

HELP PROMISED OWENS VALLEY

Power Board and Citizens from North Meet

Independence Man Urges City to Push Construction

Committee Will be Named by President Del Valle

10-15-1927

Co-operation between the citizens of the Owens Valley and Los Angeles Board of Water and Power Commissioners to the end that the valley may be helped out of its present difficulties and a future program of well-being carried out was pledged at a meeting of the board and citizens of the valley In the board rooms here yesterday.

During the course of his remarks, after the valley group had expressed its purpose and desires, President Del Valle of the board declared it was the happiest and most satisfactory meeting ever held with people of the valley "because it is based on good faith and a desire to co-operate."

A dozen men came down from the valley to attend the meeting. They wished it understood they were not official delegates nor did they represent any organization. They felt secure in saying, however, that they spoke the feelings of 90 percent of the valley residents, those who have always opposed violence indulged in against the city by the few who controlled affairs up there.

RELIEF NEEDED

Dr. J. H. Loundagin of Independence, in setting forth the purpose of the meeting, said there is real need for immediate relief for the people of the valley which can be brought about if the city will push right now whatever construction work and improvement work it plans to do in the valley. They were not down here looking for charity, he said. It would help the business men and the valley residents if the city would state its general policy in the future, whether the Aqueduct was there to stay, how much water could be released for agricultural needs of the valley and so on. Assistance in building roads into the mountain fishing and hunting country would mean much. The city also could help by bringing into the valley only sound, substantial tenants on the lands it leases out.

The commissioners expressed themselves highly pleased with the spirit of the visitors and in hearty accord with their hopes and desires. A committee will be appointed by President Del Valle to confer with the valley people on how the desired results can best be brought about.

President Del Valle's reply to the valley people, in part, was as follows:

CO-OPERATION PLEDGED

A study of the records in the case will disclose that the department of water and power in the past has used its best efforts to help maintain and increase the prosperity of Owens Valley. I know I speak for all the officials of the organization when I say that the department is anxious and ready to employ every means at its command to co-operate with the residents of the valley in the future to the end that the people of that region may prosper, and the resources of the valley be more fully developed.

It is not merely a desire to co-operate with the valley people that prompts the department to assist in developing the Owens Valley country. The city of Los Angeles has a direct interest in this valley. Through its Aqueduct system, Los Angeles has invested more than \$40,000,000 in Owens Valley, either through the purchase of lands or the construction of water supply works. Obviously, it is therefore to the direct interest of Los Angeles, as well as Owens Valley, that the agricultural and commercial prosperity of the valley be maintained and increased.

It is a matter of record that the officials of the department helped materially in obtaining the improvement of the highway into Owens Valley. This has opened the valley to hundreds of thousands of tourists and vacationists and has contributed much to its commercial prosperity.

VACATIONS URGED

It is also a matter of record that the department has expended large sums of money in advertising the marvelous vacation opportunities of the Owens Valley-High Sierra region.

The department stands ready now, as it has in the past, to contribute its share in the work of developing the tourist business for the valley people.

The closing of the Owens Valley banks with its consequent hardships upon the valley people, of course, was a situation where constructive help from the department was limited. But the department did all that it could to alleviate conditions growing out of the bank failure.

There were about 350 ranchers leasing farms from the city when the banks closed. Semiannual rental payments on these ranches were due to be paid in August. Without waiting to hear from the ranchers, the Water and Power Commission notified each one of them that payments on the leases were to be extended until such time as conditions would permit their payment without hardship upon the lessors.

PAY ROLL HELPS

For a long time past the department has had a large amount of construction and development work under way in Owens Valley. It had employed every available man in Owens Valley on these works. At the present the city's pay roll in the valley amounts to approximately \$100,000 a month. This large payroll should help the valley materially, and we believe it does.

There are certain works in connection with the Aqueduct water supply and the city's hydroelectric plants yet to be carried forward in the valley. Whatever these works are, the valley people may rest assured that they will be pushed forward as rapidly as conditions will permit.

There is no reason why Owens Valley should not prosper and develop in the future. Certainly the Department of Water and Power is ready and willing to co-operate fully and continuously with those residents of the valley interested in constructive development.

ROCHESTER NAMED WATTERSON RECEIVER

George W. Rochester, Los Angeles attorney and member of the State Legislature, yesterday was appointed receiver in bankruptcy by United States District Judge Henning for Watterson Bros., Inc., of Inyo county. The appointment was made on an involuntary petition in bankruptcy recently filed by creditors.

The receiver will take charge of the assets of the Watterson hardware store at Bishop, the National Soda Products Company's plant near Cartago Station and the Tungsten Products Company, all of which properties are held by the two brother, Mark Q. and W. W. Watterson.

In making the appointment, Judge Henning said he was particularly persuaded in his action by the recommendations of Attorney A. J. Rosenshine, counsel for the State Superintendent of Banks.

The Watterson brothers are awaiting trial on forty-four counts of embezzlement, indictments on which followed the closing of their five Inyo county banks and the disclosure of shortages in their accounts.