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ED. FLETCHER  
Fortieth District

## Joint Committee on Water Problems

(CREATED PURSUANT TO SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION No. 11,  
RESOLUTIONS CHAPTER 130, STATUTES OF 1941)

## California Legislature

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413 STATE CAPITOL  
SACRAMENTO

November 16, 1942

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Honorable Ed. Fletcher  
1020 9th Avenue  
San Diego, California

Dear Ed:

Enclosed you will find a copy of a letter received by me some time ago from Senator Deuel.

Obviously he has given considerable thought to those matters which should be contained in our final report and also some suggestions of policy. I wish you would carefully consider them because I think they are very helpful, and then we will all confer more about them later.

Kindest personal regards.

Very sincerely yours,

*Bradford S. Crittenden*  
BRADFORD S. CRITTENDEN

BSC:SP  
ENC: 1

C O P Y

Chico, California  
October 24, 1942

Hon. Bradford S. Crittenden,  
Stockton, California

Dear Senator Crittenden:

Bearing in mind your recent request that I give some time working with you to prepare the report of the result of the investigations of the legislative committee on water resources, and after considerable thought on the subject, I deem it proper to submit to you some conclusions I have arrived at and which I hope will be helpful. Please understand that I offer these thoughts as suggestions only, subject to definite action by yourself as chairman, and by other members of the committee.

In the first place it is obviously impossible for the committee to incorporate within the report all the evidence taken, whether such evidence be in the nature of documents submitted or taken in shorthand by our own reporter. There must be rigid scaling down and condensation of this evidence. To that end there must be a preliminary going over of the material and its classification so that the committee can more easily consider it. Some preliminary work along this line should be carried on before the committee meets. Who is best fitted to do this it is your province to determine.

My idea of the report is that it should be as brief as possible with little or no attempt to go into the details of each separate problem or proposed project as such were laid before the committee as it appeared in various communities. The report should be consolidated into three or four phases, that is: Water, its conservation, distribution and control; the imperative necessity of some coordinated program whereunder local communities with their varying problems, the state in its proper functions, and the federal authorities in theirs, can be brought together in a helpful and constructive way, thus avoiding as far as is possible the present methods of divided efforts with no plan under which all may join in a sensible and constructive manner.

It will, of course, be necessary to embody within the report, possibly as an appendix, brief mention of the places we visited and the nature of the problems there presented. This as much to satisfy the people of such communities as anything else. To offer each community a remedy would be impossible largely because under present conditions we do not know the remedy, and even though we thought we did, it could not be applied. Neither can we choose some particular problem

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and stress it for first action. To the people of each community their particular problem is of paramount importance. It is natural that such should be the case.

But without definite recommendations as applying to the situation as a whole, the work of the committee will have been entirely futile.

My thought is that the committee should recommend, through legislation, the creation of some central state agency before which hearings could be had and from which as a result of such hearings recommendation be made directed either to the legislature, to other state agencies, or to the federal authorities. In other words, the establishment of a clearing house for the presentation of these many problems connected with water. The legislature would thus be advised, there would be a logical method of approach to the federal government for aid in such instances as would be appropriate, and the people of many communities would have a body before whom they might appear and feel they had a hearing. In addition, these communities would have a vehicle of approach to the federal authorities now practically denied them unless they are large enough and wealthy enough to engage high-power lobbyists and to assemble high pressure groups.

I might enlarge upon the functions which might devolve upon or be assumed by such a board or commission, but that is not here now necessary. The main thing now important to remember is that our committee should as a result of its investigations recommend some tangible and practical course of action. Otherwise we have wasted our time and the money of the state. And such recommendations must be applicable to the state as a whole and not to separate and individual problems. We cannot solve or greatly help to solve the individual problems. But I believe we can point out what appears to us to be the best approach to solution, and that I believe can only be done through coordination of all means to assemble information, placing that coordination in a single agency, which in turn becomes the advisor and source of information to the legislature and the vehicle of approach to federal authorities.

I am well aware that if the committee recommends the creation of a new board or commission strenuous opposition will arise. We can agree that there are now too many such boards and commissions in California.

But it seems to me that we have a board already existant whose functions could be enlarged by legislative action so as to encompass further duties outlined above. Such is the Reclamation Board whose functions as you well know are now extremely limited.

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Revamping the Reclamation Board could be legally done, I believe, without disturbing its present functions which should not be disturbed. The revamping so as to enlarge its duties to cover the things desired as it occurs to me, should be done with care and extreme caution. We do not want to make it another political repository. We want it well manned by competent persons. In all likelihood it must be appointed by the Governor, but such appointments should be subject to approval by the Senate. We could, I believe, outline some of the qualifications of its members. We could place it upon a plane where it would be an honor to serve and where the compensation would be reasonable and sufficient to attract high class men. The name "Reclamation" could easily be retained and the definition of "reclamation" made to apply as well to water in its many phases as to flood control alone. Under proper formation and personnel the Reclamation Board could easily emerge from obscurity with limited duties and scope into one of the most important and vital state agencies. It could undertake tremendously important duties which with the war ended and rehabilitation within our own borders undertaken, would become still more important. I believe we most need coordinated efforts in the approach to a solution of these water problems. The present situation is chaotic and totally inefficient, with every community for itself and the weaker ones faced with impossibilities.

Until my experience with the committee I did not realize the immensity of the water problem and its many and divergent phases. I am convinced that a major operation, so to speak, is needed, and that it is our duty to recommend action which is coordinated rather than scattering and spread so thin as to mean little or nothing.

I submit these thoughts to you for what they may be worth. I hope you will not call the committee together for November 10, 11 or 12, for I have a meeting of the prison committee, of which I am chairman, on those dates.

If you should desire to send copies of this letter, or its import, to other members, I have no objection. But of course, that is a matter for your own good judgment. In any case, I shall lay the suggestions before the committee when it meets for discussion and such action as the members may determine.

Sincerely,

Charles H. Duvel

November 27, 1942

Honorable Bradford S. Crittenden, Chairman,  
Joint Committee on Water Problems  
First National Bank Building,  
Stockton, California.

My dear Senator Crittenden:

On my return from the North I find your letter of November 16th, and copy of letter of Oct. 24th from Senator Deuel.

In principle I am sympathetic with Senator Deuel's letter, but I strongly favor in the report that all counties of the state be included in the statewide water plan, and that all basic data be brought up to date and extended, with estimates of cost.

I question the advisability of the creation of a new board, or giving authority to the present Reclamation Board. If you revamp the present Reclamation Board, it will have to be statewide in character, while during the last 25 years it has been functioning only in the Sacramento Valley, and more or less of a local valley affair. The state water plan, as I remember it, was authorized by the legislature sometime about 1921, and reported back to the legislature in 1931. It took over 10 years of intensive investigation of the water situation in California.

It practically left out Southern California, and San Diego County, where 56 percent of the population of the state lives and who pay 53 percent of all the taxes. You stated publicly here that San Diego was left out of the statewide water plan, and we have found it out, altho we are the fourth largest county in population and taxable valuation. Already \$25,000,000 or \$30,000,000 has been paid by the state in flood control up North and some \$260,000,000 is well under way, under federal auspices on an attractive financial basis. It has been recognized by the federal authorities as the most complete and accurate water plan ever produced by any state, the Central Valley Project.

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With the war over there will come a slowdown of industrial employment, as well as other employment related to our war effort, to say nothing of the millions of returning soldiers who will be looking for jobs. We must have a large state and federal program of public works. These projects should now be thoroly investigated and we should be ready with plans and cost estimates, so as to be in the most favorable position for construction on terms similar to the Central Valley Project.

The present State Water Plan contains much valuable data, but unfortunately these investigations have not been available for all counties. Actual plans were made available for the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys, and I take my hat off to Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys. There are many other units, such as the counties of Southern California, particularly San Diego, Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo flood and conservation problems that are vital.

San Diego County has water for only 280,000 people, and over 400,000 people are drawing on our supply. We need help immediately, with the increase of 150,000 to 200,000 people the last three years.

I am not forgetting the American River, the Kings River and other projects which are well advanced.

It goes without saying that the early completion of the State water plan, in all parts of California to the point of actual project plans and cost estimates should be secured at the earliest possible date, and have something definite to work on, and the entire state should be considered in this matter. Up to date Northern California has had everything, and Southern California, as far as the state is concerned, practically nothing. The Division of Water Resources of the Department of Public Works has acquired this vast amount of data previously collected, and as I have heretofore mentioned, the first move, in my opinion, in the extension of the state water plan is to acquire the basic data, particularly that in Bulletin No. 5, all of which should be brought up to date. There are about 15 years' more records now available.

It will probably take several years, and the legislature should adequately finance it. It is so vital, particularly in Southern California, that the matter should be pressed vigorously and immediately, since lack of personnel will be a difficulty in any event.

Much of the construction now is proceeding thru federal agencies, some of which operate partially, or largely, thru local arrangements; others thru federal management, which method seems to be increasing materially. As far as I am concerned federal control and management of local water development from Washington creates many unnecessary difficulties, is taking from the seat of control all our vital water and power, which the people of California are increasingly anxious

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about, and experience has shown that the closer the management can be tied to the locality the more satisfactory the operation. I think our California Irrigation Districts, locally controlled and operated, are a credit to the state. We can get quicker action, more economical and have a better knowledge of local conditions.

Flood control, as we have seen, is most vital and should receive attention in preparation for post-war construction. I agree an active coordinating agency, adequately financed over a term of years, is essential. We now have the legal right to do this class of work which has been exercised for more than 30 years thru the Department of Public Works. We appropriated \$5,000,000 for emergency flood rehabilitation in 1938 and not a word of criticism. The whole thing was handled promptly and effectively. This also applies to the \$500,000 appropriated in 1940 for repair of flood damaged public works, matched by local agencies and handled by the Department of Public Works in an efficient manner. There have been many other similar appropriations which they handled. More would have been done if it had not been for the lack of funds.

The legislature has not committed itself as yet on any policy regarding the ratio of benefit to cost. We have heard so much of this on our different trips from federal agencies who demand that benefits must exceed the cost. We must have a general state flood control policy coordinating state activities with those of the United States and we will be getting somewhere. I do not see where there is any need to create a new agency for this purpose.

Our State water plan and flood control records extending over many years are on file in the Division of Water Resources, and they have trained and experienced personnel who have made any number of reports on these water subjects the last twenty years, which are now available. With adequate appropriations and a clear policy I do not see why the Department cannot financially carry this work to the extent desired, and is the proper agency to continue this work.

While I am making no criticism of the State Reclamation Board, the fact is it is only a governing body of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Drainage Districts, and its duties are almost entirely in the Sacramento River Flood Control Project in the Sacramento Valley, a local board active on Sacramento River flood problems only. I am sure the Sacramento Valley people would object to the elimination of this Board, or making it statewide. Southern California would insist upon it and Sacramento Valley would lose control. If I lived in the Sacramento Valley I would oppose this.

I repeat I am very sympathetic with Sacramento Valley problems and San Joaquin Valley, have never voted against them and will continue to play ball, but Southern California must have more recognition and financial assistance than in the past, as a matter of equity, justice, and necessity.

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I hope that you, as chairman, will be able to secure a unanimous report from our committee and hope that the committee will see value in my recommendations, keeping in mind the needs of the entire state.

What I am worried about more than anything else is the increasing control over our vital water and power by the federal government. We will not be doing our duty to the state if this matter is not thoroly thrashed out, and included in our report. I cannot approve of federal control of power and water, which is the case at Shasta and Friant Dams. Our representative should ask the return to the state of this control, and fight until we get it. The New England states recently refused to allow the federal government to build federal flood dams, the federal government to keep the power. There must be a way of getting federal aid and protecting our state rights.

When is our next meeting?

Kindest personal regards.

Yours sincerely,

(signed) ED FLETCHER

EF M

P. S. I am sending a copy of this letter to each member of the committee.

**Ed Fletcher Papers**

**1870-1955**

**MSS.81**

**Box: 5 Folder: 26**

**General Correspondence - Crittenden, Bradford S.**



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