

Natural Gas Problems Under Committee Study

By VINCENT THOMAS
Assemblyman, 68th District

Ever since the days of the primitive camp fires of California's early Indian inhabitants, fuel has been a basic factor in our economy. In today's space-age technology, its importance is even greater, and our soaring industrial production has sent demand for all types of fuel sky-rocketing. Problems of supply and prices have multiplied, and have become a major concern of Congress and many state legislatures.

Perhaps the fastest growing among important fuels in California is natural gas. This is also true for the nation as a whole. Because of this it is small wonder that economic problems of the natural gas industry have become major issues both in Washington and Sacramento. Federal law now controls the price of gas in interstate commerce.

Two fundamental factors have influenced the consumption of natural gas in California, supply and price. Our state is a producer, but our production long ago fell behind our demands. Development of interstate pipelines, and the construction of a line from Texas to California about 12 years ago solved that problem by enabling importation of huge quantities of gas.

MORE RECENTLY a pipeline from Canada has made available additional enormous reserves. However, even with these resources, our own producing natural gas fields furnish about 30 per cent of our total consumption.

Prices of California natural gas to both domestic and industrial consumers still presents a serious problem. The Public Utilities Commission held an extended series of hearings on the advisability of state control of gas prices at the wellheads, and recommended that the legislature consider enactment of suitable legislation.

An administrative study group independently proposed that the commission be given authority to fix prices, and that the position of natural gas coordinator be established to work with all concerned. In the meantime, owners of producing wells in the Sacramento Valley complained that distributors were by-passing their product in favor of imported gas.

These varying forces met head-on at our 1963 session. A bill was introduced to give the PUC price-fixing powers. Another was dropped in the hopper to impose a 50 per cent price penalty on gas contracted for by distributors with California producers, but not actually used. All bills on the subject were rejected, but the problem was assigned to interim study by the Assembly

Committee on Public Utilities and Corporations.

THIS COMMITTEE has announced that it will promptly start an investigation of the natural gas industry, and that it will devote at least one-third of its hearing time between now and the 1965 session to the matter. The chairman has stated that he feels the committee can study the situation much more thoroughly during the interim than was possible during the regular session.

"Natural gas plays a vital role in this state's economy, and the committee has accordingly give this subject top priority for its interim study," he said. He continued that it is the group's intention to bring all of the questions involved out in the open, in the hope of resolving the issues which have plagued the industry, the Public Utilities Commission, and the legislature during recent years.

USC Master Plan Drive Tops First Phase Goal

Fund raisers at the University of Southern California have told the Board of Trustees of the University that a goal of nearly \$31 million has been reached 16 months ahead of schedule.

H. Leslie Hoffman, national chairman for the Committee for the Master Plan at USC, reported to the trustees his committee had raised \$30,982,930 as of Sept. 1. The goal, announced when the USC master plan was unveiled in May, 1961, has been set at \$30,315,000.

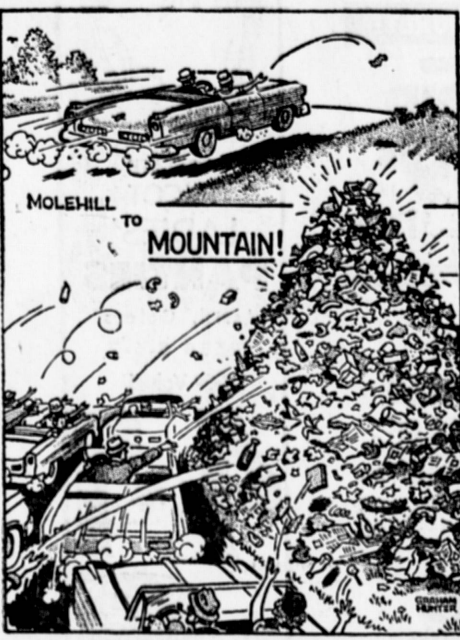
The figure represents well over one million dollars a month in the 27½ months that the drive has been underway.

INCLUDED in the total pledges is \$2,845,903 of matching money for a Ford Foundation grant of \$6,500,000.

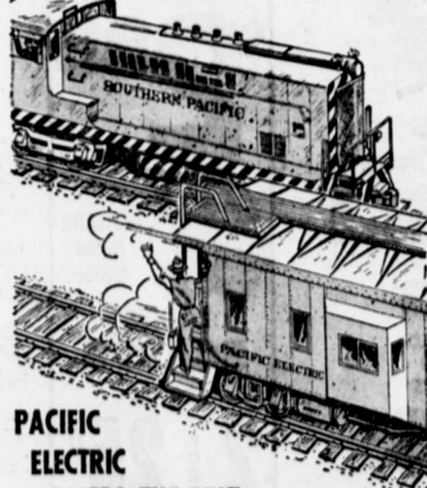
Hoffman explained the committee has earned about 41 per cent of the total Ford Grant in the first 10 months. He said 790 days are left in which the University must earn the remainder. Ford originally put a 1,009-day challenge in which USC must earn three dollars for each one dollar of the grant.

A TOTAL of \$106,675,000 remains to be raised in the USC expansion plan. No date has been set, but plans call for raising the funds as quickly as possible.

The USC master plan for enterprise and excellence in education was first announced in 1961. Since that time, the University has moved quickly to get several phases of the plan into operation.



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