

## Controlling the controllers

A writer regurgitates a weary collection of talking points in congratulating the Town of Apple Valley for its efforts to punish Apple Valley Ranchos Water Company for professionally providing our water for decades ("Controlling water," Daily Press, Dec. 24, 2015). As usual, none of these talking points withstands even cursory scrutiny.

First, there is the xenophobic argument, which apparently doesn't apply to any of the other utilities or big businesses in town. But the real question is where the writer and the Town were when Ranchos was (with the help of those simply awful foreigners) pouring millions of dollars into maintaining and improving our community's water system?

Second, the Council has never demonstrated it is doing what is best for our community, let alone focusing on it. Whether you want to look at the piecemeal destruction of Outer Highway 18 to the construction of the animal shelter to the purchase of the Country Club to the Yucca Loma "bridge to nowhere" to this latest fiasco with Ranchos, the only guiding principle seems to be "more, more, more." To get more, you usually have to pay more, and when a government agency is involved, you have to pay a lot more.

Third, water has always been a necessity. Ranchos has provided us with this necessity for nearly 70 years and done a darned good job of it. The "cost of doing nothing," as the writer puts it, is that we continue to receive excellent water and excellent service from Ranchos. The cost of doing something will almost certainly run into the hundreds of millions of dollars, and once the Town has its hooks into the water system, that's it. Governments never admit mistakes: They simply blame someone else and then raise taxes.

Fourth, Ranchos customers pay the second-lowest rate for water service, when you account for the hidden charges typical of municipal water utilities. As a bonus, Ranchos' dealings are transparent thanks to the CPUC, which will assuredly not be the case with the Town in charge.

Fifth, if the writer has a bone to pick with The Carlyle Group, her worries are almost over, as the sale to Liberty Utilities is all but final.

Sixth, whether or not the writer wishes to acknowledge it, the CPUC has been looking out for our interests.

Eliminating them from the feedback loop means that when (not if) the Town wants to raise water rates, there will be no opposition, especially given the Town's manifold transgressions of Proposition 218.

— *Greg Raven, Apple Valley*

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