

Dispute Fares Incodell Plan

New Needs Survey Asked; Alien Charges 'Smeared'

James H. Allan, executive secretary of Incodell, and George G. Chandler, who argued Pennsylvania's case when the U. S. Supreme Court allocated the water of the Delaware River Basin 20 years ago, figuratively crossed swords yesterday over the "incodell" plan. Chandler was the attorney for the Incodell plan in support of the plan. A statement issued by Allen charged that "a handful of men are now spinning the Incodell plan with a smear campaign" and that Pennsylvania's own council authorized in 1931 that New York could take as much as 600,000 gallons a day from the upper Delaware without jeopardizing this Commonwealth's supply.

CALLS FOR NEW SURVEY
Chandler replied that he failed to understand what Allen meant by "smear." Chandler called in turn for an up-to-date survey by an independent engineering group to produce facts and figures more current than the "smear" used 20 years ago when the Supreme Court allocated 440,000 gallons a day to New York.

"I feel that the Incodell proposal deals only with water conditions of the past and the immediate future," said Chandler. "In the light of Philadelphia's anticipated boom, the business great new steel mill in this area, for example, we must think of the future."

'UNWARRANTED CLAIM'
The criticism Allen claims that Pennsylvania should not take present Court programs into account is actual reality, that will give New York any water . . . over and above 600,000 gallons a day as authorized by the Supreme Court." He added that if anyone came up with a plan that would give more water than Incodell's, Incodell "will gladly embrace it."

According to Allen, if the General Assembly should approve the TRIS's agreement, Pennsylvania would have to give over any change in the allocation schedule in the future.

RECALLS 1931 RULING
Regardless of the cited veto power, Chandler insisted that a situation in which the U. S. Supreme Court has ruled in favor of the Incodell plan recalled that the Supreme Court in 1931 retained jurisdiction and held the case for 18 months. Chandler recalled that the Supreme Court in 1931 retained jurisdiction and held the case for 18 months. Chandler recalled that the Supreme Court in 1931 retained jurisdiction and held the case for 18 months.

Once the tri-State agreement is signed, he pointed out, "when the Supreme Court is asked to give effect to that jurisdiction had been ousted by the compact" and would refuse to give any further petition from Pennsylvania.

PLAN 'OBJECTIONABLE'
Chandler said the Incodell plan, from Pennsylvania's point of view, was "highly objectionable" because it deprives this Commonwealth of three valuable present and future rights: first, the Court's finding that New York is entitled to 440,000,000 daily gallons; second, the Court's ruling that New York's taking of its allocated share did not give that state a superiority of rights over Pennsylvania; and, third, the Court's retention of jurisdiction, leaving the door open to Pennsylvania.

This state, said Chandler, has 51 percent of the drainage area supplying the Delaware, whereas New York has about 36 percent. Twenty years ago Pennsylvania asked only for 48 percent of the water. Now, he said, the Incodell plan would cut this share "by 10 percent." "I have no choice," he said, "is with the Court."

Water Billing Service Needs Drastic Revision,

the chaotic conditions in the city's water and billing service, described in the letter by Kos Semonski appearing in The Inquirer, call for prompt correction. Home-owners have been subjected to unfair treatment, and title to property has been jeopardized, because of errors in water bills and failure over long periods to water meters read.

It has been brought out that in hundreds of homes in Philadelphia water meters have not been checked for years at a time. City employees apparently use guesswork figures in making out some of the bills.

Instead of checking meters regularly, as they are paid to do, certain meter readers, if it is charged, supply the Water Bureau with national figures based on their own estimates of consumption.

In many instances second payments are demanded on bills already paid, and complaints on this score are frequently met with shrugs and no attempt at rectification. And the consumer may be listed as delinquent,

TO PROTECT the buyer against charges for excess water than may have been consumed by the previous owner, the sum of \$100 is placed in the settlement account. For a single house it is \$25. For commercial and industrial properties, larger amounts are held.

Daily requests for special water meter readings are sent by messenger to the Water Bureau by the title companies, it was pointed out. If and when the meter is read, the city is paid the adjusted amount and the remainder of the money in the account is returned to the home seller.

The title companies representatives were met within a reasonable length of time, but that these were "very much in the minority."

Que title company official estimated that it took three to six months for the money to be received. The rest of the accounts have to be kept alive for "maybe a year, two years, seven years or even longer," he added.

In some instances, it was said, the special meter report arrives two or three years later. The property no longer can be located. The seller must be kept open and after a lapse of years, the title companies must check proceedings.

Since the number of meter readings consumed by the rate of nearly 25,000 per year, the city's problem, it was warned, will become even more difficult.

A GREAT DEAL of the blame for a gross error in the records, on the system of appointing political followers "who have been known to have their own minds to give the city as little of their time as possible," real estate brokers pointed glaringly to their charges that "meter readers read meters only once a year."

In this instance it was necessary for a title firm to obtain quickly a special reading of the meter at the Kensington Postal Substation E.

Many weeks elapsed, and the information for the test was in desperation the head of the title department telephoned the Water Bureau to complain.

The clerk in the bureau then checked the record on the requests for the test. He found that the executive that the card stated the meter reader visited the property three times a year, but this situation was unable to get in.

The postal station, however, is open from 9 A. M. to 5:30 P. M. for its regular business.

TWO WEEKS ago a \$5,000 P. M. told an Olney home and threatened to shut off the water supply, assuring the owner failed to pay his bill.

Allan L. Fagerstrom, of 126 West 35th, the occupant and owner for 15 years, produced his bill for that year. He also pointed out to the water broker representative that his wife had paid the bill twice, once by her wife and once by himself, when a duplicate bill was mailed to the house some time ago.

Fagerstrom added that when he discovered the double payment, his wife of City Hall Annex and after several hours of arguing succeeded in obtaining a refund.

THREE DAYS later, the property owner continued, he received a telegram from the City Hall stating that the money he paid immediately.

"For years these taxes and we want them right away," the caller insisted.

When Fagerstrom replied that he had a receipt for the payment and that he had shown it to a Water Bureau representative the City Hall man declared the receipt was "fraudulent and no good."

The Olney home owner then asked the caller to identify himself. This was refused with the warning that unless the bill is paid in the next few days, it would be listed as delinquent and the water turned off.

THE vice president of the Wombling Trust Co. said his attention had been called to a large number of similar complaints from residents of the 42d Ward.

Many accounts in this district have been repaid and bills for past years are being sent to new owners who purchased their homes recently. The home owners, carrying life insurance, should bills to the bank's title department for payment.

Many of the bills are older than five years, the bank executive said he doubted that the title department would be held responsible. Many of the property owners, rather than argue with City Hall clerks for hours, have paid bills, even though legally they did not have to.

The banker stressed, however, that the records of the bureau were checked by expert search clerks before the bills were issued. No delinquencies were found to exist at the time.

Water Meter Puzzle City's Failure to Provide Readings Brings Chaos

By Kos Semonski
First of Three Articles

TITLE of thousands of home-owners to their properties has been threatened and more than \$250,000 in home-sellers' funds tied up for an indefinite period because of the city's failure to provide efficient water meter reading service, leading Philadelphia title officials charged here yesterday.

Real estate brokers joined in branding the service as "inaccurate and haphazard" and called for prompt action to end conditions in which water meters are left unread for months while city employees provide "guesswork" figures to be used in making up bills.

Because of these chaotic conditions, extending over the past 10 years, title officials said home-sellers had been required to leave more than a quarter of a million dollars in "settlement accounts" to guard against the sudden presenting of new bills.

Other home-owners have had the title to their properties clouded by "delinquent bills" so old that title companies, acting on legal advice, are certifying that they can be held responsible and that the city must stand the loss.

Meter readers frequently do not bother to check meters regularly and instead supply the Water Bureau with "guesswork" figures based on their estimates of consumption.

RECORDS of thousands of accounts in the Water Bureau are inaccurate or lack the necessary information on delinquent payments or water consumption.

A spokesman for one large title company said as a direct result of the situation, the firm's representatives are seriously considering a plan to eliminate insurance against unpaid water bills.

Another large title company, it was pointed out, must spend a minimum of \$10,000 annually to maintain a staff of a number of frozen settlement accounts.

Here, a representative asserted, that the firm's repeated requests to the city for meter readings have been ignored, sometimes for years. Regarding the settlement account, the representative said the various firms explained that they are set up because the title company is without a meter reader for a property on the day a new owner takes possession.

Trigger and Reel Incodell Facts Questioned In River Water Diversion

By JOE PANCOAST

Incodell's efforts to acquaint sportsmen with "facts" concerning the proposed diversion of 600,000-900,000 gallons of water daily from the Delaware to Hudson watersheds for the benefit of New York City's water supply fall short of the purpose, in the opinion of Grover C. Ladrer, State Supreme Court justice. He said:

"Their advance as facts that a much higher flow in the Delaware during summer and fall would result from the contemplated diversion and gives assurance that industry would have an adequate year-round supply of suitable water and that dry weather encroachment of salt water in the lower river would be abated."

"These are assumptions," said Ladrer, "that sufficient rain will fall at the proper time to permit release of water from storage reservoirs, despite the fact New York City would continue to draw its 990,000,000 gallons and millions more would be going to North Jersey. What happens to industry if there is a drier, much drier year?"

"Further, much of the so-called salinity will disappear when all the planned sewage disposal plants are in operation throughout the entire Delaware River Valley."

Shad Restoration
Incodell also states its plan "will provide facilities for protection of the shad restoration program."

"If Incodell has such plans, they should be revealed in full detail for study," Ladrer commented. "I, for one, am not aware of such plans except as a record of the opinions of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission on Incodell's project and its effect on shad."

The ninth annual report of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission contains the following recommendations: "The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

1. That alternate plans be developed by Incodell not calling for construction of main-stem dams across the Delaware River;

2. That if construction of these main-stem dams is insisted upon, they be provided with fishways which the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has found to be capable of passing shad over dams. In this connection the USF&WS notes the only fishways presently known to be used by shad are those at Bonville Dam on the Columbia. These were constructed by the Corps of Engineers of the U. S. Army at a cost of some \$5,500,000;

3. That in addition to fishways that will be used by shad, diversion channels, built in connection with main-stem dams, be protected with time mesh screening screens which will keep out the young of downstream migrating shad;

Two Blockades in View
To these points the USF&WS added: "The present success of shad spawning runs are restricted to that portion of the river above Millford, Pa., 130 miles from Philadelphia."

Construction of the Bonville Barrydam Dam would block shad from that area and the dam at Wallace Bend would be another main-stem barrier. The sum of the two would undoubtedly be more than the sum of their separate efforts."

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has already reported that shad runs in the Delaware would be restored, Ladrer said, "if pollution were eliminated and no main-stem dams prevented the fish from reaching suitable spawning grounds."

"If the fishery reached its former peak," Ladrer claimed, "a gross income of \$100,000 would be realized."

AN OFFICER of the Broad Street Trust Co. said that a new program was under way in which attempts were being made to impress a new property owner with the importance of the special meter reading.

He said the new owners were being asked to make repeated requests to the Water Bureau for such readings. "We haven't been able to do anything in the situation," he stressed. "Our patience has been taxed for years."

"We have contacted the Receiver of Taxes and asked for relief. We were told that 10 men were assigned to special meter reading tasks. This promise was made but has since been completely forgotten."

"In my years of experience handling settlements, I am convinced there are hundreds of homes in Philadelphia where meters have not been read for years at a time."

Meter Reading By Utility Group

City Controller Joseph S. Clark, Jr. yesterday declared that the advertisement of water meter readings in Philadelphia had broken down and advocated that the job be turned over on a contract basis to a private utility group.

His criticism of the meter division came as a result of a report made in The Inquirer, and was made in a letter addressed to Frederic D. Garman, president of City Hall, and Thomas Buckley, Director of the Bureau of Public Works.

RAPS 'INEFFICIENCIES'
Inefficiencies of the agency, Clark said, were "disgraceful."

"Let us frankly admit that advertisement of meter readings has demonstrated a complete broken down and that complete reorganization is not impossible to install normal efficiency in this division of the Bureau of Public Works."

Clark pointed out that the average employee reads 75 or 80 meters a day, while an employee of the Philadelphia Gas Works or the Philadelphia Electric Co. makes 250 to 300 meter readings per day.

"Of course, an able administrator with a free hand could remedy this condition and a better meter reading program would be placed under an honest merit system, adequate supervision would be provided and a minimum standards of performance would be required."

SURVEYS and recommendations for the efficient operation of the Water Bureau have been made more regularly over a long period of years.

Some of the expert suggestions have been taken and many have been ignored. In the various investigations the experts have found fault with the system and with the personnel, crediting only a few of the employees with being conscientious in their efforts to provide a satisfactory service to real estate brokers.

"But the few who do give a day's work for a day's pay," he added, can't overcome the inefficiency of the 'drones'."

THE last expert advice given city officials in connection with the bureau's system of accounting came after an extensive survey in 1948 by Charles Haydock, a consulting engineer.

In his final report, Haydock made the charge that "the accounts of the Water Bureau are not kept in accordance with generally accepted methods of water works accounting so that the operating results cannot readily be compared with other water systems."

His criticism came only a short time after Albert V. Taylor, chief of the Bureau of Water, declared the city was losing \$200,000 annually from faulty water meters and cheating on the part of private and industrial property owners.

The loss was attributed by Taylor to the infrequency of inspections and he admitted the city had no system for a periodic check.

Title company executives, their search clerks and many real estate brokers declared that unless better administrators are placed into key positions in the Bureau of Water, Philadelphia would continue to provide an inefficient and inaccurate meter reading and billing system.

The End