

1946 City Plan to Improve Water Is Branded Failure

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The 1946 program launched with so much fanfare to give Philadelphia palatable water has collapsed, the Citizens' Council on City Planning said yesterday in a blistering survey of the work of the Bureau of Water.

The report carefully traced the history of the deterioration of the city's water in the last 40 years and the failure of all moves to map and execute long range programs since the first such attempt in 1920.

The 1946 plan has gone the same way, with only one-sixth of the money which citizens believed would go toward giving them tasteless and colorless water, actually being spent on new treatment facilities, the report said. Instead, most of the money went to lay new mains and fix old ones.

LACK OF PLANS CHARGED

And no detailed plans have been made to spend the \$12,000,000 on which voters will be asked to pass in November, with the "obvious danger" that this money also will dribble away in patch-and-fix jobs on the whole city water system, the report declared.

Nonetheless, in its final 17 recommendations, the Citizens' Council recommended that city water should neither be farmed out to a private company nor put under a separate authority but should be continued as a municipal operation. But it urged a completely revised Bureau of Water and perhaps even a new city Department of Public Utilities administering the huge business operation which water supply represents.

RED FEATHER AGENCY

The Citizens' Council which drafted this report is a Red Feather agency comprised of representatives of 123 civic organizations and headed by E. Walter Hudson, a politician. Vice presidents are Harold W. Brightman, president of Lit Brothers; Walter F. Miller, Jr., chairman of the Committee of Seventy; and Benjamin W. Frazier, Germantown manager for the Philadelphia Gas Works Co.

The report was sprinkled with

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observations showing that 30 percent of the Water Bureau's 1000 employees are more than 60 years old, that in one month the Water Bureau had on file citizens' complaints of 46,000 defective water meters, while 14,530 meters were in its shops awaiting repair—and still only half the city's 470,000 water-users had meters at all.

ANTIQUATED BILLING

In addition to few many being too old, the employees of the Water Bureau work under a complex "job classification" system of 109 separate job titles, and are hampered by a bad administrative set-up, an antiquated billing procedure and tight-fisted City Council control, the report said.

Present officials of the Department of Public Works and the Water Bureau "can take pride" in improvements "completed in the face of formidable obstacles," the report said.

"But the fact remains that Philadelphia's water supply is still not satisfactory," it added. "Approved plans have been disregarded, urgently needed improvements have been pressed with insufficient vigor, suggesting that both past and present management of the system is in some measure responsible for the continued existence of a water problem in Philadelphia."

'MILKED OF PROFITS'

In justice to the Water Bureau, the report adds, citizens should be aware that for years the water system was "milked" of an annual "profit" of two to three million dollars on the sale of water—money which was diverted to other purposes by City Council while the water system was allowed to decay. And the Water Bureau has never gotten any budget credit for its job of maintaining 20,910 fire hydrants and two hundred of high pressure fire mains, the report said.

The scale of the problem confronting the city was emphasized by the data prepared by the Citizens' Council on the city water system as it stands today after 30 years' neglect.

SUPPLIES 470,000 CUSTOMERS

"It's a big business, supplying almost 470,000 customers with a daily average of 350 million gallons of water. During summer months this average is exceeded. On the day of peak demand last year the output was almost 470 million gallons, or 117 percent of rated capacity.

"The plant, which includes five raw water pumping stations, five filter plants, eight filtered water pumping stations, two filtered water reservoirs, two high pressure fire service pumping stations, almost 2000 miles of main and 20,000 fire hydrants, represents a capital investment of over \$100,000,000."

MONEY IS DIVERTED

The 1946 program's timeliness has been ignored, and money remaining from the unachieved 1946 program has been diverted toward re-

pairs and laying of new mains for new housing, the survey said.

Enough "studies" have been made of Philadelphia water, it observed, and as its first recommendation declared:

"1.—A comprehensive water-works improvement program covering at least the next 10 years should be promptly developed on the basis of existing surveys and proposals."

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

"16 The Citizens' Council then made 17 more specific recommendations:

"2.—The program should be directed toward improvement of the quantity and quality water which can be provided from present sources of supply.

"3.—The program should include projects to permit drawing all of Philadelphia's water from the Delaware River at the Torresdale intake and to permit abandonment of the Schuylkill as a regular source of supply.

"4.—The program should have as its immediate objective the complete installation, within the next two years, of all necessary equipment to remove objectionable tastes and odors in the water and to reduce its mineral content.

"5.—The program should incorporate a schedule for systematic maintenance of the distribution system.

"6.—Meters' should be extended to all water services during the next five years.

"7.—As a precaution against possible future inadequacy of the existing Delaware River source of supply Philadelphia should safeguard its claims to the Wallpack Bend reservoir site.

"8.—All waterworks revenue should be reserved for the operation, maintenance and improvement of the water supply system.

"9.—Delinquencies in payment of water bills should be reduced by enforcement of existing regulations.

"10.—Both current and delinquent water charges should be rendered on a single bill.

"11.—The Water Bureau's accounting methods should be revised and improved.

"12.—Repair of defective meters should be speeded.

"13.—Leakage surveys of the water supply system should be continued.

"14.—The number of job classifications in the Bureau of Water should be reduced.

"15.—The overbalance of older employees in the Bureau of Water should be eliminated, and a compulsory plan instituted for the pensioned retirement of City employees.

"16.—The water supply system should be operated as an independent municipal utility with a segregated budget.

"17.—Consideration should be given to the advisability of establishing a new Department of Public Utilities."

LOSERS TERRIBLE U.S. DOLLARS

advance Philadelphia toward the goal of more and better water, the Citizens Council on City Planning reported yesterday.

Money allocated for improvement and expansion of treatment facilities has been dissipated piecemeal for maintenance and rehabilitation, the council, which represents about 100 civic organizations, reported.

Of the nearly \$9,000,000 originally allocated for the program, it was said, less than one-third was spent for treatment facilities.

Pollution Seen on Rise

Control of taste and color in the city water has become increasingly difficult, pollution in the Schuylkill and Delaware has risen and maintenance, modernization and improvement of the water supply system has been seriously neglected, the report stated.

The council, noting that the 1946 program "has not been substantially followed" and that its timetables have not been met, warned that the \$20,000,000 the City plans to spend on water improvements in the next three years may be similarly spent for purposes

gators said, continued management of the water system by the City itself would be preferable to management by either a private company or by a water authority.

Program Recommended

The report recommended the following steps:

Development of a ten-year program toward improving the quality and quantity of water from present sources.

Eventual abandonment of the Schuylkill as a source of supply.

Complete installation within two years of equipment to remove objectionable taste, odor and mineral content from city water.

Extension of metering to include all water services.

Use of all water revenues for the water system itself.

Reduction of water rent delinquencies by improved billing and accounting and through speedy repair of defective meters.