

Letters to the Editor

Editor:

Water availability has a direct bearing on the quality of our life if not on our very existence. A limited supply of water and an ever-increasing population (exacerbated by an out-of-control immigration policy) means less water for everybody. Such a scenario is now being acted out in California and our elected officials seem to be powerless to do anything about it.

California's history is the story of drought and that has a lot of bearing on the present. We know from studying tree rings that California suffered a drought that lasted more than 50 years from the 1760s to the 1820s. Another twenty-year drought period occurred from 1865 to 1885. A benchmark drought between 1928 and 1933 saw average rainfall of 10.62 inches or 41 percent below normal.

In the 140 years from 1850 to 1990 there have been 37 years in which the rainfall was less than 13.62 inches (the high water mark of the five-year dry period 1928-1933) and which would qualify as drought years with the rainfall at 24 percent below normal. Based on the rainfall recorded at the weather bureau in Sacramento over the last 140 years, in an average of one out of four years, the rainfall will be at least 24 percent below normal.

With the current drought going into its sixth year and with no prospect of relief, there is new attention to the subject of numbers of people in relation to an ever-diminished water supply. The steady growth of California's population is due in large measure to excessive migration into the state, 44 percent of which is composed of legal and illegal immigrants. It is estimated that the state's population increases by 700,000 to 800,000 persons each year. To provide water for this many people means that California would have to build a dam the size of Folsom Dam every six-and-a-half years! This estimate is based on a "drought standard" formula of a family of five using one acre-foot of water per year. More new dams to accommodate the burgeoning population are felt to be too expensive as well as being vigorously opposed by environmentalists.

How about converting sea water to potable water? The cost for that at present is about \$1,900 per acre-foot — equally untenable.

I have been making the suggestion that we begin to tie growth to water supply in a very concrete way. I am proposing that the State of California have the ultimate authority to issue building permits, and that this authority be vested in the Department of Water Resources Control Board. This Department would authorize the existing building departments of the counties and cities to represent them in the issuance of building permits. Knowing where the water is and

what the needs of the state are, the Board can allocate building permits relative to the available supply of water based on the previously mentioned drought standard definition: *The population of a given watershed area would be limited to the water available in the reservoirs over a four-year dry period based on a family of five using one acre-foot of water per year.* Such a definition would serve as a yardstick by which any community or region would be allowed to grow, but no more. An area such as Southern California would have to have its current water needs supplied from outside areas. It would be understood that such "transfers" would mitigate against growth in the areas from which the water was taken.

The state legislature has created standards to address the hazards of fire, flood, earthquake — why not drought?

The explosion of population now occurring in our state is creating intolerable conditions: choking the arteries of transportation, poisoning the air we breathe, blinding us to the beauty of a state we can no longer see, cramming us together on ever-smaller lots, causing the prices of our homes to soar beyond the reach of our children, raising our taxes to pay for such things as welfare for legal and illegal immigrants. This immense increase in population is severely outstripping the supply of water. And we are told we must endure all this in the name of "growth."

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