San Diego—lies in what SCRC calls the Southern California Metropolis.

## Areas In Fringe

Actually, North Los Angeles County and the Antelope Valley—the region Rawson is particularly concerned about—are on the fringe of this heavily-populated metropolitan community.

The valley alone embraces an area of 1,500 square miles, but the progress association Rawson represents likes to include East Kern County, farther north, in its overall plans.

"The consensus here is that the SCRC study does not give a true image of this area's development or potential," Rawson says. "The report, for instance, gives no weight to investment, climate, health, the low cost of land—factors that usually motivate population movement from one area to another."

"The council frankly admits it based its entire estimate of population growth on industrial employment. Yet we know that Los Angeles had a population of nearly 1 million before it developed any industry."

Population projects made by the progress association, he says, foresee 200,000 people in the greater Antelope

Valley by 1970 and 750,000 by 1980. This compares to 105,000 living in the area now.

In drawing up a plan for the region, the county's Regional Planning Commission made the same forecast—750,000 by 1980.

Despite what the SCRC believes, Rawson says the area's development will be aided immeasurably by the new Antelope Valley Freeway, now under construction, and the Feather River Project.

One of the main aqueducts from this state-wide water system will traverse the southern end of the Antelope Valley.

Both these projects have been cited by Milton Breivogel, county director of planning, as key forces in the valley's growth.

"It's our belief the SCRC report does not bear out what many economists and forecasters have predicted for this area," Rawson says.

The region, he points out, now has "three substantial economic legs—the aircraft industry and substantial agricultural and commercial businesses."

"But we must defer to the low desert—Palm Springs and the Salton Sea—when it comes to recreation," he adds.

## Aircraft Jobs Boom

Industrially, Rawson and other boosters point out, the Antelope Valley has a well-grounded collection of defense plants in the Palmdale-Lancaster area.

Edwards Air Force Base, a flight test center in the heart of the valley, has 11,500 employees, while Air Force Plant 42 in Palmdale employs another 3,500.

But Gordon Douglass, coordinator of the SCRC report, insists a great many additional jobs must be created before the North Los Angeles County - East Kern region of the Inland Empire realizes its potential.

Douglass, a professor of economics at Pomona College, said:

"The point we're trying to make is this: Developers have tended to exaggerate the ease with which jobs can be created in the years to come. People aren't going to pour into Antelope Valley—or anywhere else in the Inland Empire—until more industry develops. And existing industries are not going to create many more jobs..."