

## Chapter 3

### LOS ANGELES KILLS THE NEW COUNTY MOVEMENT

The Supervisors-elect of Canyon County met right after the election at the request of *The Signal*, and again in February 1977 as the result of a letter from Assemblyman Mike Cullen of Long Beach, who had introduced AB 333 to the Legislature. This bill dealt with creating a process to split Los Angeles County into smaller counties.

I had seen an article in the *Herald-Examiner* about the bill, had written to Mr. Cullen about it on February 6, and received a response by return mail, with a copy of an article from the Long Beach paper. The original bill directed the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to split the county into five parts, each with at least a million residents, and submit the plan for a vote at the November 1978 election. Cullen had cited our experience as “an example of how those in power – namely, the Board of Supervisors – behind the shield of an objective study are able to represent to voters that if anyone leaves the jurisdiction, the county, the property taxes of those remaining will increase appreciably.” He continued,

I think it’s futile for lawmakers in various cities and their constituents to attend mass meetings mainly to voice concern at the lack of accountability I’ve described and then go through the laborious process of trying to qualify a ballot petition, only to find themselves in a David-and-Goliath position with respect to the Board of Supervisors.

I don’t believe a secession attempt is ever going to be successful unless every area of the county is affected and voters in every area are able to vote their own self-interest.

The county population is just too big to be served by one board.<sup>1</sup>

Cullen wanted me to testify in favor of his bill, and, after meeting with the other supervisors-elect, I wrote that I would be delighted to if he would not object to my offering recommendations for amendments to his bill.

These recommendations would include that language specifying the number of counties to be placed on the ballot to read ‘not less than five,’ rather than simply five; that the population not necessarily be equal, that geography also be considered; and that the proposal might include the creation of multi-county agencies to finance equitably, or provide services for, counties which might otherwise suffer from the creation of new counties.

I would like to add that I believe the prohibition against cities being in more than one county may stand in the way of good government at the local level, or even at the county level.

On the other hand, Los Angeles County was working to stop these county formation efforts. Assemblyman Robert C. Cline, who represented more people in the San Fernando Valley than in our valley, wrote on February 18, “You can count on my opposition to any legislation making it more difficult for county

formation. Any imposition of more stringent rules and limitations must and should be opposed vigorously.

“If I can be of assistance in joining you to voice your list of grievances before the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors please let me know.”

After the November election Bob had offered to carry a bill to have the Legislature create Canyon County. I had to tell him that the state constitution required a vote by the people of both the proposed county and the remaining county. His response was to take his bill, AB 24, which was about constitutional amendments, and amend it to become a bill which would allow any area like ours, which had voted for county formation, to go to a second election without doing a petition over again. However, I heard nothing more of AB 24.

Larry Chimbole, who had served as the first Mayor of Palmdale, and was the member of the Assembly representing the Antelope Valley, wrote saying, “I’m really interested and want to help wherever I can.”

Dan Hon called for the annual meeting of the Canyon County Formation Committee on March 3, 1977 in the multi-purpose room at Placerita Junior High School. We discussed the formation of a County Service Area for the entire unincorporated territory of Los Angeles County, which was coming before LAFCO on April 13, and dismissed it as inappropriate. Plaques were distributed, most of them made by hand by Dan and Ellen Hon. Connie Worden was awarded a silver bowl. The supervisors-elect plus Harry Fedderson and Lee Turner were elected as the new board by a voice vote. Among the actions the board took that evening was turning Alice Kline’s scrap books over to the Perkins Room at the Valencia Regional Library (from which they have disappeared). We had started the evening with \$119.29 in the treasury, and ended with \$295.75. The cause was not dead, for people were still willing to pay dues and vote.

The South Bay County movement, which included an area from El Segundo to Palos Verdes, was looking forward to an election in 1978. Los Cerritos County, which included Long Beach, Signal Hill and four small unincorporated areas, was in the petition stage. It appeared that they had used a Canyon County petition in doing their art work.

It seemed to me that the members of the Assembly Local Government Committee were truly interested in AB 333. Under the leadership of Chairman William A. Craven they came to Long Beach to hear testimony on the bill on April 29, 1977, at the city hall. I liked Craven. He listened to testimony attentively and asked questions to help the presenters make their points well. He had been a supervisor in San Diego County.

Mike Cullen had sent me a mailgram advising me of the meeting on April 26, but Dan Hon, Connie Worden and I were already prepared to represent Canyon County. Fourteen of us were scheduled to speak before the audience could have their say. James A. Hayes, the Fourth District Supervisor of Los Angeles, led off, and thus did not have the opportunity to refute later testimony. Jim Walker, Chairman of the South Bay County Study Committee, was second. Meanwhile we were taking notes, and preparing to make contacts.

I outlined my talk on the spot, not knowing how the hearing was going to proceed or what direction testimony might take. Mayor Bob Ryan of the City of Rancho Palos Verdes and the chairman of the Peninsula County Committee, raked Jim Hayes over the coals for not being accessible even to a mayor of a city in his district. I was up fourth, listed as “Elected to Canyon County Board of Supervisors.”

I related the history of the campaign and made the point that although we were only one twenty-third of a Los Angeles County supervisorial district we were larger than 108 of the 114 counties in Missouri, and that we voted for county formation in spite of major threats delivered by county employees. We had been outspent \$219,500 to \$10,000.

We needed financial viability for any proposal so the Board of Supervisors could not stack a ballot with a bad proposal; more than five counties of varying size; efficiency so we could lop off the peak of the bureaucratic pyramid; cut transportation and communications costs, and cut supervisorial staffs. I complained that while Supervisor Hayes had held out the hope of localized zoning that we had already asked for this, and had been turned down by our supervisor.

I questioned whether the supervisors should be involved in the proposal at all. We needed a state commission to report to the Legislature, and to have the Legislature put that proposal on the ballot. I questioned the need for hundreds of tax districts and the special districts operating beyond the view of the public. I criticized the statement that we would duplicate services. We already had our own courthouse. The county duplicated services in many areas. “We must resolve the constitutional requirement here that would have required the British to vote the United States out of the British Empire.” I reminded the committee that in 1850 Los Angeles County reached the Colorado River, and that it had to be “chopped some more.” I could have said truthfully that it touched New Mexico Territory, as Arizona Territory was formed in 1864.

Dan Hon and Connie Worden followed me, and noted that the South Bay and Peninsula County movements were led by cities. Other speakers included Louise Hawley, Councilman Hank Doerfling of Hermosa Beach, Mayor Gunther W. Buerk from a city on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, and Steve Saroian of the Chumash County Study Committee. Also speaking were Louis T. Gilbertson of the San Gabriel Valley Association of Cities, Executive vice-president George Koutsoubas of the Committee for Investigating Valley Independence City/County in the San Fernando Valley, and Chairman Marilyn Angle of the Santa Monica County Study Committee.

I attended several meetings with a number of these people in 1977, but we never agreed on a large joint effort to split the county up at once. AB 333 did not become law, and we were too preoccupied with our own areas.

On May 16 I testified in Sacramento before the Senate Local Government Committee. Los Angeles County was pushing for SB 700, 701, and 702, a three-pronged effort to stop the county formation engine dead on the tracks.

Senators David Roberti and Ralph Dills, with coauthors Berman, Hughes, Torres and Vicencia of the Assembly, were at work representing the behemoth from which we were trying to escape, and had introduced the legislation on March 29. The main point affecting us, in SB 700, was a provision that a new county could not be created if the population of the proposed county was less than five per cent of that of the existing county. At the time the whole north county did not have enough people.

In response to charges made during the 1976 campaign, I said, "First, we have never advocated giving up any of our responsibilities as citizens. The very first time that the proponents of Canyon County appeared before the Assembly Local Government Committee, in 1972, when it was chaired by Assemblyman John Knox, the first point made by Daniel Hon, our first speaker, was that if any of our elected representatives present believed for a moment that our proposals were a gambit to escape responsibility for welfare or any other service that that aspect of county finance should be covered in such a way that new county formation would not permit relief from such burdens."

I reviewed the threats made against us in the election campaign, and continued.

[W]e the representatives, supported by 55% of the voters of Canyon County, want our own county government for a number of reasons which we consider to be very important. 1) We are a remote area, thirty to sixty miles from the county seat, with one per cent of the people, one per cent of the assessed valuation, eighteen per cent of the land area, and enough voters to comprise about five per cent of just one L.A. County supervisorial district.

2) We are a long distance call away from our 'local' government, and most L.A. County employees have no idea where we are. We do not even appear on the standard maps of Los Angeles County except as a reduced-scale inset up in a corner.

3) Planning and zoning for our area is perceived as one disaster after another. In recent years Los Angeles County has repeatedly approved subdivisions over our loud protests over access and traffic problems. Venture Homes was allowed on a mesa with one access road. After a major fire Los Angeles County built another road at taxpayer expense, a cost of over \$1.5 million. The Home Tract caused a sharp curve to be placed in the middle of a major highway which had been straight. Now, after several deaths, the county is going to realign this stretch. We have no planning or zoning for problem solving, but only in response to developer requests or in reaction to overwhelming situations.

4) While we already have our own county offices (a whole civic center full) we cannot reach anyone in authority there. Decisions, maps, publications, information all come from Los Angeles at a communications cost eleven times higher than that of the average county of our population (all of which contain much more land).

5) Those of us who are on welfare must travel thirty or more miles to a county welfare office to get any help – after years of constant complaining and meetings with officials very little has been done to solve this problem.

6) In 1972 we got the people of Los Angeles County to approve a charter amendment allowing us to contract some special district services. It took four years for county government to respond to this victory, which was finally proven worthwhile by the fact that special district landscaping costs dropped by half.

7) We have been discouraged repeatedly from forming a city, particularly in 1963 and 1970-71 by county officials, and partly due to our geography. To their credit, present county officials have offered considerably more candor and encouragement, even to the point of stating that we had been ‘fixed’ in the past....

We seem so small, but we are average in California, and for those who like to say they are from Missouri, we are larger than 108 of the 114 counties in Missouri.

We would like to be allowed to try again, for reasonable people must be allowed to have a reasonable solution to an unreasonable problem.

However, we recognize full well that Los Angeles County is beset on all sides by petitions and the efforts of unhappy citizens to create new counties.

Even SB 700 would not stop us from getting on the ballot again (though winning would be a long chance).

If this committee is going to consider seriously any county formation procedure bills I hope it will take a close look at AB 333. We do not believe this bill in its form two weeks ago is the best possible bill which could apply, but the idea of splitting Los Angeles County has merit. We support the idea that a state commission, largely composed of Los Angeles County residents, should be created to study the issues and put a proposition on the ballot which would allow Los Angeles County to be divided into an unspecified number of counties, the measure to take effect if it is approved by majority vote in *each* of the proposed counties (this will satisfy constitutional requirements). Furthermore, we believe that state experts should be required to investigate the financial aspects of the proposal, and alter it in such ways necessary, to assure that *each* proposed county is given fair treatment from a fiscal point of view.

We believe that great savings can be gained from lopping the top off the bureaucratic pyramid of Los Angeles County. Then the base can be divided, with the 60,000 plus employees assigned to do their respective jobs in the 4,000 county buildings which already exist. Smaller government will be manageable, and manageable government will be

efficient, and leaner and cheaper. And best of all, it will be more responsive to us all.

We did not do well. Senator Nate Holden of Los Angeles was out to kill us even if he could not explain why. Senator Alan Robbins, representing much of the San Fernando Valley, who had spent his own millions to get elected, and later wound up in jail, lied to us. He said we had his support, and then voted in favor, saying he did not know the bill allowed a new county to be formed out of part of a city. Milton Marks of San Francisco promised us support, and then left the meeting early, calling for the vote before we could testify. I had a tape recording of the whole hearing, made on a machine inside my briefcase so *The Signal* could tell the whole gory story in great detail, but unfortunately I learned the hard way not to carry a tape home in a pocket. It was erased going through the metal detector at the airport.

The next day Leonard Panish, the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder, notified the Board of Supervisors that South Bay County, including the cities of El Segundo, Manhattan Beach, Hermosa Beach, Redondo Beach, Torrance and Palos Verdes Estates, had gathered 39,109 signatures, 630 more than the minimum. Governor Brown would have to appoint a Commission by Sept. 21.

Harry Hufford predicted, "Fragmentation of the region will ultimately result in higher taxes for everyone." He raised the specter that a statewide income tax levy would therefore become necessary. He said the proposed county would enjoy a rich tax base and a minimum of social needs, which was true, but he lied when he said that the proposed South Bay County would enjoy an assessed valuation of \$27,014 per capita.

Jim Walker said that South Bay County would participate in dealing with regional social problems (although there was no mechanism for this). Meanwhile AB 333 had passed Assembly Local Government by a 7-1 vote and been sent on to Ways and Means. I had testified there, having been asked to spend the night in Sacramento by Mike Cullen, who wrote me a check for \$25 out of campaign funds for a night at the Senator Hotel.<sup>2</sup>

On the same day the *Times* story appeared I wrote a letter to the Editor, which was never printed.

A week or so ago a news item appeared in the *Times* in which Harry Hufford, CAO of Los Angeles County, was quoted as saying that the assessed valuation per person of the proposed South Bay County was \$27,014. Now in today's *Times* this figure is given as fact, not as a statement of a partisan in a coming political campaign.

Someone must call the lie now, before it is accepted as the truth. As a proponent of Canyon County, which was beaten by Los Angeles County's '100% half-truths,' if I may quote the impartial chairman of the Governor's New County Formation Commission, I believe the merits of the South Bay County proposal should be measured by the Commission, which will deal with the truth, rather than by Los Angeles County, which deals in self-preservation at the expense of the truth.

It is time for the Times to dig into this per capita assessed valuation figure carefully, and question Mr. Hufford closely as to the method used to arrive at his conclusion. The South Bay may not be poor, but it hardly contains more than a quarter of the total wealth of Los Angeles County.

I had a chance to talk with Assemblyman Cline casually at the commencement at College of the Canyons at the end of May. On June 20 I wrote that a town meeting had been scheduled for July 14th. We wanted to make a decision about whether to go for incorporation or another try at County Formation, which was still possible because the new laws would not go into effect until January 1, 1978. Could a "Canyon County Municipal Improvement District" be formed by the Legislature? I outlined it as being similar to a contract city without the need to provide fire protection, and asked if we could have flood control powers. Could we enjoy state subventions?

Bob Cline's response was timely, but not encouraging. Julie Castelli Nauman of the Assembly Committee on Local Government staff picked up on the name "Canyon County MID," which should not have been chosen. A municipal improvement district was no substitute for city or county government – it simply did not have enough powers. A new one would have to go through the LAFCO process. An alteration in the sharing of state subventions would be extremely controversial.

Of course she was right. We talked about the problem over the phone, and then I wrote her a detailed letter outlining our situation. We wanted local control over our whole valley, but could not form a city of larger than perhaps sixty or eighty square miles because we could not provide fire protection, and cityhood required that we provide fire protection to the entire area of the city. We could levy a tax rate of about 78 cents on all the land in the proposed city, and eliminate the 78-cent fire protection district rate, thus bringing all the land into a city. However, the 78-cent rate on the land outside the district would not bring in enough revenue to provide the service needed.

Our position in Sacramento did not improve. My testimony on SB 702, before the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, is revealing.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, this is the first time anyone from the area which would be most affected by this bill has had an opportunity to testify. When SB 700, 701 and 702 came before Senate Local Government there were many of us in the audience, some pro, mostly con, ready and anxious to give testimony. When it came time to hear this bill the chairman remarked that it was late, he had to leave, was voting against the bill and wanted to call the vote. It passed in a form which was significantly different in one respect, by a vote of four to three.

In its present form it would have been defeated, for Senator Robbins made it clear that he was voting for it only because it allowed new county formation to cross through a city, thus allowing the San Fernando Valley movement to proceed.

We had no opportunity to testify against this bill in Assembly Local Government. It was brought up at the last moment, without any opportunity on our part to get word it was to be considered.

This is a bad bill, defective, unjust and unfair, and I ask on this basis that it be considered by this committee in its entirety.

I would like to add that it is being brought before this committee without a fair opportunity for notice, as SB 700 was heard yesterday afternoon, but we are a little more sophisticated now, so I am here.

Senator Roberti has been quoted in the press as saying Canyon County, as we propose it, is 'frivolous.' I would like to say that the majority of the people of the proposed Canyon County were serious enough to vote in favor of formation in spite of a well-funded and astute campaign against it. Perhaps we were unsophisticated and naïve, and underfinanced (for we were outspent thirty to one), but we are hardly 'frivolous.'

Canyon County was not proposed on a whim. We did serious research, which was later proven valid by the Governor's Commission, before we even attempted to circulate our petitions. We simply want the only form of government which makes sense for our area, which is essentially a rural portion of Los Angeles County, only one per cent of the county, but large enough to be an average California county with an average tax base.

We tried for city incorporation and got shot down by Los Angeles County in 1970 and 1971, when false "factual" reports were published. I would present documentation of this charge today except that all my records are presently in the hands of the Los Angeles County Economy and Efficiency Commission, for we continue to be naïve enough to believe that we should cooperate with all requests for information.

We have asked for an Area Planning Commission, which request was denied by Supervisor Baxter Ward. We have proposed a district to be established by the legislature. We cannot afford to have a special district based solely on property tax revenue, and while we expect more cooperation in trying to incorporate a city, a city could include at best only ten per cent of the area of our community. In short, we have considered everything which might help bring some measure of local government to our community, and county formation still has, according to a July poll, the support of the people by four to one over a city.

But let me address the bill directly, working from a copy dated Aug. 9, 1977, amended in Assembly. On page 3, lines 2 and 3, I question whether any commission can reasonably be expected to determine the county budget for the first partial fiscal year. If done at all, it would have to be done very late in the proceedings, when the election date should be known, and hence the date of county formation. Furthermore, the job could be sloppy, and the responsibility should be left to elected



public officials. By all means remove the present prohibition or lack of power to suggest a budget, etc., but do not require such a determination.

Lines 6 through 8 call for socio-economic data. This should be allowed, but not required. Our biggest socio-economic problem arises out of parents working in other parts of Los Angeles County, being away from their children long hours due to the long commute. We have an ethnic minority of about 15%, with above average income and education levels. Some may read significance into the fact that we lost on Canyon County in three precincts, one of them being Val Verde, a small multi-ethnic community. But I believe this is due largely to the outstanding job Los Angeles County has done in getting federal community improvement funds for Val Verde, which the people did not want to see cut off.

On page 4, lines 3 through 10, this bill ties the hands of the Commission. The New County Formation Commission for proposed Canyon County determined that Canyon County would have to pay off the lease on its new county civic center, a cost in excess of \$11,000,000. This was fair in spite of the amount probably being considerably more than one per cent of the indebtedness of Los Angeles County. After all, we were getting new facilities. But Los Angeles County cannot tell you how many buildings they own, let alone lease.

As for lines 13 through 25, the bill is totally unrealistic, wasteful and unfair. I doubt Los Angeles County could be inventoried in six months or a year, and the expense would be horrendous, an expense which would, I believe, accrue to the state. Then this bill would require that we buy back property for which we have been paying taxes all these years, with no credit for the interest we have in the other 99% of the county's property. The Commission chaired by Dr. Hagman, a law professor at UCLA, did an outstanding job of assuring that the property vital to the operation of Los Angeles County, namely the Wayside Honor Rancho, would remain with Los Angeles County.

As to page 5, lines 18 through 34, the study required concerning the socio-economic impact would be too nebulous and too broad, requiring a tremendous amount of time and money to reach conclusions which in some respects cannot be based on hard data. As for the effect on schools, what effect except for the formation of a small county superintendent's office? If you are aware of the Hagman Commission findings you know full well we would have escaped no taxes except through more efficient operation, our somewhat lower welfare responsibilities being offset by very costly fire control responsibilities.

On page 6, line 12, 'actual cost' of services is mentioned. The Hagman Commission got nothing but 'estimated actuals' from Los Angeles County during its hearings, and later characterized them as '100% half truths.' The formula for determining transition costs was

both ingenious and fair. Who would determine the actual costs? The courts would, at great expense. Why tie the commission's hands?

On page 7, lines 3 and 4, have you considered the contents of GC section 23385? It deals with transfer of funds, records and transfers of title.

In short this bill is designed to kill Canyon County, yet it does not prohibit another petition which we can initiate beginning November 3rd. It would not even affect such a petition, but would merely force us to undertake a campaign, perhaps without adequate financing to win county formation.

The result of passage of this bill will be to force us to go for county formation immediately as legally allowed. That might well be 'frivolous,' for us to have the temerity to think we might win on the merits of the issue without putting a huge warchest to work. If we can take the time to gain proper financing then we can fight the issue as equals and we will know, when the election is over, whether we are finished or not.

Why was Canyon County beaten the last time? We were outspent thirty to one on such false issues as costing Los Angeles County '\$261 million in tax base,' and 'allowing the San Fernando Valley to burn.' We simply want a smaller, local, more responsive government which can legally service our whole area, and we would hope that one day Los Angeles County will wake up to the desirability of shedding the entire northern portion of the county so it can operate as the urban county it is without ignoring those three per cent who occupy sixty per cent of the land in the proposed Canyon County and the Antelope Valley.

I would welcome any questions. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to be heard.

The legislature did not leave us much choice. On July 14 Gil Callowhill presided over a town meeting at Placerita Junior High School, which was sponsored by the Canyon County Formation Committee. Harry Fedderson served as Executive Vice President, and the balance of the elected Canyon County Board of Supervisors as vice presidents. Marge Akehurst was Secretary and Lee Turner was Treasurer.

On July 13 Baxter Ward wrote to me that Joan Pinchuk would attend the meeting to represent his office, and restated his concern that an Area Planning Council would not have responsibility to the electorate. I could not sympathize with his stand, because the Regional Planning Commission also was not elected, but appointed by the supervisors, who had the power to appoint the Area Planning Council. "All the same, I recognize the interest of Santa Clarita residents in more direct control over their affairs. Therefore, as with a nearly identical situation in Lancaster, may I please offer my support on behalf of any proper effort toward incorporation. Not only is cityhood achievable almost immediately, it also could give to residents a fair idea of the problems of control and costs in a variety of

affairs.” Ward then closed, “If countyhood still would be sought, cityhood is an appropriate intermediate step.”

At the town meeting I outlined the six choices we had. We could ask the Board of Supervisors to appoint a Municipal Advisory Council, which would not be elected by the people and would have only advisory powers, but might have valuable input on the special districts.

We could ask for an Area Planning Commission which would at least give us some degree of control over planning and zoning, which were big issues.

We could form a Community Services District, through a petition, going through LAFCO, and an election. This would be limited, but real, government, with some control over special districts and taxes.

We could ask the state legislature to form a Municipal Improvement District, which might have some real government powers, with possibly some zoning authority and control over parks and recreation. Both the CFD and MID would have to be funded out of special district property taxes; these special districts paid overhead to Los Angeles County and might as well pay the overhead to a CFD or MID.

City incorporation was real government giving us control over our own taxes and state subventions in an area limited to territory receiving services from the Consolidated Fire Protection District. It would control planning and zoning, parks and recreations, have some effect on taxes, and could be achieved through petition, the LAFCO process and an election. There would be some small negative impact on school revenues because of the way mobile home taxation was structured.

County formation would give us complete control over our area and be formed through the present process only if we completed the petition drive between November 3 and December 31. We would set up a new county superintendent’s office, with little impact on our present schools. I knew this would take a tremendous effort, and that we would lose the election.

I did not like the idea of a volunteer Municipal Advisory Council. The idea of refusing to pay representatives, so popular with the voters (so many of whom say that elected officials should serve for the honor of it), eliminated many who could not give up time they might have to devote to a second job. Diamond Bar had one.

The Area Planning Commission would not work because of Baxter Ward’s opposition, in spite of the fact it would have taken a lot of heat off the county.

The Community Services District would have no sources of funding but the property tax. It might increase public awareness of how our tax dollars were spent. At least it would make decisions now made by unknown or inaccessible bureaucrats and approved by supervisors who sat on 292 different boards! I did not mention that they got paid for some of those board meetings.

Our concept of a Municipal Improvement District having control over state subventions could not be sold to the powers in Sacramento. I described Julie Castelli Nauman’s reaction to the idea.

A city could be formed in eighteen months, and provide millions of subventions, revenue sharing and even some other funds not available to a general law county. We would have real power, and, most important, we could become a city without worrying about how the Los Angeles County voters felt about it. We would have a local vote. It would include 90% of the people but only 10% of the land. We had never voted on cityhood, legends to the contrary.

A county would provide more power over a wider area and control over the county tax rate. We knew what had happened on our first try. This could be our last chance, and would take a tremendous effort. We would have fifty-five days to complete the petition drive, which had taken us six months before.

Yes, the meeting was held on Bastille Day. The rabble voted once again to try to break down the walls of our prison! I was very proud of their determination, even if they had chosen to try the impossible. We had promised to follow their direction. We were to try for Canyon County again.

In the meantime we heard criticism from the outside. I suggested to Cindy Hammond of Torrance that if people were really concerned about the threat of fires they could buy the thirty-six square miles of land which would yield only \$702 if taxed at a seventy-eight cent fire tax rate, donate them to the federal government, and let the federal government fight the fires.

On July 28 I wrote to Reed McClure, editor of the editorial pages of the *Santa Monica Evening Outlook*.

I was shocked that Will Thorne's article, "LA County Secession Could Raise All Taxes," would give further credence to Harry Hufford's statement that South Bay County, as proposed, is 831% richer than the average area of Los Angeles County. But then, why be shocked, for should not an experienced reporter believe that he can rely upon figures issued by the Chief Administrative Officer of the largest county in the world?

However, the 831% figure is either a horrendous mistake or a blatant lie. If your readers will call their county supervisor's office and ask to be sent a copy of the Taxpayers' Guide, they will find that the assessed valuation of the six South Bay cities is indeed higher, per person, than that of the county as a whole. It is about twice as big, and has been about twice as big for a year, since the area was reassessed. Before that, in spite of the apparent wealth, the area was about equal to the rest of Los Angeles County.

Professor Donald Hagan, of the UCLA School of Law and Chairman of the governor's commission which reported on Canyon County, characterized Los Angeles County testimony about that issue as '100% half-truths.' Is Los Angeles County going to escalate to '100% lies?'

I hope the working press will keep them honest.

However, I never heard of any effort in that direction, let alone that my letter had been published.

On August 3 *The Signal* published in the legal notices the list of reassessed properties. That got some people's blood flowing.

The same day, John Corzine, Deputy Legislative Counsel, wrote to Assemblyman Bob Cline that a Canyon County Municipal Improvement District could indeed be formed by the legislature, but that it could not receive the normal state subventions.

The next day, Bob wrote to me, saying in essence that he was ready to move ahead, but it was too late for anything to be enacted in the current session. On August 18 Julie Castelli Nauman wrote saying she had discussed the idea of a Canyon County MID with Ruth Benell of LAFCO, and that neither of them could suggest any alternative to incorporating a city.

Our assemblyman worked diligently in our behalf, calling me to let me know of last minute changes in hearing schedules which allowed us to avoid some trips to Sacramento, and plan others at the last minute. This was a big help, because Los Angeles County and the City of Los Angeles had staffs in Sacramento, and big expense accounts. Harry Fedderson, Gil Callowhill, Connie Worden and I, as well as others, paid our own way and often took time off work. Therefore, we suffered double whammies in that we lost income instead of being paid to represent the people.

Senator David Roberti could pull consideration of a bill from a committee's calendar if he wished. He could say he had too many amendments for the committee to consider that day. On August 26, 1977, Assembly Ways and Means had thirty-eight bills on the docket. They certainly did not mind if the author of a bill suggested that it be pulled. Those of us in the audience, who did not have the floor, could go silently home, driving for six hours, or flying, knowing that Roberti's bills would be up another day, which would begin very early some morning. Usually notice was given with barely enough time to prepare testimony, get a few hours' sleep, and get up at 4:00 a.m. for another seven-hundred-mile trip.

About this time I was finished with helping the Economy and Efficiency Commission.

We met frequently with representatives from other new county movements. During this period I met with Jack Baum, Jim Walker, Bob Ryan and some others. We asked for a Task Force on Government Structure. Jack Baum, representing CIVICC, said the San Fernando Valley was paying \$930,000,000 in taxes and receiving \$330,000,000 in services. He wanted a consolidated city-county. Jim Walker said that assessments were up 400% in four years for some, that he had four per cent of the population and six per cent of the assessed valuation. He wanted to end duplicated services.

Bob Ryan of the Peninsula County effort wanted supervisors to work nights. He was taking a "man from Mars" approach to services, and was looking at a combined fire and police department. He wanted to force annexation of unincorporated territory. His area was facing 100% increases in assessments the next year. He was tired of the major funding for deprived areas going into the

pockets of employees who did not live in those areas. In this era before political correctness, he said he had heard that the Polish government had just bought Los Angeles County and "they're going to keep its government like it is."

On October 1, 1977 I wrote Harry Hufford, suggesting that perhaps his office had gotten figures confused and had compared the market value of the South Bay County area to the assessed value of Los Angeles County when it came up with the 831% number. "As a proponent of Canyon County, about which your office issued reports which were characterized by Professor Donald Hagman, chairman of Governor Brown's County Formation Review Commission, Proposed Canyon County, as '100% half-truths,' I believe that you have a duty to be very careful to be entirely accurate in your release of figures pertaining to new county formations." I sent copies of the letter to all the newspapers in Los Angeles County.

A year from the day we went down to defeat Alice Kline had her volunteers on the street with petitions. We did not have to explain the issue to the voters this time. The community was white hot, and ready to sign. One person would come to the door, find out it was a Canyon County circulator, call the whole family to come sign, and they came running.

We spent less than \$100 on the petition drive, and got it done in six weeks.<sup>3</sup>

On January 13, 1978, we had our annual meeting. Gil Callowhill chaired the meeting and with Harry Fedderson presented a summary of the year's events. Alice Kline, the hero of the petition drive, was introduced. Dan Hon, chairman of the nominating committee, introduced the nominees: Harry Fedderson, Bob Silverstein, Ben Curtis, Don Jennings, David Foley, Gil Callowhill, Bruce Kline (Paul and Alice Kline's son), Carmen Sarro and me. Phil Hoskins and David Saylor were nominated from the floor. Fedderson, Silverstein, Curtis, Callowhill, Kline, Sarro and I, all nominated by the committee, were elected.

Six days later Harry Fedderson was elected president of the board, Ben Curtis as executive vice president, Carmen Sarro as secretary and Gil Callowhill as treasurer. The remainder of the meeting was unstructured. We discussed SB 702, and our approach to the black community, with Gwen Moore as a contact. We needed fifty speakers and a system for evaluating the questions that were asked, as well as the answers given. The Governor's Commission was discussed. Ben Curtis was not happy with the stand of the Newhall-Saugus-Valencia Chamber on Canyon County and was appointed to talk with them.

Arlene Matthews was mentioned as a possible commission member. The separate incorporation of the Canyon County Publicity Commission was reviewed.

I was appointed January 30 to give Alice Kline the good news that we had selected her as chairman of the Speakers Committee. John Fuller, Gage Biren and Art Evans were mentioned as good people to serve on the Governor's Commission.

However, I had lost the desire to fight. We were not going to win this battle, and it would exhaust the troops.

In February I resigned from the board. I wrote, "I do so with complete confidence that the remaining members will carry on the splendid traditions of grass roots politics, representing the finest aspirations of the people of Canyon County." I was worn out after eight years of constant work on the issues, and my family was beginning to forget what I looked like.

We discussed John Braitman of Ventura County, Merrie Hathaway Ashton and Larry Caplinger as potential members of the Governor's Commission, as well as the idea that State Senator Walter W. Stiern (D-Bakersfield) could serve as a conduit to the governor.

Carmen mentioned her letter to Gary Owens of KMPC 710, who had mentioned Harry Fedderson as an "obscure personality." Then Gary Owens mentioned Harry again, saying he was indeed a "household word."

The minutes of March 1 were only one and one-half pages long. Don Jennings was elected to the board. Carmen had been protesting that three pages was too much. Appended to these minutes was "Note: Watsamatta? Youall sick??" The treasury was up to \$681.91. On March 14 the budget was set at \$2500.

The chambers and the committee were not working together closely. A letter from the chamber to the committee president was addressed to "George" Fedderson. On April 2 the Committee board met on Sunday afternoon due to the unexpected alacrity with which Governor Brown had appointed his Commission. I participated as an invited guest. The minutes of the meeting listed the appointees and provided comments.

Herbert Joines was unknown to us. He was not a registered voter locally in July of 1977. The newspaper listed him as a Democrat, a C.P.A., aged 37.

Bob Endress, 42, a Republican, had run against me in 1976 for Supervisor. At that time he had put on a big campaign during the last week, but had done little else. He had signed the petition both times, and lived next door to Pat and Chuck Willett. In 1976 he was employed by TransAmerica, but later he was a private insurance investigator.

John Casper Goldbach, of Hollywood and California State University Northridge, 47, a Democrat, had been a professor of Kathy Morrison in Assemblyman Cline's office. She called him a "sharp cookie and an advocate of small government."

We knew nothing of Charlene Orszag, 44, of Canoga Park, with a history of activity with the League of Women Voters.

Michele Prichard, 23, was an environmentalist and research associate. She had been in California for less than a year. A major in public policy from Washington University in St. Louis, she was later reported as applying for a commission seat because she wanted to get involved. She gained a reputation for showing up at a meeting dressed in a tube top; no one had told her she was walking into a public meeting.

Twenty-six years later Ms. Prichard explained that she had been a student of Barry Commoner, the environmental activist and 1980 Citizens Party presidential

candidate, and had been hired to work in Laguna Beach for the Scientists' Institute for Public Information, co-chaired by Commoner and Margaret Mead. In that capacity she had developed contacts with labor in Los Angeles, and Scott Franklin of the firefighters' union (and a Newhall resident) suggested she apply for the commission seat. She knew they were against county formation, but ultimately voted to put it on the ballot because she "thought it should go to a vote."

I outlined a presentation I thought we ought to make to the Commission at their first meeting. Harry and Carmen were given the task of implementing it.

When the board met on April 14 Art and Betty Evans, Don Ray, Jan Heidt and Ruth Newhall also attended. Don Ray presented his concept of the "average voter," called Ethel. To her political affiliation was least important. She did not know who her representatives were. She did not care about Canyon County, or her own mayor. She got her news from the television, and would vote for the personality.

We should have all the campaign workers raising money, should do opinion research to discover the magic formula, and then do a media blitz. We should not speak on the issues, but might use a slogan, such as "Let Freedom Ring." Don Jennings thought we could raise several hundred thousand dollars. Jan Heidt was running the Canyon County Association, a separate entity formed to run the campaign. She said that John Johnston felt it would cost \$2 million for a successful campaign.

On May 2 Jan Heidt reported to the Formation Committee that her neighbors, who had just been reassessed, were more interested in passing the Jarvis-Gann initiative than Canyon County. Harry Fedderson said that he had been invited to join the county helicopter tour by Austin Anderson. Both Anderson and Gene Krekorian of Economic Research Associates, had been hired as staff for the Commission. Fedderson planned to reciprocate by asking a county person to come on the bus tour which the committee was planning, a tour which might cost the entire contents of the Formation Committee's treasury.

Fedderson related the details of a meeting with Jim Dickason of Newhall Land and Farming. Dickason said that the farming company would prefer to work with the county they knew, that Canyon County would take some time to set up their government and was an unknown factor. However, the company would not take a position, and was down to 45,000 acres, with two-thirds of that in Ventura County. He explained that they had stuck with the 1968 plan for development pretty closely, had plans to develop a regional shopping center, and that Sears had bought property in it, but would not develop until the population reached 100,000.

Carmen Sarro said that turnover on the board of the Chamber of Commerce left the board with little knowledge of the 1976 movement. Gene Trowbridge, who was in his nineties and had been very successful in gathering petition signatures, was collecting press clippings for the committee.

Fire statistics were presented to the committee during the May 25 meeting:



Canyon County was proposed at 761.5 square miles. Of this 348.6 square miles was national forest, 352.5 square miles was Forest and Fire Warden territory, and the Consolidated Fire Protection District occupied 60.4 square miles. Thus 45.8% was in the national forest, the Forest and Fire Warden protected 46.3%, and 7.9% was in the district. Los Angeles County's 4083.2 square miles included 1079.6 square miles of national forest (32.3%). The Forest and Fire Warden territory totaled 1396 square miles (25.3%). A list of fires from 1946 to 1976 revealed that until the Magic Mountain fire in July 1960, which consumed 27,410 acres, there had been no fire over 10,000 acres. The Liebre fire of June 1968 took 48,428 acres, and the Clampitt fire of September 1970 covered 42,750 acres, with three others at the same time taking 29,745 acres. Eighteen of the vehicles in the eight stations in the proposed county were credited to the Forest and Fire Warden's operation, and the Consolidated Fire Protection District funded three.

Our area had two engine companies in the District, giving them each responsibility for thirty square miles. However, the county average for the district was 2.6 square miles. The county was using state funding for the Forest and Fire Warden to handle their responsibility for the north county, and we would suffer the consequences in the statistics. Curiously, in this "remote" area of "extreme fire danger" the Forest and Fire Warden had one company per 50.4 square miles while the county average was 42.3 square miles. For our area the state provided \$540,093.68. We had 21.2% of the equipment and 16.49% of the uniformed personnel of the Forest and Fire Warden for 34.6% of the area served.

The county was preparing figures for "estimated actuals" and post-Jarvis. Harry Fedderson was in regular contact with Austin Anderson. County Fire Chief Clyde Bragdon, a Newhall resident, gave testimony to the Commission on July 9. He reported on the various fire departments in the area, said Canyon County would not have the support of units from the San Fernando Valley, and there would be no equality in fighting fires. He pointed out that the Commission used different figures in two parts of their report, and that the best way to run a fire department was to have just one. There were no surprises in the "factual" material.

As the Committee board meetings continued the discussions were largely about various aspects of the developing Commission report, small fund raising efforts, and the slow sales of "Win-a-Wabbit Waffle" tickets. By August 8 there was \$84.70 in the treasury. There was real concern about the transition procedures.

By mid-August the Commission was pushing hard to make a deadline allowing for a November election. They were struggling with the financial details but stated clearly that Canyon County could have survived on a much lower tax rate in past years. Proposition 13, passed in June, would put all the counties in the state into deficit positions. Canyon County would save Los Angeles County \$7.2 million per year, a savings of a mere two-thirds of one per cent of the budget. However, the Canyon County tax base was growing faster than the Los Angeles County base.<sup>4</sup>

The Commission had had the benefit of the previous Canyon County Commission's experience, as well as that of the Peninsula and South Bay county commissions that had completed their work. Peninsula and South Bay had been defeated. Chairman Goldbach had also kept in touch with the chairman of the proposed Los Padres County, which tried unsuccessfully to form out of the northern part of Santa Barbara County.

On August 24 the committee moved to consideration of the ballot argument, written by Harry Fedderson and Don Jennings. It was signed by Jack Baum of the Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association, who was interested in a city-county for the San Fernando Valley; Joe Whiteside, a local carpenter's union official; Robert Wilkinson, a Los Angeles City Councilman, and Harry Fedderson.

At the end of August both the Committee and the Association were momentarily unable to pay their bills.

By September 8, 1978, candidates had filed. There were few of them. Some who had taken out papers had not gathered the 165 signatures needed to run for supervisor, and only Tom White found the 818 necessary to run for countywide office. Harry A. Fedderson, a research manager and rancher from Saugus, was the sole candidate for first district supervisor. R. Earl Andrews, an investment advisor from Valencia, was running unopposed in the second district. Bob Silverstein, a retired manufacturing engineer from Friendly Valley in Newhall, and Martin C. Tomson, a film editor and writer from Newhall, were competing in the third district. Tim Boydston, a medical laboratory technician and full time student from Canyon Country, and D.L. "Don" Jennings, a programs manager from Canyon Country, faced off in the fourth. William Broyles, a custodian at College of the Canyons, listed on the ballot as a "school employee," was running unopposed in the fifth district. Bruce Kline was trying to qualify as a write-in candidate for assessor, and Tom White was unopposed as a candidate for District Attorney.

The September 18 meeting of the board included guests Tim Boydson, Dan Hon, Connie Worden and Ruth Newhall. Most of the candidates – all had been invited – were missing. By October 2 the Committee had \$10 on hand, and Jan Heidt's Association had raised \$12,000 and spent most of it. On October 16, about two weeks before the election, there was no quorum. On October 24 it was reported that Jane Nerpel was helping to distribute flyers. Vince Wiese, the local Chevrolet dealer, had contributed money, and donations were up to \$25,000. The Committee was trying to reach the NAACP and the Michael Jackson talk show.

Coverage in *The Signal* was light. From the first part of September to mid-October there was none. The issue did not need to be sold in the Santa Clarita Valley, but in hindsight perhaps some coverage of fund raising efforts would have helped. On October 18, 22 and 25 Ruth Newhall ran a three-part explanation called "What Is Canyon County?" On the 25th there was a story about the Canyon County Association, led by Jan Heidt, having raised \$25,000.

That same day Scott Newhall editorialized above the masthead on page 1, under the title, "Why Must We Clean Baxter's Chamber Pot?"

“We are the salt of the good earth of Southern California and possibly the entire United States. We are not the mob of quarry grunts, chiseling out huge slabs of travertine marble for the Supervisors’ throne room. We are men and women of quality – not scullery maids nor footmen assigned to empty out the chamber pots of the likes of Baxter Ward and his four accomplices.”

Two days later Baxter came out in favor of city incorporation. He did politely wish us luck in the election.

On November 5 *The Signal* included an “Election ’78” section with the 162 pages of the Canyon County study summarized on pages 3-11, and more coverage on the supervisorial candidates.

Wednesday, November 8, the election returns came in. Entered into the minute book of the Committee was a photocopy of *The Signal* front page. The above-the-masthead headline read “Wins Here – Wins in L.A. Canyon County Victorious.” It went on to say that at midnight the results in Los Angeles County had been 56% in favor, and in Canyon County 59%. Alas, this was a joke.

Above the masthead in red ink ran the real headline, “Inconclusive here – Loses in L.A. CANYON COUNTY DEFEATED.” We had won only 33% of the vote in the rest of the county, while taking 59% in the proposed county. The results were too late for any story to appear. Too days later photographs of our “victory party” at the Elks’ Lodge showed happy faces. We had won at home, and had done a little better in the rest of the county than before. We had not suffered any illusions. The preliminary returns showed the results to be 13,214 to 9,027 in our valley, and 559,379 to 1,003,828 in the rest of the county.

Many of the local people who voted “no” were under the impression that they had no right to vote for the officials. With the lack of competition many people who voted “yes” did not vote the rest of the ballot. Tom White scored 10,670 countywide. Fedderson got 2,061 votes, Andrews 1,838, and Broyles 1,935. In the contested third district Bob Silverstein won with 1,578 for 61.8% of the vote over Tomson. In the fourth district Don Jennings won over Tim Boydston by a margin of 2,076 to 687.

On November 17 Harry Fedderson, Carmen Sarro, Bob Silverstein and Gil Callowhill attended the Formation Committee board meeting. Jan Heidt and I were listed as guests. We had carried the beach cities and 45% of the voters in the San Fernando Valley. We discussed options. If we wanted to try for a county again it would take 300,000 signatures. The people interested in breaking up Los Angeles County would meet in January. We could try for incorporation.

On December 21 the board voted to keep the committee’s corporate structure active. Harry Fedderson had appointed Dianne Curtis, Jim Schutte, Marj Akehurst and Joe Whiteside to the nominating committee for the 1979 annual meeting, at which Harry Fedderson, Bonnie Mills, Bob Silverstein, Paul Troxell, Gil Callowhill, Carmen Sarro and Don Jennings were elected to the board. Harry was reelected President, with Don Jennings as Executive V.P., Carmen as Secretary and Bob Silverstein as Treasurer.

For two meetings it appeared that the members of the committee wanted to

forge ahead. Then activity slowed. City incorporation was mentioned in August. I was invited to talk about city formation at the committee's meeting in September. A show of hands showed unanimity in supporting cityhood, but no specific action was taken. In January 1980 they met and decided to leave the fate of a supportive bill that Bob Cline had introduced in the legislature in Bob Cline's hands. Gil Callowhill handed in three scrapbooks with the request they be turned over to the historical society. Dan Hon moved, with a second from Gil Callowhill, that Harry Fedderson, Carmen Sarro, Nancy Albrecht, Bob Silverstein, Jane Kohut, Bonnie Mills and I be elected to the board. Officers named by the board were Harry Fedderson as President, Carl Boyer as Executive Vice President, Carmen Sarro as Secretary and Bob Silverstein as Treasurer, with the balance as Vice Presidents. We had \$253.41 in the checking account. We moved to donate the scrapbooks to the historical society.

On May 10, 1982, Harry Fedderson, Gil Callowhill, Nancy Albrecht, Bonnie Mills and Carmen Sarro met. They paid their annual dues and elected Harry Fedderson as President, Nancy Albrecht as Vice President, Carmen Sarro as Secretary and Bonnie Mills as Treasurer. There was \$252.51 in the account. Carmen asked why the organization was kept in existence. Harry said something might change. A majority voted to keep going.

There were no more minutes.

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<sup>1</sup>Los Angeles *Herald-Examiner*, Jan. 29, 1977; and Long Beach *Independent Press-Telegram*, Feb. 6, 1977.

<sup>2</sup>*Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 1977.

<sup>3</sup>Minutes of the Canyon County Formation Committee meeting of Jan. 9, 1978. The minutes reflect the humor in the meetings. "Carl [Boyer] made a motion, seconded by George [Wells], that Gil [Callowhill] attend the January 10th meeting of the Board of Supervisors and the Committee pay expenses. Don Jennings moved to amend the motion to limit Gil to two martinis and was ignored by Committee." Carmen Sarro, substituting as secretary that evening, made sure that a record of our fun was preserved.

<sup>4</sup>*The Signal*, Aug. 16 and 18, 1978.