

“A New Federal City”: San Diego during World War II

ABRAHAM SHRAGGE

The author is a doctoral student in history in the University of California, San Diego.

...the Federal Government will ultimately have to provide for the comprehensive development of San Diego as a new Federal city.¹

As several popular magazines stated at the time, the outbreak of World War II produced a “blitz-boom” in the city of San Diego, California.² The effects of the boom were readily apparent: as the city’s manufacturing enterprises geared up for wartime production, tens of thousands of people swarmed into town in search of jobs, while the local military bases grew markedly in both number and size. Central-city and suburbs alike swelled to accommodate the newcomers, and the city’s utility systems and water supply all but failed to keep up with demand. With substantial help from the federal government, San Diegans attacked these and related problems in various ways, and to an extent succeeded in solving many of them. Almost overnight, the war appeared to have turned San Diego into a real metropo-

1. “Public Improvements Necessitated by the National Defense Program at San Diego, California,” Oct. 8, 1940, a report to the Secretary of the Treasury on a conference held in San Diego on Oct. 4, 1940, attended by Under Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, representatives of the War Department, the British Purchasing Mission, and Consolidated Aircraft Corporation. Records of the Department of the Navy, General Correspondence File of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, Record Group 71, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as RG 71, NA).

2. *Life* (July 28, 1941), 64–69; *Saturday Evening Post* (June 19, 1941), 14–36; *National Geographic* (Jan. 1942), 45–80; *Travel* (Sept. 1944), 20–21, 33.

lis, something that three generations of boosters—try as they might—had not been able to achieve.

San Diego would never again be a “sleepy Navy town,” as Gerald Nash has described its condition before the war.³ Here, however, World War II produced a culmination of long-term processes rather than the abrupt transformation that Nash has suggested. In fact, San Diego had been growing rapidly for many years, and its mode of development had been well established by 1900. The most notable change that took place during the war period was the degree to which the federal government dominated certain mechanisms of urban growth, especially the installation and expansion of basic infrastructure.

The blitz-boom was a temporary phenomenon, for it hardly changed the way the city conducted its business. Before, during, and after the war, San Diego’s affairs were directed by a small group of businessmen, who, under the aegis of the chamber of commerce united themselves and the general populace in order to maintain the preeminence of the local naval establishment. Because the business community had over the years formed such a cordial and productive bond with the War Department, the U.S. Navy, and the Congress, San Diego seemed well disposed to accommodate the massive changes that the war’s demands dictated. San Diegans, however, were prepared neither for the magnitude of the wartime expansion nor for the heavy-handedness of their federal benefactors.

Two of the major transformations that Nash has asserted—racial and ethnic diversity, and “the large-scale infusion of women,”⁴—largely bypassed San Diego, thanks in part to the steadfast conservatism of the city’s business leaders. And while the federal government’s investment in San Diego’s infrastructure and defense industries surely expanded during the war, the increases were more incremental than exponential. Above all, the U.S. Navy would remain the single most important participant in the city’s economic and social life, as it already had been for many years.

The most cogent analysis of San Diego’s peculiar history

3. Gerald Nash, *The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War* (Lincoln, 1985), vii, 17, 56–59, *passim*.

4. Nash, *American West Transformed*, 40–41, 88–89.

may be found in the work of Roger Lotchin, who has characterized the city’s growth both as a part of a “Darwinian struggle” between itself and its competitors to the north, and as an ideal example of a “martial metropolis”—a “type of urban form organized around its partnership with the military services.”⁵ In San Diego, these phenomena were complementary, and were driven by the attitudes and actions of the city’s leading businessmen and politicians. By successfully “interfusing...public and private prosperity,” San Diego’s boosters were able to create an aura of consensus around a growth ethic that then helped them to achieve their goals, although perhaps not as quickly or as completely as they might have wished.⁶

Durable growth and prosperity were slow in coming to San Diego. The city’s natural allure, exemplified by its equable climate and landlocked bay, was more than offset by natural obstacles to development. Often described as one of “the ten best natural harbors in the world,” the bay was actually full of silt, and so its capacity for shipping was severely limited. San Diego’s “Mediterranean climate” belies the fact that the city sits on the coastal edge of a nearly waterless desert. Periodic drought and limited local sources made the city’s water supply problems a constant drag on urban growth, despite the boosters’ protestations to the contrary. And mountains to the north and east isolate San Diego from the rest of California, which caused railroad developers to favor the more accessible approaches to Los Angeles, leaving the southernmost city to languish without a direct transcontinental rail link.⁷

San Diego’s indigenous problems were too expensive for its citizens to overcome by themselves. Only by capturing the superior resources of the national state was the city able to have its harbor dredged and its water supply assured. These difficulties

5. Roger Lotchin, “The Darwinian City: The Politics of Urbanization in San Francisco between the World Wars,” *Pacific Historical Review*, XLVIII (1979), 357–381; Lotchin, “Introduction: The Martial Metropolis,” in Roger Lotchin, ed., *The Martial Metropolis: U.S. Cities in War and Peace* (New York, 1984), xii–xiii; and for the most comprehensive analysis, Lotchin, *Fortress California, 1910–1961: From Warfare to Welfare* (New York, 1992), esp. chaps. 1, 2, 5, 6, and 9.

6. John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place* (Berkeley, 1987), 50–57.

7. Robert Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850–1920* (Berkeley, 1967), 51–55.

had been present at the city's founding, and had endured through the Second World War, by which time, as Nash has pointed out, San Diego was "more than ever a federal province."⁸

Beginning in 1870, San Diego's businessmen conjoined their vision of urban expansion with a steady buildup of military bases that became the city's hallmark. The boosters soon perfected their techniques for extracting military appropriations, which they were often able to use to create the crucial elements of urban infrastructure. The city's most successful tactic—giving away large tracts of valuable land to the navy—contributed to a unique civic culture whose other principal attribute was its dependency upon the largesse of the federal government as the primary instrument in San Diego's course of urban development.

One of the city's pioneer businessmen, John D. Spreckels, expressed the spirit of San Diego's booster philosophy in a testimonial speech he delivered to the elite of the business community in 1923:

Why did I come to San Diego? Why did any of you come? We came because we thought we saw an unusual opportunity here. We believed that everything pointed to this as the logical site for a great city and seaport. In short, we had faith in San Diego's future. We gave of our time and our strength and our means...to help develop our city, and naturally, our own fortunes.... Big cities require big men—men big enough to forget petty personal differences, and pull together without jealousies, suspicions or factional bickering.... [B]efore you can turn a small town into a big city, you have got to shed your small town skin.... [W]hat is the matter with San Diego? Why is it not the metropolis and seaport that its geographical and other unique advantages entitle it to be? Why does San Diego always just miss the train, somehow?⁹

Spreckels's words conveyed an apt sense of civic inferiority. San Diego in fact *had* "missed the train," literally as well as figuratively—a condition that has defined San Diego's urban culture throughout the city's history.

8. Nash, *American West Transformed*, 17.

9. John D. Spreckels testimonial dinner, June 13, 1923, Ed Fletcher Papers, Mandeville Department of Special Collections, University of California, San Diego, Library, MSS 81, box 27 (hereafter cited as Fletcher Papers, UCSD).

After a failed boom during the 1880s, the whole city seemed to have become infused with the sense of insecurity that Spreckels had projected in his farewell speech. Since 1870, the chamber of commerce, local newspapers, real estate developers, bankers, and private individuals had been producing a steady stream of booster literature that only confirmed this attitude while at the same time trying to beckon in-migration. Pamphlets with titles such as *The Italy of Southern California* and *San Diego, Our Italy* might have indicated that San Diegans felt unsure about the value of their culture and the aesthetic quality of their city, and therefore had to rely on European metaphors in describing their own landscape.¹⁰

The booster community had always been desperate to attract the interest of outsiders whose capital they might harness to San Diego's benefit. In 1887, when Spreckels, a real-life captain of industry, arrived in search of investment opportunities, local businessmen tried hard to accommodate him.¹¹ At the same time, however, the city's leaders reached out to the federal government for help in overcoming the area's natural shortcomings, calling for federal legislation to “complete the great railroad enterprise,” federal patronage in the form of a customs collection district, and federal dredging appropriations to make the harbor more viable.¹²

The most peculiar aspect of San Diego's civic culture was the ardor and unanimity with which the citizenry embraced the U.S. Navy. From the moment in 1898 that San Diegans learned of the navy's interest in establishing a coal depot there, the chamber of commerce initiated a perpetual crusade to expand the naval presence. The material basis for this behavior is clear—the navy would create a ready-made population boom composed of thousands of employed men (often with their families in tow),

10. Anne Farrar Hyde, *An American Vision: Far Western Landscape and National Culture, 1820–1920* (New York, 1990), 2–3.

11. H. Austin Adams, *The Man: John D. Spreckels* (San Diego, 1924), 159–173. One thing San Diegans had to do to capture Spreckels was rewrite the city charter in order to give him fifty-year rather than twenty-five-year franchises for his wharf and streetcar developments; Spreckels claimed that the shorter franchises would not be worth the investment.

12. San Diego Chamber of Commerce (hereafter cited as SDCOC), “President's Report,” 1870, 1871, 1872, 1873, 1874, Greater San Diego Chamber of Commerce.

an idea that was expressed repeatedly in chamber reports. Moreover, the navy's industrial needs, including ship fueling and repair, base and housing construction, aircraft overhaul and training facilities, might well substitute for otherwise scarce civilian industries.¹³ In San Diego and other martial metropolises, the fusion of civilian and military interests became the key to realizing urban ambitions.¹⁴

In 1912 San Diego sent its own man, William Kettner, to Congress for the first time. Kettner was the city's perfect booster—an enthusiastic chamber of commerce leader and an ardent navalist. He began lobbying for naval bases and dredging appropriations even before he was sworn into office, soon claiming to have persuaded the navy to complete the coaling station, and then clearing the way for the service to acquire several other properties for its use. Kettner became known as San Diego's "million-dollar congressman" because he had extracted that amount and more from the federal government for his district in such short order. And herein lay his genius. While San Francisco Bay area cities were angling for a "main home [naval] base" that might cost between \$60 and \$150 million, Kettner sought \$50,000 here and \$250,000 there on his district's behalf, which sums were hardly noticed by those who had the power to refuse his requests.¹⁵ This accretional strategy served San Diego well over the next several decades.

The outbreak of World War I fortuitously combined with San Diego's Panama-California Exposition of 1915–1916 to put the city and the navy into business with each other as never before. Kettner and his booster associates squired Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt and Col. Joseph Pendleton, USMC, around the fair and sold them on the idea of establishing an "advance Marine Base" and a naval training station in San Diego. The consummation of these plans de-

13. Remarkably similar processes obtained in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay area during the same decades. See Roger Lotchin, "The City and the Sword: San Francisco and the Rise of the Metropolitan-Military Complex, 1919–1941," *Journal of American History*, LXV (1979), 996–1020.

14. See, for example, Christopher Silver, "Norfolk and the Navy: The Evolution of City-Federal Relations, 1917–46," in Lotchin, ed., *Martial Metropolis*, 109–134.

15. Lotchin, *Fortress California*, 27–30, and William Kettner, *Why It Was Done and How* (San Diego, 1923), 9–49.

pended upon a series of extraordinary real estate transactions that included a group of Kettner’s friends selling the navy a tract of tideland property that they owned, and the city giving the navy the rest. Thereafter, the navy, the marines, and the army acquired properties in and around San Diego for several different purposes, including training stations, a naval hospital, border outposts, aviation bases, and a shipyard.¹⁶ Once the Exposition closed in 1916, its grounds in Balboa Park were given over completely to military uses for the duration of the war. By the time the Marine Base and Naval Training Center opened in the early 1920s, the navy had built seven bases in San Diego at a cost of \$20 million, and Washington had budgeted \$17 million more to complete these projects.¹⁷

Events such as visit of the Grand Fleet in 1908, the annual observance of Navy Day, and the first modern aircraft carrier’s entering the bay in 1931 caused the whole city to turn out in riotous celebration. San Diegans constantly fell over one another in their attempts to entertain sailors of all ranks, and to impress Congress and the navy’s top leadership with the warmth of San Diego’s welcome. Newspaper accounts appeared almost daily, reporting dinners, dances, meetings, and excursions, all organized on the navy’s behalf.

Even before 1900 the navy began to appear as an attraction in tourist brochures, real estate promotions, and streetcar timetables. Canny real estate promoters obtained indirect endorsements for their subdivisions from top navy brass such as Assistant Secretary of the Navy Charles Darling, who was quoted in a 1905 flyer: “...I believe the harbor of San Diego, because of its location, is one of the most important in the United States, and that it will grow in importance in its relation to the Navy Department, and also in its relation to the commercial world...”¹⁸ A booklet of poetry inspired by San Diego’s spectacular vistas included a photograph of the USS *Iowa*.¹⁹ A 1926

16. Kettner, *Why It Was Done and How*, *passim*.

17. SDCOC, “President’s Report, 1923,” pp. 3, 4.

18. Ralston Realty Company, *University Heights: The Ideal Home Spot* (San Diego, 1905), Goodman Collection, Mandeville Department of Special Collections, Central University Library, University of California, San Diego (hereafter cited as Goodman Collection, UCSD).

19. Allen H. Wright, ed., *San Diego and Vicinity: Tributes by Well Known Poets* (San Diego, 1907), Goodman Collection, UCSD.

subdivision brochure touted the navy's new 625-foot tall radio towers located nearby as a good reason to buy a home there.²⁰

By the mid-1930s, admirals on active duty in San Diego, as well as some who had recently retired, were themselves writing copy for chamber of commerce brochures, such as the beautifully illustrated *National Defense and the San Diego Dredging Program* sent exclusively to members of Congress. The booklet was designed to win the hearts and minds of those who were about to vote on a \$4 million appropriation that was subsequently passed. The admirals had learned to speak the chamber's language, and wholeheartedly promoted the rhetorical fusion of commercial and naval interests. According to the recently retired Chief of Naval Operations,

San Diego now has a considerable volume of merchant shipping which with harbor improvements and other developments is bound to increase.... *At the present moment there is need for additional berthing space and dredged water area for vessels and patrol planes which are coming along under our naval building program. The additional dredging and reclamation projects recommended are essential for the development of San Diego Harbor so as to give, consistent with merchant shipping requirements, the maximum service to the Fleet in Peace and in War.*

(Signed) W. H. Standley, Rear Admiral, U.S.N., Retired.²¹

In his contribution to the brochure, the current Commandant of the Eleventh Naval District noted in bold type that as substantial and worthwhile as earlier dredging improvements had been, "*they have not kept pace with the Navy's growing use of this area.*" The rest of this justification took the form of an implicit threat—in the absence of the appropriation, the navy might have to move somewhere else to do its peacetime training.²²

Most of the impetus for federal spending came not from the Congress, the War Department, or the Department of the Navy, but from San Diegans themselves. Since 1900 the chamber of commerce had attempted to influence naval policy for purposes of its own. The city's leaders demanded military

20. New University District Syndicate Subdividing Rolando, *San Diego: The Cradle of California* (San Diego, 1926), 14, Goodman Collection, UCSD.

21. SDCOC, *National Defense and the San Diego Dredging Program* (San Diego, 1936), 7. Emphasis original.

22. *Ibid.*, 25–27. The chamber reported with due pride that President Franklin D. Roosevelt "himself" had read their brochure.

fortification of the Mexican border as well as protection of the harbor and coastline. Much more important than defensive measures was the constant call for major federal investment in infrastructural improvements—especially harbor dredging—for which the navy was always promoted as the major beneficiary.²³

Before the 1930s, prominent citizens who sat on the chamber’s committees and boards employed more homely methods to achieve their goals. Sometimes they literally went door-to-door through the city to drum up subscriptions for civic improvements.²⁴ They were thus able to raise \$25,000 to build a road east across the desert, \$250,000 to build an Army-Navy YMCA, and \$280,000 to buy the property that they then donated to the War Department for the Naval Training Station.²⁵ But the big money always came from Washington, D.C. By acting together and by obtaining the support of the city’s rank and file, the boosters were able to harness the resources of the federal government which they then used to benefit both the city and themselves.

During the 1930s, the booster community achieved two critical breakthroughs that would make the later dimensions of the blitz-boom possible: First, they had overseen the massive expansion of the military installation and improvement of the harbor; and second, they had lured the ambitious Reuben F. Fleet and his Consolidated Aircraft Company to San Diego from Buffalo, New York.²⁶ In 1936 the federal government began its

23. The Secretary of the Navy’s correspondence files are replete with examples of the chamber of commerce’s efforts to generate naval policy for the city’s benefit. See George H. Ballou to the Secretary of the Navy (hereafter cited as SecNav), April 7, 1900, Secretary of the Navy—General Correspondence, 1897–1915, file 10924-2, Records of the Department of the Navy, Record Group 80, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as RG 80, NA); and Chief of Bureau of Equipment to SecNav, Second Endorsement, April 26, 1900, RG 80, NA.

24. SDCOC, “Annual Review, 1900–1901” and “Annual Report, 1919.” Also, Ed Fletcher, *Memoirs of Ed Fletcher* (San Diego, 1952), 292, 300, 305, 307.

25. To this worthy cause, John D. Spreckels had donated \$15,000. The property in question was purchased from the San Diego Securities Company, whose principals included chamber of commerce directors George Burnham (a future congressman), A.G. Spalding, H.H. Timken, and other prominent civic leaders. See Kettner, *Why It Was Done and How*, 61, and San Diego, *City Directory, 1912–1917*, (San Diego, 1917), *passim*.

26. What clinched the deal with Fleet was the offer by the city to lease for fifty years twenty-five acres of choice land adjacent to the municipal airport (itself adjacent to downtown San Diego) at a rate of \$1,000 per year. See *San Diego Union*, July 25, 1934.

largest dredging project to date, while Consolidated became the largest manufacturer and civilian employer in San Diego.²⁷ Of course, virtually all of Consolidated's work was on military contracts.

Washington invested far more in San Diego than the dredging and base-building projects, thus highlighting the considerable prewar "federal colonization" of San Diego, a process well supported by New Deal Agencies. The WPA/PWA put up the new civic center and built the county fairgrounds at Del Mar as well.²⁸ By 1941, the WPA had participated in more than a thousand projects in San Diego County. These included expanding the airport, refurbishing military buildings and constructing many new ones, creating recreational facilities, improving city streets, installing water lines and sewer systems, as well as initiating artistic and educational programs.²⁹ This agency spent at least \$13 million building up the city's civil and military infrastructure prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor.³⁰

When war broke out in Europe in 1939, San Diego's blitz-boom was already underway. The experience of the local aircraft plants was proof of this: Consolidated Aircraft, which had employed 1,600 workers in 1936, hired nearly 13,000 more by September 1940.³¹ The two other major manufacturers in town, Solar Aircraft and Ryan Aeronautical, grew from a few hundred to 5,365 employees between them during almost the same period.³²

As Tables 1-4 suggest, from 1935 on, the city experienced a demographic and economic revolution. The faster-than-usual expansion of the city's population that occurred during the war years put a tremendous strain on the school system, the housing supply, public as well as private transportation, the police force, and on the water and sewer systems. As usual, the chamber worked to alleviate problems to help.

27. *Ibid.*, Feb. 23, 1936.

28. San Diego Federal Writers' Project, *San Diego, a California City* (San Diego, 1937), 69-70.

29. Pamela Hart Branton, "The Works Progress Administration in San Diego" (M.A. thesis, San Diego State University, 1991), 110-129.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *San Diego Union*, June 30, 1935, Sept. 19, 1940. At its peak in 1943, Consolidated employed 40,000, and was operating twenty-four hours per day.

32. *San Diego Union*, Feb. 8, 1940.

Table 1: San Diego (City) Population Statistics

Year	Population	Percent Increase
1870	2,300	
1880	2,637	15
1890	16,159	513
1900	17,700	10
1910	39,578	124
1920	74,361	87
1930	147,995	99
1940	192,486	30
1942	*276,600	43 ('40-'42)
1944	286,050	3 ('42-'44)
1946	*320,000	12 ('44-'46)
1950	334,387	74 ('40-'50)

Sources: *San Diego Chamber of Commerce estimates; all others, United States Bureau of the Census.

Table 2: Military Population in San Diego County

Date	Military Population	Source
Aug. 1939	38,075	Eleventh Naval District
March 1944	193,296	U.S. Bureau of the Census
Jan. 1946	176,000	Chamber of Commerce estimate
April 1947	45,000	Chamber of Commerce estimate

Long before the blitz-boom reached its peak, the city’s housing supply had failed utterly to keep up with demand. By 1942, thousands of recent arrivals were living in substandard conditions of various descriptions—in a large, hastily installed trailer park in pastoral Mission Valley, in old trolley cars, in all-night movie theaters, and in tents.³³ Because it had always relied

33. House Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, *Hearings on San Diego*, 77 Cong., 1 sess. (June 12 and 13, 1941), part 12, *passim*; *Saturday Evening Post* (June 19, 1941), 34.

Table 3: Selected San Diego Blitz-Boom Statistics

Year	Agricultural Output (County)	Industrial Wage Earners	Industrial Payrolls	Industrial Output
1929		3,836	\$ 6,975,000	\$ 34,205,183
1930	\$ 12,579,550			
1935		4,000	5,000,000	30,000,000
1940	19,077,272	24,500	44,500,000	90,000,000
1941	24,468,070	47,100	73,900,000	160,000,000
1942	30,968,974	70,000	175,000,000	800,000,000
1943	39,799,517	74,000	192,000,000	1,000,000,000
1944	48,006,307	55,000	137,500,000	1,000,000,000
1945	52,524,360	32,000	80,000,000	500,000,000
1950	70,960,578	*20,783	*61,993,000	275,000,000
1955	92,849,830	**48,137	**224,969,000	743,300,000
1960	104,357,000	68,950	444,710,683	1,403,000,000

Sources: San Diego Chamber of Commerce, "Annual Reports," 1945, 1964, *1947 (nearest available year), **1954 (nearest available year); U.S. Census of Manufacturers, 1958.

Table 4: Military Payrolls in San Diego

Year	Total Military Payroll
1929	\$ 17,000,000
1939	30,000,000
1943	150,000,000
1946	90,000,000
1947	105,000,000
1949	97,662,708
1950	117,019,446
1960	264,765,370

Source: Greater San Diego Chamber of Commerce, Economic Research Bureau, *San Diego 1962 Business Survey* (San Diego, n.d.)

upon San Diego’s “civilian facilities” to house a large number of its personnel, the navy had attempted to encourage local developers to build affordable projects to accommodate sailors, soldiers, and their families.³⁴ San Diego’s business community had avoided confronting this situation in any realistic way, although subsidies and loans under the U.S. Housing Act of 1937 would have helped them to do so. According to Christine Killory, “Powerful economic interests in San Diego were more pre-occupied with protecting real estate values than housing the poor.”³⁵

As late as November 1942, chamber and aircraft industry officials had discussed the rather radical concept of moving people unconnected with defense work from their homes in order to house war workers. Another idea that got a serious hearing was to convert unused retail space into dormitories for aircraft plant employees.³⁶ The federal government had already taken this matter into its own hands, however, and created Linda Vista—“the largest single defense housing project and the largest low-income housing development in the world with a projected occupancy of 13,000 people.”³⁷ Because Linda Vista and other emergency projects were built under the exclusive authority of the federal government, local officials were left completely out of the planning process, whereby federal agencies rode roughshod over property owners and city agencies, and refused to take out building permits or reimburse the city adequately for schools and services.³⁸

34. Adm. William Leahy to the Postmaster General, Jan. 12, 1937, RG 80, NA. This policy had been enunciated as early as 1916 in a special report to Congress that called for “the encouragement of the development of such [civilian] resources in time of peace...as a measure of preparation for national defense.” See also “Preliminary Report of Navy Yard Commission,” 64 Cong., 2 sess., *H. Rep. 1946* (1917), vol. 32, part I, 14–15.

35. Christine Killory, “Temporary Suburbs: The Lost Opportunity of San Diego’s National Housing Projects,” *Journal of San Diego History*, XXXIX (1993), 36.

36. SDCOC, Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, Nov. 22, 1942, p. 2.

37. Killory, “Temporary Suburbs,” 37.

38. *Ibid.*, 39–40. For a detailed account of the limited success of local planning efforts in two other West Coast boom towns, see Carl Abbott, “Planning for the Home Front in Seattle and Portland, 1940–45,” in Lotchin, ed., *Martial Metropolis*, 163–189.

While the federal projects attempted to deal with the major issues, some problems remained unsolved until late in the war. Basic public services were only gradually installed and improved in the new tracts, and a high level of discomfort persisted for years. Moving the expanded population to and from work, shopping, and leisure pursuits was another major problem, as the existing transportation system was not up to the task. (See Table 5.) The chamber had persuaded the aircraft companies to structure their daily shift changes so that their employees would avoid commuting during peak shopping hours, but it was also necessary “to prevent non-workers from staying downtown for shopping...until five o’clock.” Thus the chamber unanimously passed a resolution to confine shopping between nine a.m. and four p.m. in order to keep space on buses and trolleys available for defense workers.³⁹

Table 5: Annual Streetcar Ridership

Year	Total Passengers	% Increase
1939	30,000,000	
1940	34,000,000	13.3
1941	46,000,000	35.3
1942	94,000,000	104.4
1943	129,000,000	37.2

Source: Day & Zimmermann Company, *Industrial and Commercial Survey, City of San Diego and San Diego County* (10 vols., San Diego, 1945), I, 74-75.

With the impending imposition of gasoline and rubber rationing, the chamber bemoaned “the fact that the community was planned with the idea of automobile service rather than the use of the city transportation system for a large percentage of its residents.” So the chamber applied to the proper authorities for relief from rationing strictures, and increased its lobbying efforts to get new roads and highways built with federal money

39. SDCOC, Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, June 18, 1942, p. 1.

as a defense measure.⁴⁰ The navy was already pursuing road construction on its own behalf, and was willing to override the chamber of commerce and city government when it saw fit to do so. The projects of greatest interest to both the navy and the city were the building of Harbor Drive, which would connect several of the most important naval bases with downtown, the airport, and the aircraft plants; a freeway through Balboa Park; and U.S. Highway 395, the main inland route north from the city.⁴¹

“[A]n adequate supply of trained labor for the aircraft industry” was one of the biggest difficulties San Diego faced during the war, and a general shortage of workers extended throughout the county.⁴² A project created by the National Youth Administration “to import girls to this city to be trained by the NYA [for war work] and housed by that agency” was rejected by the chamber’s Educational Committee, however, because it would add to the already acute housing problem. Moreover, the “release of two hundred unattached young women each four weeks into the community...would at all times present serious moral possibilities.”⁴³

Of special concern to the chamber was suppression of prostitution and eradication of venereal disease.⁴⁴ The actual rate of venereal infection was quite low in San Diego compared with other cities, but the municipal government, the city police force, and the navy decided to attack the “supply side” anyway, whether or not prostitutes were the real problem.⁴⁵ The city

40. *Ibid.*, June 11, 1942, p. 2.

41. Harbor Drive provides an interesting case study in its own right. Initially, it had been proposed as part of the “Nolen Plans” of 1908 and 1926—San Diego’s attempts to create a “city beautiful”—to which the navy had voiced its official approval. Because of the navy’s subsequent wartime accretion of waterfront property through condemnation, this road would now have to cross navy lands, requiring a complex land exchange and licensing procedure that is exhaustively documented in RG 71, NA.

42. Arthur Coons and Arjay Miller, *An Economic and Industrial Survey of the Los Angeles and San Diego Areas: Summary* (Sacramento, 1942), 28. See also House Committee on Naval Affairs, *Hearings on Investigations of Congested Areas* 78 Cong., 1 sess. (1943), 416 and 462 (hereafter cited as *Hearings on Congested Areas*).

43. SDCOC, Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting, May 14, 1942, p. 4

44. *Hearings on Congested Areas*, 404–409, 413–416, 432–436, 615–622.

45. *Ibid.*, 408–409. See also, C. A. Blakely to the Chief of the Bureau of

council used the state vagrancy laws to empower the police to arrest “dissolute people [i.e., women] wandering about the streets without any visible means of support,” and hold them on \$1,000 bail for 180 days, while treating those who were infected with venereal disease. Congressman James W. Mott of Oregon admonished the chief of police for “working under a subterfuge—stretching the law just a little,” and wondered if this was not a public health issue more than it was a problem for law enforcement.⁴⁶

At least 40,000 women entered the work force in San Diego by 1943, and of those, more than 25,000 were employed in the aircraft plants, with many of them relegated to low-skilled assembly-line functions.⁴⁷ Because many of the working women had young children, day-care emerged as yet one more thorny issue in the life of the city’s inhabitants. Consolidated Aircraft’s director of industrial relations Frank Persons knew just where to turn—to the federal government. Since the WPA had won a \$6 million appropriation to this end, Persons urged the chamber of commerce to tap the WPA and make “a start on such a program in this municipal area, in order to create a need for additional funds to sustain and expand this program.”⁴⁸ Why the very profitable company would not do this on its own account was not revealed.

Responding to a request from Consolidated Aircraft, the chamber engaged in a two-phased campaign to put more women to work in the aircraft plants. First, they asked the Secretary of the Navy and the state legislature to waive any rules that kept women from working for more than eight hours a day or forty-

Navigation, April 3, 1941, RG 71, NA, in which the Commandant of the Eleventh Naval District informed the bureau chief that the root of the problem was the “large number of aircraft and other defense project workers bringing their female followers into this area.... These followers are not under any medical supervision; they haunt the streets, cafes, and beer parlors; and reports of infection that they spread are seven times greater than those of professional prostitutes.”

46. *Ibid.*, 414.

47. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, “Wartime Changes in Population and Family Characteristics, San Diego Congested Production Area,” April 1944, Series CA-2, No. 2, p. 4; and U.S. Employment Service, Southern California Division of Reports and Analysis, “Labor Market Report for the San Diego County Area, California, May 1943,” 24, Central University Library, University of California, San Diego.

48. SDCOC, Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, Sept. 3, 1942, p. 2.

eight hours a week or on the late-night shift.⁴⁹ Second, the chamber joined in a nationwide publicity program called “Work for Victory” intended to expand the number of women doing industrial work. To this end the chamber paid for radio and newspaper advertisements inviting women to apply for factory jobs in the spring and fall of 1942. The program was so successful that a further drive was called off.⁵⁰

By endorsing the increased employment of specifically local women, the organization sought to solve two problems at once—keeping the shifts full in the aircraft plants and slowing the flow of immigrants. This was the chamber’s first attempt in its history to limit the expansion of the city’s population.⁵¹ When demand slowed after 1943, however, San Diego’s Rosie-the-Riveters found themselves out of work. By 1945, women who had recently been working in the aircraft plants accounted for ninety percent of San Diego’s unemployed.⁵²

Except for two notable spasms of unrest—one in 1912 and the other in the mid-1930s—San Diego’s working people had pursued a “harmony of interests” with their employers.⁵³ Historically, the city’s leading merchants, manufacturers, and philanthropists had been reasonably sympathetic to the plight of the working man, something they found entirely consistent with their community consciousness.⁵⁴ San Diego’s small industries employed a fair proportion of skilled workers, implying that even the working class may have been imbued with a certain middle-class character. But if working people should have the temerity to ask for more than their betters were willing to give, they suddenly became “racketeers” and “radical agitators.”⁵⁵

Despite the WPA’s claim in 1937 that San Diego was no

49. *Ibid.*, Dec. 26, 1941, p. 2.

50. *Ibid.*, 3.

51. *Ibid.*, May 28, 1942, p. 4. This report noted that 7,000 women were then employed at Consolidated, and that there was room for more.

52. Marilyn Moll Clark, “Women Aircraft Workers in San Diego during the Second World War” (M.A. thesis, San Diego State University, 1977), 129, 141.

53. *Mother Earth*, VII (June 1912), 97–131, Frederick L. Ryan, *The Labor Movement in San Diego: Problems and Development, 1887–1957* (San Diego, 1959), 6.

54. Ryan, *Labor Movement*, 8.

55. S. Westover to Ed Fletcher, March 31, 1941; and J. Wells to Ed Fletcher, April 5, 1941, folder 8, box 35, Fletcher Papers, UCSD. See also Adams, *The Man: John D. Spreckels*, 125–138.

longer an open-shop town,⁵⁶ the Assistant Secretary of the Navy had stated that it was strictly up to the individual worker whether or not to belong to a union.⁵⁷ Because the navy was “the largest single employer of labor in the country if not in the world,”⁵⁸ by 1940 the commandant of the Eleventh Naval District, of which San Diego was headquarters, had become the chief arbiter in local labor relations. Of particular concern to the navy were strikes against local contractors and suppliers for higher wages—in order to cope with the rising cost of living—that might threaten the national defense effort.

When the San Diego Building Trades Council called a general strike on “all naval and military defense public works projects” for the purpose of raising wages by a dollar per day in November 1941, the commandant ordered “the Government” to take over vehicles belonging to striking contractors. He also asked that civil authorities maintain order and free access to the affected job sites. In the event this failed, the commandant was prepared to order naval and marine guards to protect both the projects and the rights of those workers who were not participating in the strike.⁵⁹ National magazines, local working people, and private citizens from around the United States expressed their support for the commandant’s hard line. San Diego’s leading newspaper, the *Union*, noted in numerous articles and editorials that this strike and others must have provided great comfort to Hitler while irreparably damaging the economic interests of workers who would never make up the wages they lost while striking.

As was the case across the United States, many San Diegans were less than enthusiastic about interfering with production during the war period. A carpenter-foreman working on one of the struck projects wrote to the commandant that he could bring

56. San Diego Federal Writers’ Project, *San Diego, a California City*, 52.

57. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Charles Edison) to All Yards and Stations, Sept. 20, 1937, Files of the Commandant, Eleventh Naval District, Record Group P8-1, National Archives, Pacific Southwest Region, Laguna Niguel, Calif. (hereafter cited as RG P8-1, NA-PSR).

58. Frank Knox, *et al.*, “Labor Relations in the United States Navy,” Aug. 6, 1942, RG P8-1, NA-PSR.

59. Rear Admiral C. A. Blakely, Commandant Eleventh Naval District to Task Group Commanders, *et al.*, “Operating Plan No. 1,” Nov. 10, 1941, RG P8-1, NA-PSR.

“80 to 90%” of his men through the gate to work because “We are behind the United States Navy.” In support of this, the *Union* pointed out that the rank-and-file were prepared to uphold the national no-strike pledge.⁶⁰ The commandant’s position seemed to match public sentiment, and the Building Trades Council ordered its men back to work less than two days after the strike had begun. San Diego’s chief of police also expressed his appreciation for the level of cooperation between his department and the navy that was so “effective in aiding the prevention of an undesirable situation.”⁶¹

Race relations in San Diego did not change drastically during the war. According to a special census, the city’s African-American population exploded from 4,143 in 1940 to 13,136 in 1946. Now African-Americans comprised a full 3.6 percent of San Diego’s population—a wholesale rise from the 2 percent blacks had represented in 1940.⁶² The greatest increase came during the last eighteen months of the war, possibly because “the residual reserve of unemployed white workers from depression days had been depleted and aircraft plants were [finally] willing to employ black workers.”⁶³ Of the approximately 5,200 African-Americans in San Diego’s wartime work force, 1,500 worked for the federal government, 1,200 worked in the aircraft industry, and 500 were employed in construction. Most of the rest found jobs in “personal service.”⁶⁴

One possible reason that black San Diegans were so under-represented in the industrial workforce was that the high proportion of skilled and semiskilled jobs in the aircraft plants proved an insurmountable barrier to those who did not already possess the appropriate training and experience. This theory, however, was contradicted in 1942 by a representative of Consolidated Aircraft’s industrial relations department, who told the chamber of commerce that “the only qualifications necessary for employment at Consolidated are proof of American birth or

60. *San Diego Union*, Oct. 1, 1941, Nov. 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 1941.

61. *Ibid.*, Nov. 11 and 17, 1941.

62. Leroy Harris, “The Other Side of the Freeway: A Study of Settlement Patterns of Negroes and Mexican Americans in San Diego, California” (Ph.D. dissertation, Carnegie-Mellon University, 1974), 59.

63. *Ibid.*, 63.

64. Laurence Hewes, *Intergroup Relations in San Diego* (San Francisco, 1946), 12-13.

citizenship...and the necessary physical ability to perform the work.”⁶⁵ The president of Vultee Aircraft (a company that merged with Consolidated in 1943) interpreted the situation differently when he told a group of African-Americans that “it is not the policy of this company to employ people other than of the Caucasian race.”⁶⁶ Between President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s 1941 Executive Order 8802 banning racial discrimination in war industries and the general scarcity of manpower in San Diego, this predicament did ease somewhat as the war progressed. By spring 1946, however, employment of African-Americans in San Diego had retreated to 1940 levels.⁶⁷

Many of the African-Americans who came to San Diego during the war elected to stay there afterwards despite the city’s heritage of discrimination and segregation, and it did not get any easier for them to find good jobs.⁶⁸ The situation was different for Mexicans, who by virtue of the Bracero program instituted by the U.S. and Mexican governments in 1942, entered the country in great numbers on a temporary basis in order to work on American farms and railroads.⁶⁹ How well the Bracero program worked in San Diego is questionable—in June 1942, the *Union* reported that local farmers were finding it “impossible to get Mexicans.” The farm labor shortage was so acute that county growers considered asking the government for prisoners to work in the fields, to import laborers from midwestern states, or even to release interned Japanese from their captivity.⁷⁰

According to the U.S. census, the number of Mexicans in San Diego increased from 9,266 in 1930 to 15,490 in 1950. These figures were quite small compared to what took place in Los Angeles, where the Mexican population jumped from 97,116 to 157,067 during the same period. Once again, the nature of the difference in employment opportunities in the two cities may have accounted for San Diego’s much smaller Mexican population.

65. SDCOC, Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, May 28, 1942, p. 4.

66. Herbert Northrup, *The Negro in the Aerospace Industry* (Philadelphia, 1968), 17.

67. Hewes, *Intergroup Relations in San Diego*, 13.

68. Harris, “Other Side of the Freeway,” 63–67.

69. *Ibid.*, 77.

70. *San Diego Union*, June 30, 1942.

No matter how great were the indignities and privations suffered by Mexicans and African Americans in San Diego during the war, the treatment of the local Japanese and Japanese-American community was far worse. Since 1900, this group had created a niche for itself in agriculture and fishing, but they were often targets of their white neighbors' envy and hostility.⁷¹ Soon after Congress declared war on Japan and the Axis powers, the Japanese “problem” was solved summarily when all people of Japanese ancestry were collected and sent off to “assembly centers” for the duration. Chamber of commerce activities expressed the local mood quite plainly. In a report presented to the chamber's board of directors, the county agricultural commissioner stated that his department was endeavoring “to protect the people of San Diego from the possibility of poisoning of fruits and vegetables by Japanese farmers...” After all, these farmers used pesticides, and they might possess various bacteriological agents capable of causing serious epidemics. The county Agricultural Department had therefore instituted a program to test all shipments from local Japanese farmers, meanwhile sending inspectors to all these farms “to keep a close watch on the crops in the fields.” To help the loyal citizenry overcome the shortage of strawberries, celery, cucumbers, tomatoes, cabbage, and cauliflower that was sure to follow, the commissioner hoped that white farmers would jump into the breach. Not only would whites “now have a chance to get the vegetable industry back in their [own] hands,” but their produce “would probably be of better quality.”⁷²

At the same meeting, the district attorney stated that his office was busy tracking down the Japanese wherever they might be. He told the directors that a recent meeting of the San Diego County Defense Council had resolved that

all Japanese, both alien and American-born, be evacuated from the State of California and sent to the interior of the United States, where

71. See Donald H. Estes, “Before the War: The Japanese in San Diego,” *Journal of San Diego History*, XXIV (1978), 425–426.

72. SDCOC, Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, Feb. 26, 1942, pp. 4–5. This report also noted that “San Diego County has a total of 177 Japanese farmers, 136 alien and 41 Japanese-American, with 1,782 acres planted in vegetables controlled by aliens and 641 by Japanese-American...”

they could be housed and fed by the Federal Government and be put to work to produce commodities needed by this country....⁷³

In April 1942, this was almost precisely what happened.⁷⁴

The wholesale removal of San Diego's Japanese population left a legacy of emotional and economic devastation. Although many of the evacuees returned to the county after V-J Day, their prewar occupational and living patterns and their sense of community had been shattered. Some said that they did not want to re-form their old ties in order to avoid ever being rounded up again. Those who had owned property or could otherwise prove economic loss due to the removal were able to recover perhaps ten percent of their claims through the Japanese American Evacuation Claims Act of 1948 and its 1951 modification.⁷⁵ After the war, the Japanese community in San Diego would exist only in the abstract sense and not in the physical, and this was transformation indeed.⁷⁶

The blitz-boom stimulated industrial growth in San Diego, especially in the aircraft plants and others tied directly to war production. One important local industry, however, the tuna fishery, declined sharply during the war. In 1940, 312 San Diego-based fishing boats employing 1,452 commercial fishermen landed nearly 129 million pounds of fish, most of which were processed and canned in San Diego. After Pearl Harbor the navy purchased or chartered the larger tuna boats for antimine warfare. Some of the fishermen were drafted into the armed forces, while those who were of Japanese ancestry were interned until the end of the war. By 1943, tonnage of fish landed at San Diego had declined forty-two percent from that recorded in 1940. The reduced catch, coupled with the additional cost of war-risk insurance, caused the price of canned tuna to double, for which reason the government refused to buy it.⁷⁷

73. *Ibid.*, 5-6.

74. For a detailed account of this, see Donald H. and Matthew T. Estes, "Further and Further Away: The Relocation of San Diego's Nikkei Community, 1942," *Journal of San Diego History*, XXXIX (1993), 1-32.

75. John Armor and Peter Wright, *Manzanar* (New York, 1988), 155-159.

76. Interview with Donald T. Estes, the foremost historian of San Diego's Nikkei population, Jan. 21, 1994.

77. Day and Zimmermann Company, *Industrial & Commercial Survey, City of San Diego and San Diego County* (10 vols., San Diego, March 31, 1945), I, 145-147; SDCOC, Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, June 4, 1942, p. 4, copies

Between 1939 and 1943, San Diego’s rank as an industrial center rose from seventy-ninth in the nation to twenty-eighth.⁷⁸ San Diegans were concerned, therefore, that defense cutbacks would damage the local economy, which in fact occurred: Within months of the war’s end, aircraft industry employment had dropped from its 1943 peak of 60,000 to 6,000, and the resident population of soldiers and sailors declined sharply.⁷⁹ The tourist industry, however, bounced back and soon exceeded its prewar income level, as did the tuna fishery and agriculture. As Table 6 demonstrates, most other industrial pursuits seemed to have held on to the gains that had accrued during the war, although the actual number of workers involved in many of the businesses was quite small. Payrolls in the manufacturing sector also remained well above the pre-1940 mark.⁸⁰

Table 6: Employment Growth in San Diego, 1940–1947

Industry	Average Total Employees per industry		
	1940	1947	% Increase
Food Products	2,551	4,470	75
Apparel Products	81	451	457
Lumber	164	405	147
Furniture and Fixtures	170	217	28
Printing and Publishing	1,016	1,392	37
Chemicals and Allied Products	131	386	195
Metal Industries	256	261	2
Transportation Equipment (incl. aircraft and shipbuilding)	5,476	13,408 ⁸¹	145

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Manufacturers, 1947* (Washington, D.C., 1950), III, 109.

are available in the Central University Library, University of California, San Diego; San Diego Public Library; and the San Diego Chamber of Commerce.

78. Day and Zimmermann, *Industrial and Commercial Survey*, I, 151-152.

79. SDCOC, *San Diego Business*, XV (March 11, 1946), 1.

80. SDCOC, “1950 Annual Business Survey,” n.p.

81. Employment figures for San Diego’s shipbuilding industry argue against a large-scale transformation in this category. According to Day and Zimmermann, 574 were employed in boatbuilding industries “prewar,” which number rose to 2,365

While labor could be calmed, minorities could be dealt with, and instant suburbs could be established, the water supply continued to be the most critical and vexing problem that the city and the navy had to solve. Between 1939 and 1945, water consumption in the city had increased from 7.6 billion gallons per year to 17.7 billion gallons.⁸² Throughout the forty-year period of naval buildup, the chamber had repeatedly promised the navy a fail-safe supply, but urban growth and recurring drought frequently taxed the system to the breaking point. So acute were some of the water crises that the navy threatened to pull up stakes absent a solution. By 1937 it had become clear that San Diego would soon have to import water from the Colorado River, more than a hundred miles away, with mountains and desert in between.⁸³ The possibility of doing so had been under investigation since 1926, and had been made feasible by the construction of Hoover Dam during the early 1930s.⁸⁴ Unfortunately, it might cost \$30 million to build an aqueduct. If the city were to finance such an undertaking, it would require an expensive bond issue for which an election would have to be called.

The chamber's executive committee identified Colorado River water as the city's "chief need," and stated explicitly that

in 1944. The U.S. Census of Manufactures notes that 1,063 were employed manufacturing ships and boats during 1947; and the California State Department of Employment reported an average of 1,034 so employed in 1951. The San Diego Economic Research Program report of 1966 states that in 1963, approximately 1,900 people worked in the industry. Day and Zimmerman, *Industrial and Commercial Survey*, VIII, 53; U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Manufacturers, 1947* (Washington, D.C., 1950), III, 105; California, Dept. of Employment, *Employment and Payrolls in California, 1951* (Sacramento, 1953), 56; San Diego Economic Research Bureau, *San Diego Economic Development Research Program* (San Diego, June 1966), p. A-29.

82. San Diego Financial and Economic Research Department, *Union-Tribune Index: San Diego Business Activity* (San Diego, (1958), 34.

83. Fred Pyle, hydraulic engineer, City of San Diego Water Department, to Claude Swanson, Secretary of the Navy, Feb. 8, 1937, file 370208, RG 80, NA. Los Angeles is much farther from the river than San Diego (approximately 240 miles versus 160 miles). However, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California had begun to build an aqueduct to Los Angeles from the Colorado during the early 1930s, and therefore Los Angeles's water supply was better assured than San Diego's.

84. Western Management Consultants, Inc., *Water and San Diego County Growth: A Study for the San Diego County Water Authority* (San Diego, 1966), 30-31.

it was the responsibility of the U.S. government to provide it.⁸⁵ In June 1942, the chamber of commerce reported that although the reservoirs were nearly full, the distribution system was inadequate for the recently expanded population, and a drought might make it necessary to curtail public consumption.⁸⁶ San Diego’s congressman, Ed Izak, told the chamber’s water committee that the federal government was “putting in standby water systems in many areas for the safeguarding of troops,” and therefore San Diego “should be safeguarded to the same extent.”⁸⁷

By 1944, drought and population growth had combined to drain the existing supply practically dry, a fact that had greatly impressed President Roosevelt, whereupon he commissioned a study to find methods and financing for an aqueduct project. The President’s committee was composed of representatives from the Bureau of Reclamation, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Federal Works Agency, the San Diego County Water Authority, and of course, the navy. On October 21, 1944, the committee recommended that the federal government immediately begin construction of a pipeline to connect San Diego with the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California’s Colorado River aqueduct at San Jacinto, approximately eighty miles northeast of the city.⁸⁸

In similar fashion to other federal emergency projects, San Diegans were given little opportunity to contribute materially to the planning process. Because this had become a military project designed with the sole purpose of preventing a wartime shortage to the city’s naval bases and defense industries, local agencies had been removed from participation in decisions pertinent to the capacity and location of the aqueduct’s component parts.

85. SDCOC, Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting, Feb. 19, 1942, p. 2.

86. *Ibid.*, June 4, 1942, p. 4.

87. *Ibid.*, Aug. 20, 1942, p. 3.

88. San Diego County Water Authority, *First Annual Report* (San Diego, 1946), 31–32. A less expensive alternative had been proposed during the 1930s—pump Colorado River water from the All-American Canal over the mountains, from where it would flow by gravity into San Diego. By 1944, however, wartime shortages of critical equipment and materials made the connection with the Metropolitan Water District aqueduct at San Jacinto (equidistant from Los Angeles and San Diego) more practical.

This meant that future contingencies were not provided for, making the cost of the system's later expansion much more expensive than it might have been had it been planned in conjunction with the appropriate local authorities.⁸⁹

Although the construction contracts were nearly canceled in the wake of V-J Day, work was begun September 1, 1945, under navy supervision. So urgent was the need for the new supply that the navy started work prior to having obtained congressional approval of the arrangements. The first delivery of water from the Colorado arrived in November 1947, at which point "less than a month's requirements was on hand."⁹⁰ The aqueduct was not exactly a free gift from Washington, though. Under the contract between the city and the navy, it was agreed that San Diego would lease the pipeline at a rate that would amortize the hard cost—but not any interest expense—over a thirty-year period, after which the city would own it free and clear.⁹¹

Within a year of the aqueduct's completion, it became evident that its capacity would have to be doubled to sustain the county's recent population explosion. Since the navy owned the right-of-way, private financing of the expansion might prove impossible. Therefore, the newly formed San Diego County Water Authority prevailed upon the navy's Bureau of Yards and Docks, the Federal Bureau of the Budget, and the Congress to fund a second barrel of the aqueduct by way of a new lease-purchase agreement. Where the first barrel had solved a military emergency during wartime, the second barrel was meant "to supply primarily municipal, industrial, and domestic water at government expense," and thus was without federal precedent.⁹² In recognition of the many contributions San Diegans had made to the navy's own growth and well-being, the appropriation was

89. *Ibid.*, 33–35.

90. Western Management Consultants, Inc., *Water and San Diego County Growth*, iv–v.

91. San Diego County Water Authority, *First Annual Report*, 35. Contract negotiations between the city and the navy were affected by wartime pressures. Because the emergency was so acute and time so short, the navy threatened to withdraw from the project unless the city agreed to reimburse the construction costs over time, which left many San Diegans convinced that they had been forced to accept financially disadvantageous terms.

92. Western Management Consultants, Inc., *Water and San Diego County Growth*, vi–vii.

passed in 1951 and the pipeline built shortly thereafter, solving the water problem for at least a while.

The aqueduct marked the apotheosis of San Diego’s embodiment of the martial metropolis, a process that had been driven by the demands of carrying on a vast war in the Pacific. Various federal agencies, and especially the navy, had all but ruled the ways and means of the city’s wartime growth. With regard to housing, labor relations, road-building, and an expanded water and sewer system, the local politicians and businessmen’s influence had been almost wholly subordinated to the federal government. As well, in the all-important area of federal land acquisition, particularly in the numerous cases where the navy needed to expand its bases, the government used emergency wartime condemnation powers summarily to dispossess large and small property owners all over the county.

Recognizing a need to “solve the post-war problem in the community,”⁹³ the chamber of commerce engaged the services of the Day & Zimmermann Company to perform a survey and create a plan for the future. Day & Zimmermann delivered its ten-volume opus in May 1945. The report noted that despite the massive harbor development projects, the port of San Diego ranked twenty-third out of twenty-four Pacific ports in 1940 in terms of volume of commerce.⁹⁴ Although the harbor had been closed to commercial shipping during the war, its reopening provided only a small benefit to the local economy. The consultants therefore recommended the creation of a unified port authority, a “free-port” foreign trade zone, and expanded wharf and airport facilities in order to allow San Diego to assume a “place of importance in the economic distribution of consumer goods for a large Southern California and Arizona market.”⁹⁵ The report also pointed out the vulnerability caused by “the large proportion of government workers,” which might be alleviated by “aggressive action and cooperation” by industry and business if San Diego’s peculiar economy was somehow to be normalized.⁹⁶

93. SDCOC, Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, May 14, 1942, p. 2.

94. Day and Zimmermann, *Industrial and Commercial Survey*, I, 45.

95. *Ibid.*, 119.

96. *Ibid.*, 96.

But it was the navy, backed by the strong support of the chamber of commerce, that remained the outstanding pillar of the economy and the community. In 1947, the navy's 45,000 active-duty personnel stationed in San Diego, plus its 15,000 civilian workers comprised forty-one percent of the city's labor force, and "poured \$105 millions in wages into San Diego's merchants' tills."⁹⁷ This trend would continue long into the future, and as always, the chamber of commerce led a perpetual campaign to keep it that way.

Retired admirals were again writing copy for chamber brochures created for the purpose of convincing Congress to pay for more harbor improvements—this time to accommodate the new generation of "super-carriers" of the *Forrestal* class.⁹⁸ In 1952, the city sent a new man to Congress, Bob Wilson, who quickly proved himself no less effective a go-between for San Diego and the navy than had been William Kettner, Phil Swing, George Burnham, and Ed Izak, decades before. In an interview twenty years later, Wilson explained his guiding political motivation in terms of San Diego's unique civic culture: "I represent the most militaristic district in the country. We've got more ships docked, more personnel, twenty-one different military installations. I'm a product of my area, I fight for a military point of view."⁹⁹

Did World War II transform San Diego? It surely did, but not entirely in the way Gerald Nash suggested. The city had become an important contributor to the new, expanded western regional economy, with a new reliance on defense industry. Driven by the chamber of commerce, however, it had always been a "federal colony"—the quintessential navy town. Nor did the war transform San Diegans' attitudes toward labor, racial and ethnic minorities, the economically disadvantaged, or toward the women who had contributed so much to the war effort. Most of the women had been forced to leave gainful employment because of defense industry cutbacks and returning GI's; the

97. SDCOC, *San Diego Business*, XVI (April 1, 1947), 1.

98. Rear Admiral Ray Tarbuck, USN, ret., "Analysis of the Transfer of Naval Vessels from San Diego," July 1952, p. 7, Bob Wilson Papers, Dept. of Special Collections, San Diego State University.

99. Martin Hirschman, *Citizens Look at Congress: The Ralph Nader Congress Project: Robert C. Wilson* (Washington D.C., 1972), II, 9.

city’s African-American and Latino populations remained subordinate and segregated; the Japanese returned from their incarceration to rebuild their lives from the ground up; and the relatively full employment of the first postwar decade seemed to have “tranquillized” organized labor.¹⁰⁰

San Diego itself was no longer “sleepy,” though. Before long its population would grow to become the seventh largest in the nation, while in 1940 it had ranked forty-third. World War II had helped San Diego’s boosters finally realize their material dreams: Their city now looked like a real metropolis, although San Diego indeed had become a “Federal city.”

100. Ryan, *Labor Movement in San Diego*, 107.