

# OWENS VALLEY ‘FACTS’ PRINTED

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“Greed of City” Declared to be Ruining ranchers

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Bishop Paper Points Shortage Here Great Calamity

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Effort to Wreck Irrigation Bonds Value Charged

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Los Angeles Times  
01-09-1925

Fifty thousand copies of a special supplement, published jointly by the Inyo Register and the Owens Valley Herald, both of Bishop, were being broadcast over the State yesterday under date of January 7, in behalf of the land and water claims submitted on November 29 to the Los Angeles Clearinghouse Association by W. W. Watterson, president of the Owens Valley Irrigation District. Across the width of the first page stretched a headline reading, “Greed of City Ruins the Owens Valley.”

In addition to correspondence between Watterson and J. A. Graves, president of the Clearinghouse Association, already published by The Times, the supplement carries a letter addressed under date of September 5, 1924, to the Public Service Commission by the directors of the Bishop Ditch Creek Company, the Owens River Canal Company, Rawson Ditch Company and Farmers’ Ditch Company, in part as follows:

“We submit as indisputable facts that as a result of the city’s purchases our property values have depreciated to the vanishing point, in so far as any purchaser except the city of Los Angeles is concerned; outside capital is no longer available, renewal of mortgages is no longer possible; the Federal Land Bank refuses absolutely to grant further loans; fire insurance companies have withdrawn from the field; our rural population is decreasing; farms are deserted; former homes, untenanted, are left to the ravages of the elements; school districts have lapsed; others are going; the number of teachers, of course, has decreased; and some of our best citizens have forsaken the valley on account of its problematical future.”

## CHIEF CONTENTION

Elsewhere in the supplement two chief contentions lead the argument – one that the dispute between the city and the valley is unsettling the value of irrigation securities throughout the State, and therefore that the business community cannot afford to let it continue; and the other that adverse publicity growing out of the dispute is affecting Los Angeles so hurtfully that it will be cheap to buy it off at any cost.

In support of the first contention, the supplement says, in part: “The Owens Valley – Los Angeles conflict has delayed practically every municipal and irrigation project in California.”

“Investors in irrigation district securities are hesitating about the worth of irrigation district bonds. Guaranteed by the State of California, these bonds have hitherto been gilt-edged – are now. But there is arising

a doubt of the ability of irrigation districts to resist the encroachments of the great cities that need water for domestic use.”

Under the heading adverse publicity, this attempt to undermine investment values is carried further. The valley, it is asserted, has won the sympathy of the nation at large. “In practically all of the papers that handled the matter editorially,” writes Harry Glasscock, editor of the Owens Valley Herald, “the sentiment seemed strong in favor of the people of Owens Valley.”

“This publicity has hurt Los Angeles terribly. Los Angeles, with her billions of dollars of invested capital, cannot afford to have a stigma attached to her name for fair dealing. There is too much at stake.”

To make sure that the corrosive influence of hurtful publicity should eat deeper, the supplement spreads it thicker. It refers to the State-wide power shortage of last summer in a manner to make it appear that Los Angeles was the only city affected. Regardless of the fact that the Los Angeles Basin holds the richest deposits of the cheapest fuel in the country, oil, the supplement declares that “As there are no coal mines in this section Los Angeles is dependent on water and electric energy for its very existence.”

Los Angeles readers learn that last summer they were told “to reduce the lights in their homes, the streets were partially lighted, street-car service was greatly hampered, manufacturing and industry was crippled.”

### **COURT PLAN IGNORED**

Such is the quality of “facts” and arguments submitted to the people of a city which did not curtail its supply of domestic water by one gallon. The power shortage, which bore heavily on the power companies, but scarcely would have been known to the general public, except for the newspapers, is referred to as a “calamity.”

“Did you know,” continues the statement, “that during this great calamity, when your community was being strangled for water, sufficient water was daily flowing through the irrigation canals of the Owens Valley ranchers to have doubled the flow of the Owens Valley aqueduct?”

Officials of the Bureau of waterworks and Supply pointed out yesterday that this water is the same that was shown last summer to Mayor Cryer and to every other visiting delegation from the city. William Mulholland chief engineer of the bureau, repeated what he pointed out several times in public addresses last summer, that this same water has been bought and paid for by the city, but that the Owens Valley Irrigation District, which controls the ditches that carry it, has diverted it to private owners, refusing delivery to the city.

A suit to adjudicate the waters of the valley, apportioning its use in proportion to ownership, is pending now. Members of the Clearinghouse Committee said yesterday that, in their opinion, nothing but a court decree will be effective in quieting the present dispute, no matter how sincere the effort to arbitrate it. Not a word suggesting that judgment be left to the courts, in whose hands the matter has been placed, is contained in the supplement.