

Drowning the Dream: California's Water Choices at the Millennium, by David Carle, Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000, xix, 235 pp.

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David Carle, a park ranger and biology instructor, has produced an earnestly argued but substantially flawed brief against the decisions that Californians made in the 19th and 20th century about the relocation and allocation of water resources. Viewed together, the flaws leave the impression that his principal purpose was to voice his dislike of Southern California. This is a feeling that he undoubtedly shares with many. The larger Southern California has grown, the easier a target it has become. Mr. Carle's book may thus turn out to be well received by an audience not as well acquainted with the book's ostensible subject matter--water.

The factual errors in Mr. Carle's book range from the relatively small (the Orange County Water District is not a member agency of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, as he states on p. 109, and Southern California has not for many years had "the worst air quality in the United States," as he claims on p. 130) to the more important. In an example of the latter, Mr. Carle has the Metropolitan Water District's Colorado River Aqueduct bringing water from Hoover Dam and Lake Mead (p. 108). In fact, Metropolitan draws its Colorado River water from Parker Dam and Lake Havasu, 150 miles downstream of Hoover Dam and Lake Mead.

A factual error such as this might be more easily overlooked or excused in a different book. But Carle stakes his entire brief against California's past water choices on the development of water importation to Southern California--"This book explores the changing California environment as the entire state was transformed by the movement of water into Southern California" (p. xv). It is, then, a fair criticism to observe that he failed to obtain and employ accurate information about the largest of Southern California's water import projects.

Moreover, Carle makes much of the fact that Hoover Dam was built by the federal government. Since he thinks Hoover Dam is the source of Southern California's Colorado River water, he depicts the project as a federal subsidization of Southern California growth. In fact, the Metropolitan Water District built Parker Dam and the Colorado River Aqueduct with funds from its own bond sales, approved by the voters within the district and paid off over the ensuing 50 years from water sale revenues.

Whatever other criticisms may be addressed to Southern California's importation of Colorado River water, it cannot be said that the federal government, the state of California, or anyone else living outside the boundaries of the Metropolitan Water District paid for it. If only the same were true of the federal water projects that supply irrigation water to the Central Valley--water deliveries that Carle wants to see continued.

It is several omissions, however, that suggest that Mr. Carle's book is more of an anti-Southern California screed than a serious discussion of the state's water choices. While every decision or action that dammed streams and drained valleys to import water across long distances to Southern California is condemned as a crime against Nature, decisions and actions that dammed streams and drained valleys to import water across long distances to San Francisco, the East Bay area, and the Central Valley are treated very lightly or left out altogether. Here are a few examples.

1. Los Angeles' "original sin" in the Owens Valley occurred from 1905 (when the plans were announced) to 1913 (when the first aqueduct barrel was completed). Mr. Carle's can be added to the long shelf of books describing Los Angeles' rape of that Sierra valley to supply itself with water.

But during the same period, particularly from 1908 through 1913, the fight over San Francisco's Hetch Hetchy project that brought water from Yosemite National Park across the state to the City By the Bay was being waged there and in Washington. Federal authorization of the Hetch Hetchy project occurred in 1913, the same year water began flowing from Owens Valley to Los Angeles. The damming and flooding of Hetch Hetchy Valley occurred between 1919 and 1923, and water imports arrived in San Francisco in 1923, a year before Owens Valley protesters dynamited the Los Angeles Aqueduct. Just a few years later, in 1930, the East Bay Municipal Water District began importing Mokelumne River water to serve the growing East Bay cities of Oakland and Alameda County.

Despite the nearly coterminous unfolding of these events, exactly two pages of Carle's 207-page narrative are devoted to San Francisco's Hetch Hetchy project, and the reader must persist to p. 135 to even find those. A scant two sentences refer to the East Bay Municipal Utility District's Mokelumne River imports.

2. The first north-south water project in the state--the Central Valley Project--was authorized by California voters in 1929, then taken over by the federal government during the Depression and built in the 1930s. Friant Dam was completed in 1942, Shasta Dam in 1943. During the same period, Los Angeles' Mono Lake Aqueduct was approved by the city's voters, and water diversion from Mono Lake streams began.

Again, though the events occurred at the same time, Los Angeles' Mono Lake diversions receive much more intensive and critical scrutiny from Mr. Carle than the Central Valley Project that dammed northern California and Sierra Nevada rivers to provide federally-subsidized water to farmers. Deliveries of imported Northern California water to Central Valley farmers began in 1951, a full twenty years before Northern California water reached Southern California cities in 1971--but Mr. Carle excuses the former event while characterizing the latter as "transforming the state."

3. The extension of the State Water Project to serve Santa Barbara (known as the Central Coast Extension) is mentioned several times. The extensions known as the South Bay Aqueduct and the North Bay Aqueduct are not mentioned even once, even though they tap the very same State Water Project in order to serve respectively the breakneck growth of Silicon Valley and the rapidly urbanizing corridor that now extends from San Francisco to Sacramento. Instead, forgetting or ignoring that the Bay Area and the Central Valley are served by California's north-south water projects, too, Carle describes the State Water Project and the Central Valley Project only as "the plumbing that delivers water to Southern California" (p. 187).

4. Also omitted are any descriptions of efforts under way in Southern California to reduce its dependence on imported Northern California water. Two brief examples: a) cities, water districts, and water companies in the Orange County Water District draw 75% of the water they supply from the local groundwater basin, and most of the water that replenishes the underground supply is now conserved Santa Ana River flow rather than water imported from the Metropolitan Water District; b) water agencies in the upper Santa Ana River watershed have set a "drought-proofing" goal--i.e., reaching a mix of supplies and storage that would allow the area to sustain a complete cutoff of imported water during a drought.

This consistent pattern of emphasis and omission undermines Carle's book for experienced observers of California water history and policy. The risk, however, is that novice readers will mistakenly believe they are getting something like the whole story.

In the end, Mr. Carle wants to press the case for using restrictions on water to curtail further growth in California. Such a remedy makes sense if one believes, as Carle does, that water importation alone explains the growth of the southern part of these state--"Southern California's population increases after the early 1900s, beyond limits set by local sources, could happen only because of imported water" (p. xvi).

But there are gaps in this analysis. Carle's description of water somehow forcing growth upon the small city of San Juan Capistrano (pp. 122-123) overlooks the tough decisions that officials in that city made to restrict building permits and acquire open space after imported water arrived. Since those measures were adopted in the late 1970s, the population of San Juan Capistrano has grown at a rate significantly lower than that of California as a whole, and the city's population in the 1990s crept slowly toward a very livable 2000 estimate of about 30,000. If water importation really makes growth inevitable, as Carle repeats throughout his book, then what happened in San Juan Capistrano simply could not have occurred.

Carle notes (without catching the contrast) that the Southern California city of Corona's population rose an astounding 48% during the 1990s (p. 166). Both Corona and San Juan Capistrano--not far apart, at opposite ends of the Foothill Transportation Corridor's Toll Road--have had access to imported water for the same period of time. San Juan Capistrano's population rose less than 10% during the 1990s. The logic declaring that imported water causes unchecked growth is still missing a few steps before it can explain the Corona-San Juan Capistrano difference. Clearly, population growth in Southern California is driven by decisions and considerations other than water supply.

An equally persuasive case can be made that California's problems of urban sprawl and increased population need to be controlled through better regulation of land use and a different approach to transportation planning. A remarkable statistic passes by in Carle's book without its plain implications pointed out: "Between 1970 and 1990, Los Angeles' population grew by 45%, but its developed land area increased 300%" (p. 166). In the face of a statistic like that, it seems hardly justified to blame water importation for smog, traffic congestion, and the loss of habitat and biodiversity.

Carle's desire to limit and control growth in California are understandable, and easy to share. And he is of course correct that "population projections, in truth, are not inevitable. How many people there will be, where they will live, and what their quality of life will be are matters of choice, just as they were throughout California's last 150 years" (p. xviii).

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What he addresses less well is the range of choices that lie before Californians, and the consequences that attend them. The choice is not only about how many people there will be; it is also a choice about who they will be.

People will keep migrating to California; the state is simply too attractive to keep people from entering. On the entire North American continent, only California features the Mediterranean climate to which human civilization has migrated at other locations around the globe for centuries. Add to the mild weather the beauty of the state's mountains and coast, and the hope is dim of getting the rest of America to just stay put in Kansas or Pennsylvania or wherever else Mr. Carle believes they belong.

If people continue to want to move to California, the most likely effect of growth controls will be to bid up the prices of existing homes and land, until folks of modest means give way to the more affluent. This demographic displacement has happened in other attractive places that have enacted growth controls (Boulder, Colorado, for instance, where home prices more than doubled in the first four years after building limits were enacted in 1990). People didn't stop moving in; they just started bidding other people out when they did.

A similar phenomenon can occur even in the absence of growth controls, when new residents arrive at a faster pace than space is made for them. We witnessed this dynamic over and over in the United States during the 20th century, from Manhattan to San Francisco, when demand for places to live outstrips the supply, prices escalate, the wealthy stay, the middle class leave, and a few poor areas remain to house those who serve the rich.

When demand to live in California is unlikely to diminish significantly, much less halt altogether, the question then becomes what to do on the supply side, and with what likely consequences. "Hotel California" may be one nightmare. "Boutique California" is another. Advocates of population limitations (however achieved) must think and proceed carefully--keeping in mind not only how many, but which, Californians shall share the dream.

Identity and Struggle at the Margins of the Nation State: The Laboring Peoples of Central America and the Hispanic Caribbean, edited by Aviva Chomsky and Aldo Lauria-Santiago. Durham and London: Duke University Press (1998), vi, 404 pp.

Reviewed by Douglas Midgett, Department of Anthropology, University of Iowa.

This volume brings together contributions from ten scholars of the labor history of Central America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. The editors provide a useful introduction and, in a concluding chapter, Lowell Gudmundson and Francisco A. Scarano discuss directions indicated in the volume for future work. A notable feature of the book is the inclusion of contributors at various stages of their careers. The combination of young scholars, recently embarked on post-graduate endeavors, alongside more senior historians is a felicitous choice and contributes to the over all quality of the book. The timeframe examined extends from 1850, the beginnings of coffee cultivation in the Salvadorian community of Lauria-Santiago's study, to 1944-1954, the revolutionary period of the Guatemalan national history, which ended with the CIA-sponsored coup that brought down the Arbenz regime.

Two recurrent themes are woven through most of the chapters. First, a revisionist argument is played out, with varying degrees of success. In some offerings, Aviva Chomsky's examination of Costa Rican laborers and smallholders, for example, an initial claim that the study argues against conventional interpretations is not supported in the text that follows. The second theme addresses resistance on the part of rural workers in the face of hegemonies rooted in class, race and gender. The second theme is, again, demonstrated with varying effectiveness. The assertion of resistance on the part of the laboring classes is one that I find occasionally tenuous, despite its popularity with academics, especially since the publication of James Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* (1985). To illustrate the various instances of resistance by the contributors to this volume we are presented with evidence indicated by everything