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(Continued from p. 229)

FROM MEXICO

7.75 MGD Water Plant

The largest sea desalting plant in the world, 7.75 million gallons a day, capable of alleviating the thirst of a half million persons in Tijuana (Baja California), will be in operation next year. A similar plant is under construction in the Netherlands; the biggest operating plant to date is the 3.6 mgd plant in Kuwait.

Total cost will run to 347 million pesos (\$27,760,000), with the plant itself, being constructed by the American Aqua-Chem Corp., costing 86 million pesos (\$6,880,000). Balance of the money is for a canal from Rosarito (site of the plant) to Tijuana, and for distribution systems in the city.

Tijuana, a favorite spot for Americans coming for the day or weekend, has suffered a chronic lack of water for decades. Back in 1921 the city had 1,000 inhabitants, but by 1950 this leaped to 70,000 and today the population stands at over 300,000. A daily floating population is conservatively estimated at 200,000. An influx of new arrivals, attracted by proximity to the U.S. and chance at earning dollars (the dollar is the more accepted medium of exchange in Tijuana than the peso), averages around 7,000 a month.

The deep wells of La Mision, and the waters of the Rodriguez Dam have been able to provide water needs of only some 20 percent of population. But delivery of water has been sporadic, with quality not even appropriate to washing clothing, according to chronic complaints of Tijuana housewives.

Cost of the water is high, ranging between 15 and 20 pesos (\$1.20 to \$1.60) for a cubic meter of water distributed by tank car. Drinking water is sold in gallon bottles at a cost of 10 pesos (\$.80) a cubic meter, 50 percent more than the current rate in Mexico City.

The problem has been chronic in Tijuana for a long time; and all hotels carry warning signs in English admonishing guests not to drink even the so-called "pure" drinking water provided in gallons, but to stick to mineral water.

Finally, last Dec. 27, when Tijuana citizens were informed by Guillermo Martinez Dominguez, director of the Federal Electrical Commission, that questions had been ironed out to resolve the water shortage problem, the population unanimously agreed to underwrite the desalination project.

Martinez Dominguez told a committee that the Federal Government, however, would not lift a finger until

the inhabitants of Tijuana agreed to pay "just tariffs" for water service. Within three days President Gustavo Diaz Ordaz received more than 20,000 telegrams from heads of families, and 108 citizen's organizations, pleading for work to be begun. In any case, citizens were getting the better part of the bargain for they will be paying for drinkable water at the rate of 3 pesos (24 cents) a cubic meter, instead of the 15 to 20 pesos of the past.

The desalination plant is going up alongside a giant thermoelectric plant constructed by the Federal Electrical Commission beside Rosarito Beach. This plant will also receive limited quantities of distilled water extracted from the sea for cooling of generators providing electrical energy for the entire Baja California peninsula and a part of Sonora.

Evaporation of seawater by turbogenerators of the thermoelectric plant will provide 29 million liters—7.75 million gallons—of distilled water each day, enough to provide Tijuana's needs for the next 25 years. *Emil Zubryn*

FROM BRITAIN

Tanker Disaster Cure Worse Than Disease

The cure for the Torrey Canyon disaster was worse, in terms of sea life, than the disaster itself.

Three marine biologists, who went under the sea to study the after effect of the huge tanker's sinking, say that far more damage has been done to marine life by detergents used to break up the oil slicks than by the oil.

Geoffrey Potts, John Gage and Bob Forster of the Marine Biological Laboratory, Plymouth, found a vast cemetery of marine life 12 feet down.

In deeper water they found dead starfish, crabs, lobster and rockfish, and others with claws and legs missing. Urchins and razorshell clams, which normally bury themselves in sand, were groping around as if doped.

They reported to the Devon Trust for Nature Conservation.

Ian Mercer of the Devon Trust, says: "Two million gallons of detergent have been poured on the shores by the crudest methods with little thought for the long-term consequences and little attention paid to feeble cries of scientists who hovered on the fringe of the military-style activity."

The experts accept that clearing oil from beaches was the prime consideration but condemn wholesale use of detergents which exterminated sea life.

F.C.L.