

Caucus

by HUGO

I'LL ANNOUNCE THAT YOU'VE BECOME A CANDIDATE.

GOOD! I'LL HAVE TO DENY IT, OF COURSE.



OF COURSE. THEN I'LL SAY YOUR CAMPAIGN IS READY TO ROLL.

GREAT! I'LL HAVE TO DISAVOW IT, THOUGH.



OF COURSE. THEN I'LL REPORT YOU'RE IN THE RACE ALL THE WAY.

I'LL HAVE TO DISCLAIM IT!



OF COURSE. THEN I'LL DROP IT THAT YOU'LL ENTER ALL PRIMARIES.

I'LL SAY- I'LL HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE.



OF COURSE. THEN I'LL TELL THEM YOU'VE BEEN WORKING ON THE ISSUES.



WHAT DO YOU THINK THE BIG ISSUE WILL BE?

CANDOR IN POLITICS!



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Palaver, politicking and procrastination

By ROBERT MEYERS

In the Late Pleistocene Era, which preceded Sam Yorty's mayoralty of Los Angeles by some 30,000 years, sabre-tooth tigers, dire wolves and curved-tusk mastodons clawed, hacked, chewed and otherwise did each other in. Often, their fighting took place at Rancho La Brea, in whose tar pits bordering Wilshire Boulevard their remains were preserved for later discovery. Now a new set of Great Beasts has come to dispute the same area, and the conflict is not so much over territorial hunting rights as preferential paths for rapid-transit vehicles. These modern creatures — politicians, bureaucrats and planners — often, like the beasts of old, tend to mire in the muck.

The Los Angeles area already has a rapid-transit system of sorts, the 470-mile freeway system. But it no longer meets the needs of the sprawling, highly urbanized region. (There is also a bus system that doesn't really begin to compete.) There is a consensus that a rapid-transit system must be built, but progress so far has been no match for palaver, provincial politicking and procrastination. Ray Hebert, urban affairs writer for the *Los Angeles Times*, summed up the chief element in the bureaucratic and political La Brea pit:

A major problem is the involvement of too many cities, public officials, governmental entities and public agencies. Their differing views have produced a confused deadlock. In view of this and the Los Angeles region's geography — 465 miles in the City of Los Angeles alone — an agreement may be next to impossible.

Bradley's baby

If Sam Yorty had won reelection as Los Angeles' mayor two years ago, there would likely be no more than the usual fuss made about the area's lack of an inexpensive, high-speed and low-pollution solution to the problem of moving people about the county. But Yorty lost, and his successor, City Councilman Tom Bradley, had campaigned on that very issue, and he has kept it in the public eye ever since.

Almost as soon as he took office, on July 1, 1973, Mayor Bradley began pressing the recalcitrant bureaucracies, both within his administration and in the jurisdictions surrounding it, in an effort to produce rapid-transit plans. Bradley took the matter up with the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors — apparently the first time in 40 years that city and county had met. Re-

peatedly, he declared that his administration's prime goal was construction of a working rapid-transit network. And yet, Los Angeles today still lacks not only a working network but even a specific plan for constructing one.

On June 6, 1974, Los Angeles County voters passed Proposition A, which enabled their government to take advantage of statewide Proposition 5, approved at the same election, permitting diversion of gasoline-tax revenues from highway construction to rapid-transit purposes. But only a few months later, in November, the voters turned down a one-cent sales-tax increase to provide the local share of funds needed to build a system. While a wildcat strike by bus drivers just before the election probably alienated some voters, Los Angelenos were also being asked pretty much to buy a pig in a poke; no one knew just where the system would go.

Federal quest

But Mayor Bradley persevered. If the sales tax could not be raised to finance a system whose cost somehow was estimated to be about a billion dollars, perhaps the federal government could come to the Mayor's aid. As much as \$800 million might be available for Los Angeles rapid-transit development, in the form of 4-to-1 matching grants under the 1974 National Mass Transportation Assistance Act. Los Angeles would have to raise \$200 million to qualify. A goodly number of cities, including San Francisco, Atlanta, Detroit, Miami, and New York were also competing for grants, but each had one thing that Los Angeles lacked: plans.

Los Angeles is not much like any of the competing cities. Within Los Angeles County are 77 incorporated cities. There are also a number of autonomous agencies created over the years to deal with specific regional functions. One of these is the Southern California Rapid Transit District, formed in 1964 to do what BART was struggling to do up north.

For years, SCRTD had poked along as, basically, a regional bus operator. But it also became intimately involved in rapid-transit discussions; in theory, at least, it had the capability to design a rapid-transit route, which the district's directors ordered only last month, on a link between Long Beach and downtown Los Angeles.

There are other agencies, however, and they became involved, too — such as SCAG (the Southern California Association of Governments), the California Department of Transportation, and planning commissions from most of the affected municipalities. Each of these bodies could exercise some control over the final outcome, either directly through withholding construction funds, or indirectly through the bureaucratic know-how and

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