

deaf ears before the full Board of Supervisors on December 15, 1987. Mayor Feinstein announced at that point that she completed negotiations on a new "wheeling" contract which would run through the year 2015 and should net the city about \$28.7 million a year, about twice what it was making under the now-expired contract. The Board refused to back a feasibility study for municipalization and wouldn't go along with any of Hongisto's other proposals.

The Public Utilities Commission approved the 30-year contract with PG&E on

December 21, 1987, along with two interim agreements while the FERC reviews the 30-year pact. The PUC also approved long and short-term agreements between the City and Modesto Irrigation District and Turlock Irrigation District.

The Board has no authority to affirm or deny the PG&E agreements, but must ratify the Modesto and Turlock contracts. Hongisto's senior aide Cindy Myers said the supervisor hopes to defeat the Modesto and Turlock agreements and hopes that will also scuttle the PG&E contracts.

Hongisto testi-

fied before the PUC that San Francisco would make about \$4 billion in profit over the next 30 years if it were to municipalize PG&E's in-city power distribution system and eliminate the need for the "wheeling" contract.

While PG&E seems to be in a win-win situation with its profitable "wheeling" contracts and the possibility of providing all San Francisco power if Hetch Hetchy's dam is torn down, there are some trying to serve the City, restore Hetch Hetchy Valley and not feed more profits into PG&E's coffers.

Hetch Hetchy -- From 'Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne' to San Francisco's water supply

By Cathy Crothers
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In the early years of its development, San Francisco got its water from local streams, wells and springs. Then, in 1849, the gold rush created a population explosion, and

additional potable water was hauled in and sold by the barrel.

In 1858, the private Spring Valley Water Company began providing San Francisco with water secured by a charter from the State of California. Spring Valley monopolized the nearby coastal

watersheds, including Sunol and Alameda Creeks.

At the same time, Hetch Hetchy Valley's history is intertwined with that of Yosemite National Park. The battle for the park began in 1890, when John Muir and Robert Underwood Johnson teamed up to expand California's

Yosemite Valley park into a much larger nationally-protected facility. A "forest reserve" of 1,512 acres called Yosemite Park was created by Congress in 1890.

The Sierra Club was formed by Muir and others in 1892. Its express purpose was ". . . preserving the forests and other natural features of the Sierra Nevada mountains . . ." The fledgling Club quickly grew to maturity fighting bitterly to keep Yosemite Park from being reduced in size.

San Francisco's population had grown to 350,000 by 1900. Friction between the Spring Valley Water Company and City officials over high water rates and the City's frustrated attempts to buy out the water company precipitated a search for other sources of water. Spring Valley, however, had secured the rights to all nearby water. Around 1900, Mayor James Phelan directed City Engineer Carl E. Grunsky to study 14 possible water sources for a city reservoir. The in-

vestigation established that the Tuolumne River system, which flows out of a perpetual glacier on Mount Lyell, was the best choice. The Tuolumne flows through the northern reaches of Yosemite Park and the "Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne" - Hetch Hetchy Valley - then on through the Stanislaus National Forest and eventually merges with the north-flowing San Joaquin River near Modesto.

The Hetch Hetchy watershed had already been brought to the attention of San Francisco in 1894 when the Board of Supervisors published a newspaper advertisement asking for proposals from parties interested in supplying water to the City. George M. Harris answered the advertisement and agreed to sell his acquired water rights in Hetch Hetchy on the Tuolumne River for \$200,000. The offer was not accepted.

Others before Harris had mentioned the potential of the Sierra watershed for San Francisco use.

A. W. von Schmidt, an engineer for the Spring Valley Water Company, had tried to tap the Sierra watershed in the 1860s and 1870s to irrigate the California Valley. In 1882, J. P. Dart, engineer for the San Francisco & Tuolumne Water Company, had proposed a route to bring water from the Tuolumne to San Francisco. The 1899 U.S. Geological Survey report had recommended Hetch Hetchy as an adequate water source for San Francisco. Although it was not a new idea, the proposal was grand in scale since Hetch Hetchy was 150 miles from San Francisco.

The report from City Engineer Grunsky listed several reasons why Hetch Hetchy was an attractive site for a reservoir, including: high water quality, tremendous water availability, best site suitability, freedom from conflicting legal claims, and hydro-electric possibilities. Grunsky estimated the cost for the complete Hetch Hetchy system would be about \$39,531,000. Mayor Phelan was con-

vinced that Hetch Hetchy was the solution to San Francisco's water problems.

While Mayor Phelan was evaluating the engineering possibilities of a water system in Hetch Hetchy, legal issues regarding access to Yosemite National Park were being pursued by California Representative Marion DeVries of Stockton. In May 1900, DeVries introduced what became the Right of Way Act of 1901, which authorized the Secretary of Interior to use rights of way through Yosemite, Sequoia, and General Grant National Parks for water conduits, water plants, dams, and reservoirs. Although Mayor Phelan left office soon after the Act was passed in July 1901, the stage was set for San Francisco to pursue a reservoir in Hetch Hetchy.

The pursuit of Hetch Hetchy was alive with controversy. Phelan had obtained reservoir rights at Hetch Hetchy and Lake Eleanor as a private citizen in October 1901. He was denied

his application to develop the reservoir, however, by Secretary of Interior E. A. Hitchcock in 1903. Phelan immediately transferred his rights to the City and County of San Francisco. The City's applications were denied also in 1903 and 1905.

Meanwhile, the Sierra Club was campaigning in the California Legislature to have California's Yosemite Valley park re-ceded to the federal government as had been originally planned. Finally, in 1905, California redeemed Yosemite Valley, and it was incorporated into Yosemite Park. Although Yosemite Park had been created in 1890, it did not gain official National Park status until 1906.

Shortly after, Hetch Hetchy Valley made national headlines when San Francisco announced its intention to develop a reservoir in the valley in order to solve its perceived water problems. Hetch Hetchy had been granted protection as a part of Yosemite National Park. Yet

San Francisco challenged the right to tap this national watershed for the City's private use.

John Muir led the campaign against the Hetch Hetchy development. The attack on the San Francisco water project created a split in the Bay area-based Sierra Club when a vocal minority came out in support of the reservoir. The minority opinion stated that creating a mountain lake in the Hetch Hetchy Valley was a small price to pay for a necessary water supply for San Francisco. In order to prevent the Sierra Club's collapse, Muir, along with William Colby and Ed Whitman, created a separate organization known as the Society for the Preservation of National Parks. This organization represented the members of the Sierra Club who wanted to prevent the damming of Hetch Hetchy.

Muir opposed San Francisco's plan since it permitted invasion of a national park for private use. The Hetch Hetchy Valley was described by J.D.

Whitney as "almost an exact counterpart of the Yosemite. It is not on quite as grand a scale as that Valley; but if there were no Yosemite, the Hetch Hetchy would be fairly entitled to a world-wide fame". Muir and others felt that the pristine beauty of Hetch Hetchy should not be disturbed unless there was urgent need. The members of the Preservation Society insisted that other alternatives be considered while leaving the fate of Hetch Hetchy for the future.

In 1906, the great earthquake hit San Francisco and the city burned for three days. Politicians asking for Hetch Hetchy rights later would claim that the fires could have been stemmed by the availability of the mountain water. The politicians neglected to note, however, that almost every water pipeline into the City had been ruptured by the earthquake - a fate that would have been shared by the Hetch Hetchy lines.

San Francisco's mayor at this time

was Eugene Schmitz. Schmitz was against Hetch Hetchy and could have proved a valuable ally to those opposed to San Francisco's plans. He had convinced the Board of Supervisors to abandon pursuit of Hetch Hetchy before the earthquake intervened. But graft and corruption menaced Mayor Schmitz's administration. When the earthquake hit, the Spring Valley Water system failed as did most other water systems. Mayor Schmitz proposed that the City buy the already operating Bay Cities Water Company for \$10.5 million. The Bay Cities proposal was found to be yet another corrupt deal, and the series of investigations which followed ended Schmitz's administration.

The earthquake and the fire fueled San Francisco's drive to obtain rights to Hetch Hetchy. Phelan continued his behind-the-scenes efforts to help the City acquire the necessary rights to build the Hetch Hetchy reservoir. In 1908, Interior Secretary James R. Garfield gave limited

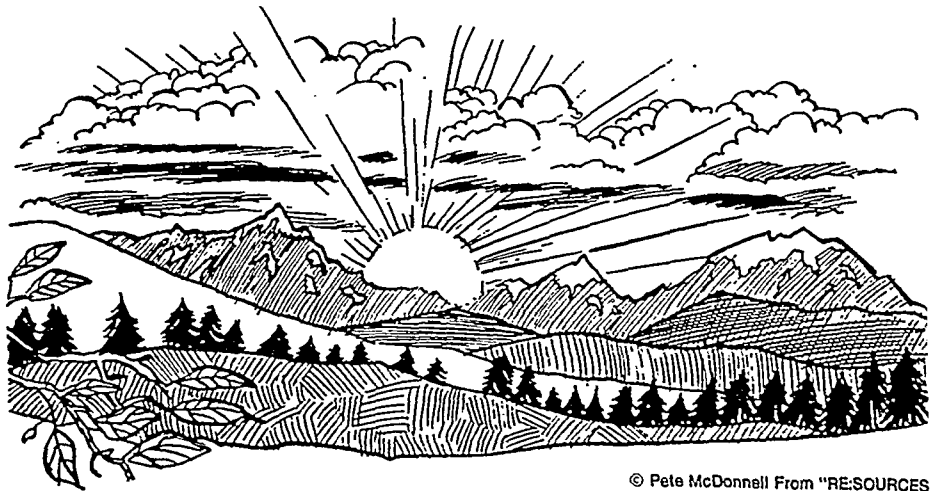
rights to San Francisco to build reservoirs, dams, aqueducts, and rights of way with primary rights at Lake Eleanor and secondary rights at Hetch Hetchy. Important support for the Hetch Hetchy project had been obtained from Gifford Pinchot, Interior Secretary Garfield, William Randolph Hearst (an activist supporter), and President Theodore Roosevelt.

Pinchot was an important ally in San Francisco's fight. He was a respected environmentalist and Chief Forester and head of the U.S. Forest Service. Pinchot and Muir had previously been friends but, in 1897, the two split over comments Pinchot made that sheep grazing caused no damage to mountain areas. Muir had been fighting grazing licenses for shepherders and was incensed by Pinchot's published comments to the contrary. Pinchot was to prove Muir's major nemesis in saving Hetch Hetchy. Pinchot, while the nation's Chief Forester, reviewed the reports

and application from Phelan, and along with California Congressman James C. Needham, became convinced that no serious injury to Yosemite National Park would occur from the reservoir and that San Francisco's water needs were "paramount" to any other issue.

Pinchot's view did not go unchallenged. Opposition to the reservoir came from four major sources: the Spring Valley Water Company, the Turlock and Modesto Irrigation Districts, power promoters, and the National Park Service supported by nature enthusiasts (especially John Muir and his Sierra Club followers).

The Society for the Preservation of National Parks sent a petition to the newly appointed Interior Secretary Richard Ballinger in 1909. This petition indicated objections to Hetch Hetchy based on the following points: "1) [t]he Department of the Interior exceeded its jurisdiction because the Garfield permit violated the Act of Oc-



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tober 1, 1890 establishing Yosemite Park; 2) the proposal did not take into account the fundamental question of whether alternate water supplies existed; 3) no necessity for granting the destructive permit had been shown; 4) there were other sources of supply which petitioner could demonstrate; 5) the rights of ninety million citizens were not given adequate hearing; 6) Hitchcock ruled twice against the city application making the whole question res judicata; 7) a reservoir would utterly destroy Hetch Hetchy as a resort and make necessary as a sanitary precaution the withdrawal of the finest half of the Park". Holway Jones, John Muir and the Sierra Club: The Battle for Yosemite, 107 (1965).

Ballinger told Muir that bills were then pending in Congress regarding the permits for the Hetch Hetchy reservoir, and that Congress would soon be deciding the issue.

Economic clashes with the City of San Francisco spawned opposition to Hetch Hetchy from the Spring Valley Water Company and the Modesto and Turlock Irrigation Districts. Assurances concerning water use and distribution eventually dispelled these companies' worries about the Hetch Hetchy project. The time was right for acceptance of the Raker Act of 1913, which authorized San Francisco to go forward with the Hetch Hetchy water project.

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