

CHAPTER SEVEN

JUNKYARD OF DREAMS

Mental geographies betray class prejudice. In the trendy-chic *L.A. Weekly's* 'Best of Los Angeles' guide, one of the 'Ten Best of the Best' is the Robertson Boulevard off-ramp of the Santa Monica Freeway near Beverly Hills: where the air starts to clear of smog and the true heaven of the Westside begins. In Yuppie deli-map consciousness, landscapes tend to compress logarithmically as soon as one leaves the terrain of luxury lifestyles. Thus Fairfax is the near Eastside, while Downtown is the far horizon, surrounded by dimly known zones of ethnic restaurants. Even if the Westsider is vaguely familiar with the old concentrations of Wasp wealth marooned in Pasadena, Claremont or Redlands, the eastbound San Bernardino Freeway (the I-10) – traversed at warp speed with the windows rolled up against the smog and dust – is merely the high road to Palm Springs and the Arizona Desert. The 'Inland Empire' of western San Bernardino and Riverside counties is little more than a blur.

One of the few modern writers to venture thither, Joan Didion, on her way to a San Bernardino murder trial, found the landscape 'curious and unnatural':

The lemon groves are sunken, down a three- or four-foot retaining wall, so that one looks directly into their dense foliage, too lush, unsettlingly glossy, the greenery of nightmare; the fallen eucalyptus bark is too dusty, a place for snakes to breed. The stones look not like natural stones but like the rubble of some unmentioned catastrophe.¹

Rising from the geological and social detritus that has accumulated at the foot of the Cajon Pass sixty miles east of Los Angeles, the city of Fontana is the principal byproduct of this 'unmentioned catastrophe'. A gritty blue-collar town, well known to line-haul truckers everywhere, with rusting blast furnaces and outlaw motorcycle gangs (the birthplace of the Hell's Angels in 1946), it is the regional antipode to the sumptuary belts of West L.A. or Orange County. 'Designer living' here means a Peterbilt with a custom sleeper or a full-chrome Harley hog. A loud, brawling mosaic of working-class cultures – Black, Italian, hillbilly, Slovene and Chicano – Fontana has long endured an unsavory reputation in the eyes of San Bernardino County's moral crusaders and middle-class boosters.

But Fontana is more than merely the 'roughest town in the county'. Its indissoluble toughness of character is the product of an extraordinary,

deeply emblematic local history. Over the course of the seventy-five years since its founding, Fontana has been both junkyard and utopia for successive tropes of a changing California dream. The millions of tourists and commuters who annually pass by Fontana on I-10, occasionally peeking into the shabbiness of its backyards and derelict orchards, can little imagine the hopes and visions shipwrecked here.

In its original, early-twentieth-century incarnation, Fontana was the modernized Jeffersonian idyll: an arcadian community of small chicken ranchers and citrus growers living self-sufficiently in their electrified bungalows. Then in 1942 the community was abruptly reshaped to accommodate the dream of a Rooseveltian industrial revolution in the West. The Promethean energies of Henry Kaiser turned Fontana overnight into a mighty forge for war, the only integrated steel complex on the Pacific Slope. In the early 1980s, with equally brutal swiftness, the milltown was shuttered and its workers and machines reduced to scrap. Yet phoenix-like, a third Fontana – the ‘affordable suburb’ – has arisen from the ruins of Kaisertown. In the new economic geometry of the Southern California ‘metrosea’, where increasing masses commute three or more hours daily to reconcile paychecks with mortgages, Fontana – and its sister communities of San Bernardino County’s ‘West End’ – are the new dormitories of Southern California’s burgeoning workforces.

If violent instability in local landscape and culture is taken to be constitutive of Southern California’s peculiar social ontology, then Fontana epitomizes the region. It is an imagined community, twice invented and promoted, then turned inside-out to become once again a visionary green field. Its repeated restructurings have traumatically registered the shifting interaction of regional and international, manufacturing and real-estate, capitalism. Yet – despite the claims of some theorists of the ‘hyperreal’ or the ‘depthless present’ – the past is not completely erasable, even in Southern California. Steelmaking in the shadow of the San Bernardinos – the transposed culture of Pennsylvania millworkers on a horticultural semi-utopia on the edge of the desert – have left human residues that defy the most determined efforts of current developers to repackage Fontana as a vacant lot. To this extent the Fontana story provides a parable: it is about the fate of those suburbanized California working classes who cling to their tarnished dreams at the far edge of the L.A. galaxy.

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PHANTOM ORCHARD

FONTANA FARMS

It was just the type of place they often had talked of. Ten acres of level land . . . rich, fertile. On it were 200 fine walnut trees, young, but sturdy. And on four sides was a beautiful fringe of tall, graceful eucalypti, through which they glimpsed the lofty crests of the San Bernardinos.

'It would be wonderful, if we just had money enough', said she. 'At least,' said he, 'we have enough to make a start. We can pay down what we can spare and stay in the city for a while. There'll be enough to put up a little garage house, and we'll have a place of our own to come to weekends and holidays'.

And so, much sooner than they had hoped, their dream of a place all their own, out in the country, came true. Every weekend, every holiday, found them on their Fontana farm, planting things, cultivating their walnut trees, watching things grow. And their farm returned their affection in full measure. Never did the walnut trees thrive so. Never did berry bushes and fruit trees do better. Each week they carried back with them some of the products of their farm.

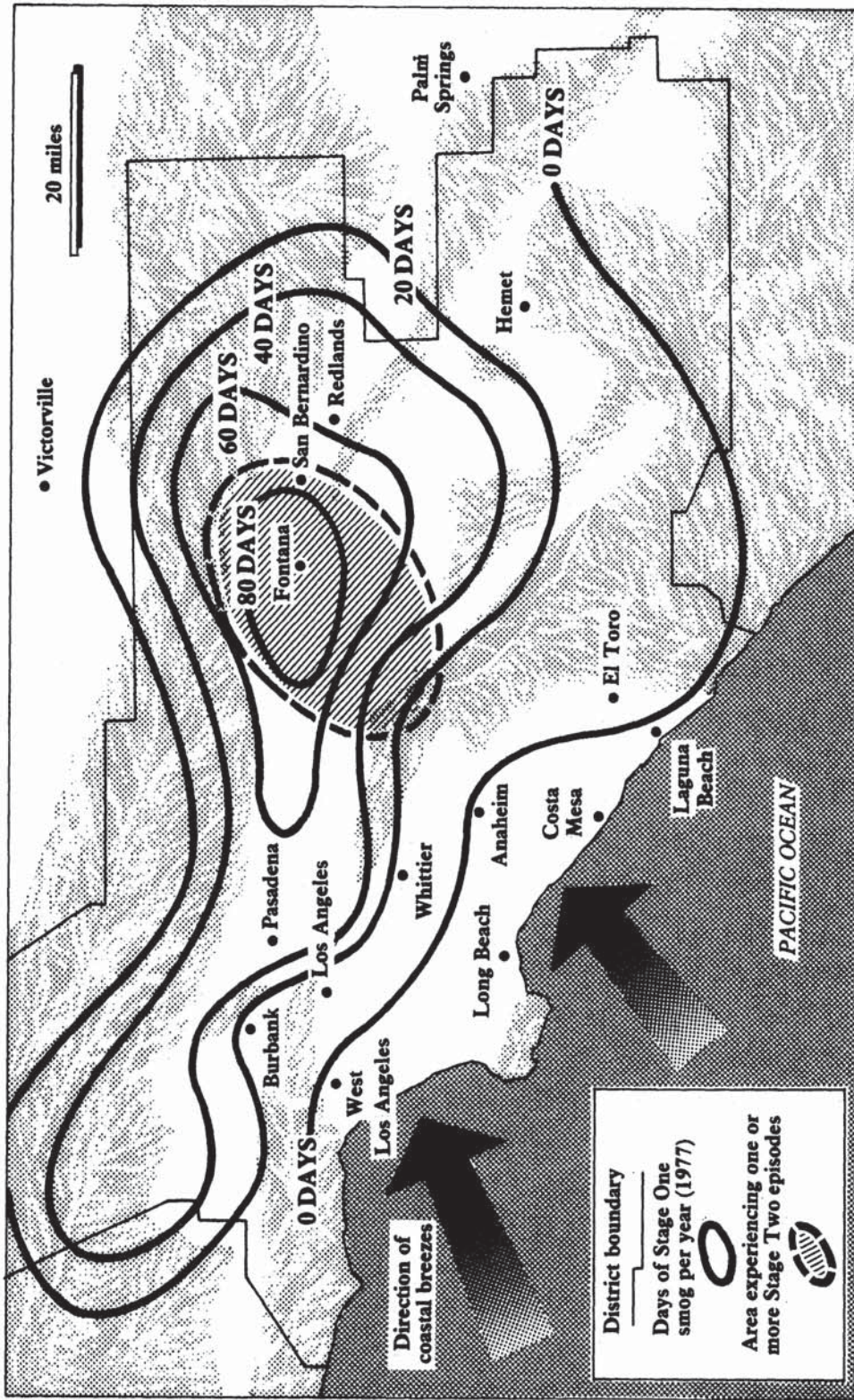
Then there came a day when they could build the farm home they always had planned. A roomy, rambling house, with a world of windows. A broad green lawn, and trees in front, and at the back equipment for 2,000 chickens, a rabbitry for 240 full-blooded New Zealand Whites, and, just for the fun of it, pens for Muscovy and Peking ducks, turkeys . . .

And so, the first of the year, they moved in. Each week brings an egg check of \$40 to \$50 or more. There is a ready market for every rabbit they can produce. The walnut trees will be in production soon, and in full bearing they will add another \$2,000 per year net to the profits of the place. In all Fontana there's no farm that's finer, no couple that is happier, and it's proved so easy . . . after they found their Fontana farm.

Fontana Farms ad, 1930²

Fontana Farms was the brainchild of A.B. Miller, San Bernardino contractor and agriculturalist. All but forgotten today, Miller was one of the hero-builders of a unique civilization of affluent agricultural colonies in what was once known as the 'Valley of the South',³ stretching from Pomona to Redlands. Like the more widely known George Chaffey, whose Ontario colony had decisive influence on the technology of Zionist settlement in

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FONTANA, CAPITAL OF THE SMOG BELT

Palestine, Miller was a visionary entrepreneur of hydroelectric power, irrigated horticulture, cooperative marketing, and planned community development. Which is to say, he was a brilliant real-estate promoter who fully grasped the combination of advertising and infrastructure required to alchemize the dusty plains of the San Bernardinos into gold. If Chaffey, along with L.A. water titan William Mulholland, far surpassed the hydraulic accomplishments of Miller, the latter was unique in the thorough planning and complementary agricultural diversity that made Fontana such a striking realization of the petty-bourgeois ideal of withdrawal into Jeffersonian autonomy. Only the failed Socialist utopia of Llano del Rio, in the Mojave Desert north of Los Angeles, aspired to a more ambitious integration of civility and self-sufficiency.

In 1906 Miller, flush with construction profits from the new Imperial Valley, took over the failed promotion of the Semi-Tropic Land and Water Company: twenty-eight square miles of boulder-strewn plain west of San Bernardino. Incessantly raked by dust storms and dessicating Santa Ana winds, the alluvial Fontana–Cucamonga fan for the most part retained the same forlorn aspect – greasewood, sage and scattered wild plum trees – that had greeted the original Mormon colonists sent by Brigham Young in 1851 to establish San Bernardino as Deseret’s window on the Pacific. Raising capital from prominent Los Angeles bankers, Miller undertook the construction of a vast irrigation system (tapping the snows of Mount Baldy via Lytle Creek) and the planting of half a million eucalyptus saplings as windbreaks. By 1913 his Fontana Company was ready to begin laying out a townsite between Foothill Boulevard (an old wagon road soon to become part of famous US 66) and the Santa Fe tracks. At the inaugural barbecue, Miller’s friend and sponsor, Pacific Electric Railroad President Paul Shoup, promised that his Red Cars would soon bring thousands of daytrippers and prospective homesteaders to see the future at work in Fontana.⁴

Other famous irrigation colonies of the day – Pasadena, Ontario, Redlands, and so on – thrived by franchising citrus growing as an investment haven for wealthy, sun-seeking Easterners. The cooperative, ‘Sunkist’ model (later so influential in shaping Herbert Hoover’s vision of self-organized capitalism) provided newcomers with a network of production services, a coordinated labor pool and a national marketing organization with a common trademark.⁵ On the other hand, the arcadian life of a Southern

California orange, lemon or avocado grower required substantial startup capital (at least \$40,000 in 1919) and outside income to sustain the operator until his trees became fruit-bearing.⁶ Ready access to capital was also necessary to tide growers over between the seasons, and periodically to absorb the costs of crop-killing frosts. Seduced by the siren song of fabulous profits in the foothills, thousands of undercapitalized citrus ranchers lost their life savings in a few seasons.⁷

Miller's concept of Fontana was presented as an alternative to aristocratic citrus colonies like Redlands as well as to the more speculative settlements in the eastern San Gabriel Valley. Fontana was envisioned as an unprecedented combination of industrialized plantation (Fontana Farms) and Jeffersonian smallholdings (subdivided by Fontana Land Company). Fontana Farms was a futuristic example of vertically integrated, scientifically managed, corporate agriculture. Its primary input was the City of Los Angeles's garbage which, from 1921 to 1950, it received in daily gondola car shipments by rail. (The garbage contract was so lucrative that Miller was forced to make large payoffs to corrupt city councilmen – igniting a 1931 municipal scandal.) The five or six hundred daily tons of garbage fattened the sixty thousand hogs that made Fontana Farms the largest such operation in the world. When the hogs reached full weight they were shipped back to Los Angeles for slaughter, recycled garbage thus providing perhaps a quarter of the region's ham and bacon. The coincident accumulation of manure was no less valued: it was either utilized as fertilizer for Miller's citrus grove (also the world's largest) or peddled to neighboring ranchers. Fontana Farms even made a small profit reselling the silverware it reclaimed from restaurant garbage.⁸

Meanwhile the Fontana Company was busy subdividing the rest of the Miller empire into model small farms. With an enthusiasm for mass marketing and production that clearly prefigured Henry Kaiser's, Miller aimed his promotion at precisely that middling mass of would-be rural escapists who had previously been cannon-fodder for Southern California's most ill-fated land and oil speculations. His 'affordable' Fontana farm idyll, by contrast, was designed to be assembled on lay away with combinations of small semi-annual installments and lots of sweat equity. For bare land prices of \$300–500 (for the minimum 2.5 acre 'starter farm' in 1930), the prospective Fontanan was offered a choice of bearing grapevines or walnut

trees (corporate Fontana Farms maintained a vast nursery of a million saplings). Starting with 'vacation farming' on weekends (Los Angeles was only an hour away by automobile or Red Car), the purchaser could gradually add on living quarters, which the Fontana Farms Company offered in a complete range from weekend cabins to the ultimate 'charming, redtile Spanish Colonial farmhouse'. Examples of these are still widely visible throughout Fontana.

What was supposed to make the whole endeavor ingeniously self-financing, however, was Miller's formula of combining tree crops (walnuts and mixed citrus) or vineyards with poultry, supported by cheap inputs from Fontana Farms' industrial economies of scale (fertilizer, saplings, water and power). Colonists were urged to install chicken coops as soon as possible to generate reliable incomes. This famous 'Partnership of Hens and Oranges' was intended to stabilize the small tree rancher through the vagaries of frost and cashflow, while simultaneously guaranteeing the Fontana Company its installment payments. Ideally, it was supposed to allow the retired couple with a modest pension, the young family with rustic inclinations, or the hardworking immigrant, the means to achieve a citrus-belt lifestyle formerly accessible only to the well-to-do.⁹

Miller's dream sold well, even through the early years of the Depression. By 1930 the Fontana Company had subdivided more than three thousand homesteads, half occupied by full-time settlers, some of them immigrants from Hungary, Yugoslavia and Italy. The ten pioneer poultry plants of 1919 had grown to nine hundred, making the district the premier poultry center of the West. Fontana Farms, meanwhile, had expanded to a full-time workforce of five hundred Mexican and Japanese laborers – comparable to the largest cotton plantations in the Mississippi Delta. In the early thirties Miller joined forces with the Swift dynasty from Chicago to buy out the historic Miller (no relation) and Lux cattle empire in the San Joaquin Valley. His rising stature in California agriculture, together with his contributions to making it into a genuine 'agribusiness', were acknowledged by Republican Governor Rolph, who appointed Miller president of the State Agricultural Society, and, ex officio, a regent of the University of California.

Even if Fontana Farms was ultimately little more than a real-estate promotion cleverly, and extravagantly, packaged as semi-utopia, it retains considerable historical importance as the most striking Southern California

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FONTANA FARMS

example of the 'back to the land' movement in the inter-war years. Originally a yeoman's version of the irrigation colony ideal (exemplified by both Chaffey's Ontario and the Socialists' Llano del Rio), Fontana grew to share many of the qualities of Frank Lloyd Wright's 'Broadacres' project and the 1930s anti-urban experiments. Skimming through old advertising brochures for Fontana Farms, one is struck by the ideological congruence – however inadvertent – between Miller's declared aims and the Henry Georgian program which Giorgi Ciucci has claimed infused Wright's Broadacres: 'labor-saving electrification, the right of the average citizen to the land, the integration of the city and the countryside, cooperation rather than government, and the opportunity for all to be capitalists'. If, as Ciucci sarcastically observes, 'Wright's ideal city would be realized only in the grotesque and preposterous form of Disneyland and Disney World',¹⁰ Miller's more practical version of the Broadacre ideal had a brief, but real tenure. All the more ironic, then, that pastoral Fontana Farms would be upstaged, and eventually uprooted, by Henry Kaiser's 'satanic mill'.

MIRACLE MAN

The 'Miracle Man' Comes to Fontana.

1942 headline¹¹

In 1946, after two years of criss-crossing all the old forty-eight states ('my ideal day was to spend all morning with the First National Bank and the afternoon with the CIO'), John Gunther published *Inside USA* – his vast (979-page), Whitmanesque snapshot of the domestic political scene on the threshold of the postwar era.¹² For Gunther, the most popular journalist of his generation, World War Two was comparable to the Revolution or the Civil War as a watershed of American character. From the standpoint of an onrushing 'American Century', he was concerned to distinguish the progressive from the reactionary, the visionary from the backward-looking. Although later journalists, albeit only by team effort, eventually duplicated the scale of his canvas (that is, the entire US political universe), none has ever matched the astuteness or piquancy of his characterizations of an entire generation of public figures. Unsurprisingly, in the gutter bottom of

national political life, Gunther identified the representatives of Mississippi, the Hague machine of New Jersey, and other avatars of domestic fascism. Conversely, at the very pinnacle of his new American pantheon, rising above even Governors Warren and Stassen (perennial Gunther favorites), was 'the most important industrialist in the United States . . . the builder of Richmond and Fontana', Henry J. Kaiser.¹³

Forty-five years later, with the mighty Kaiser empire now dismantled, Gunther's panegyric to Kaiser (he was given an entire chapter to himself) requires some explanation.¹⁴ In essence, Gunther, like many contemporary observers, saw Kaiser as the exemplary incarnation of the Rooseveltian synthesis of free enterprise and enlightened state intervention. Kaiser of the 1930s and 1940s is heroically entrepreneurial – Gunther compares him to nineteenth-century empire-builders like the Central Pacific's 'Big Four' – yet, unlike the old-fashioned 'railroad corsairs', Kaiser 'has great social consciousness and conscience'. A lifelong registered Republican, he avidly supports the New Deal. 'As to labor Kaiser's friendly relations are well known. He wants to be able to calculate his costs to the last inch, and he never budes without a labor contract.'¹⁵ Although his early background was as a small-town salesman, lacking any formal training in engineering or manufacturing, Kaiser by the mid 1940s had become the great problem-solving magician of the war economy: mass-producing Liberty ships in four days and achieving other productivist feats worthy of Edison or Ford. Even better than Ford himself (who represented an earlier era of authoritarian engineer-capitalism), Kaiser personified the spirit of the war-generated high-productivity, high-wage economy that later economic historians would refer to as 'Fordism'. But 'Kaiserism' would have been a more apt name for the postwar social contract between labor and management:

Production in the last analysis depends on the will of labor to produce . . . you can't have healthy and viable industry without, first, a healthy labor movement, and second, social insurance, community health, hospitalization plans, and decent housing. 'To break a union is to break yourself.' *The 'Kaiser Credo'*¹⁶

Kaiser was also a hero of the West. Denounced by Wall Street as the 'economic Antichrist' and 'coddled New Deal pet', he was welcomed west of the Rockies as a self-made frontier capitalist who, against incredible odds,

had triumphed over William Jennings Bryan's 'cross of gold'.¹⁷ To Western economic nationalists, like A.G. Mezerik, Kaiser was a 'new kind of industrialist', an incarnation of the 'trust-busting Second New Deal' and a pioneer of the 'independent industrialization of the West'.¹⁸ In fact, Kaiser, accumulating a small fortune in the corrupt street-paving business during the auto-crazy 1920s, was transformed into an industrial giant during the 1930s by virtue of strategic (and sometimes secretive) business and political alliances. In the late 1920s, Kaiser became a favorite of the legendary Amadeo Giannini, founder of the Bank of Italy (later, Bank of America) and the West's major independent financier.¹⁹ With Giannini backing, Kaiser assumed de facto leadership over the coalition of construction companies building Hoover Dam and became the Six Companies' Washington lobbyist. In the capital Kaiser hired consummate New Deal 'fixer' Tommy Corcoran to represent his interests in the White House, while cultivating his own special relationship to powerful Interior Secretary Harold Ickes.²⁰

Most importantly, Kaiser, together with Giannini and other local allies, were able to recognize the extraordinary 'window of opportunity' for Western economic development opened up by the political crisis of the 'First' New Deal in 1935–6. To be fair, it was actually Herbert Hoover, the first president from California, who had launched the industrialization of the Pacific Slope by authorizing construction of both the Hoover Dam and the Golden Gate Bridge. But the big chance for Western (and Southern) businessmen came in the interregnum between the Banking Act of 1935 and the beginning of Lendlease, when relations between the White House and Wall Street reached their twentieth-century nadir. As Eastern finance capital (including many key supporters of FDR in 1933) turned against the New Deal, Kaiser and Giannini, together with Texas oil independents and Mormon bankers (led by Six Companies partner and new Federal Reserve chairman Mariner Eccles), politically and financially shored up the Roosevelt administration, preventing the insurgent labor movement from dominating the national Democratic Party.²¹ In his epic *Age of Roosevelt*, Arthur Schlesinger describes the convergence of interests that supported the 'Second' ('anti-trust') New Deal of the late 1930s:

It included representatives of the 'new money' of the South and West, like Jesse Jones, Henry J. Kaiser and A.P. Giannini, who . . . were in revolt against the *rentier*

mentality of New York and wanted government to force down interest rates and even supply capital for local development. It included representatives of new industries, like communications and electronics [including Hollywood]. . . . It included representatives of business particularly dependent on consumer demand, like Sears Roebuck. And it included speculators like Joseph P. Kennedy, who invested in both new regions and new industries.²²

The modern 'Sunbelt' was largely born out of the political rewards of this Second New Deal coalition. Billions of dollars in federal aid (representing *net* tax transfers from the rest of the country) laid down an industrial infrastructure in California, Washington and Texas. And nearly \$110 million in major construction contracts – including the Bay Bridge, the naval base on Mare Island, and Bonneville, Grand Coulee, and Shasta dams – fueled the breakneck expansion of the Kaiser Company. Long before Pearl Harbor, Kaiser was already discussing with Giannini and a select group of Western industrialists (Donald Douglas, Stephen Bechtel, and John McCone) strategies for maximizing the role of local capital in a war economy. Recognizing that a Pacific War would make unprecedented demands on the under-industrialized California economy, Kaiser proposed to adapt Detroit's assembly-line methods to revolutionize the construction of merchant shipping. Although critics initially scoffed at the idea that a mere 'sand and gravel man' could master the art of shipbuilding, Kaiser, with the support of his high-level New Deal connections, became the biggest shipbuilder in American history. In four years his giant Richmond, Portland and Vancouver (Washington) yards launched a third of the American merchant navy (80 per cent of 'Liberty Ships') as well as fifty 'baby flat-top' aircraft carriers: nearly 1,500 vessels in all.²³

In Richmond, where 747 ships were built, Kaiser was able to create a social and technological template for postwar capitalism. To simplify welding, huge deckhouses were assembled upside-down and then hoisted into place, helping reduce the traditional six-month shipbuilding cycle to a week. In the absence of a skilled labor force, Kaiser 'trained something like three hundred thousand welders [at Richmond alone] out of soda jerks and housewives'.²⁴ But his real genius was the systematic attention he focused on maintaining labor at high productivity with minimum time lost to sickness or turnover – the nightmares of other military contractors. Back in 1938, while trying to meet deadlines on the Grand Coulee, Kaiser experimented with transforming indirect medical costs into a direct,

calculable industrial input by subscribing his workers to the pre-paid health plan pioneered by Dr Sidney Garfield. This Permanente Health Plan – to be the most enduring part of the Kaiser legacy – was adapted with union collaboration to the massive Richmond workforce, together with active company intervention to construct war housing, organize recreation and rationalize overloaded public transport (Kaiser imported cars from the old Sixth Avenue El in New York).²⁵

But Kaiser's Richmond shipyards had a critical bottleneck: a persistent shortage of steel plate. An industrial colony of the East, the West Coast had always imported steel at high markups (\$6–\$20 per ton); now, in the midst of a superheated war economy, the Eastern mills could not supply, nor could the railroads transport, enough of this high-cost steel to meet the demands of Pacific shipyards. Although US Steel's Benjamin Fairless claimed that 'abstract economic justice no more demands that the Pacific Coast have a great steel industry than that New York grow its own oranges',²⁶ the war shortage prompted the corporation to propose a new integrated (ore to steel) mill on a Utah coalfield. Arguing, however, that the postwar Western market would not justify the extra capacity added by the mill, US Steel demanded that the Defense Production Corporation pay the cost of construction.

Kaiser countered with his own, characteristically audacious proposal to borrow the money from the government to build on his own account a tidewater steel complex in the Los Angeles area, using Boulder (Hoover) Dam power. From the outset this was treated by all sides as a Western declaration of independence from Big Steel, provoking rage in Pittsburgh in equal measure to the enthusiasm it generated in California. In the event, Washington tried to satisfy all sides by allowing US Steel to operate the government-built mill in Geneva, Utah, while loaning \$110 million to Kaiser via the Reconstruction Finance Corporation.²⁷ The War Department, however, whether acting from post-Pearl Harbor hysteria, or secretly lobbied by Big Steel (as Mezerik believed), insisted that the Kaiser facility had to be located at least fifty miles inland, 'away from possible Japanese air attack'.²⁸ This locational constraint was widely thought to preclude postwar conversion of the facility to competitive production. Rule-of-thumb wisdom held that an integrated complex could only operate at a profit if dependence on rail transport was confined to one 'leg' of its logistical

'tripod' of iron ore, coking coal and steel product. A Southern California tidewater plant was accorded but a slim chance of survival in the postwar market; an inland location, dependent upon coal and iron rail shipments from hundreds of miles away, was considered an economic impossibility.²⁹

But Kaiser believed that 'problems were only opportunities with their work clothes on', and refused to be daunted. He calculated that radical economies in steel-making and mining technology, together with the vast promise of the postwar California market (drastically underestimated by Big Steel), would allow him to convert profitably to peacetime production. Accepting the War Department's disadvantageous conditions, he sent his engineers in search of a suitable inland location. They quickly fixed their sights on Fontana.

THE DE LUXE WAR BABY

From Pigs to Pig Iron!
Fontana Steel Will Build a New World!
*Kaiser Slogans, 1940s*³⁰

In that Indian summer before Pearl Harbor, Fontana's destiny seemed fixed forever on hogs, eggs and citrus. While locals debated the hot prospects in the annual 'Hen Derby' or fretted over rising mortality on 'Death Alley' (Valley Boulevard), Fontana Farms publicists were boasting that the 1940 Census 'Proves Fontana, Top Agricultural Community in the United States!'³¹ A.B. Miller, now in partnership with giant Swift and Company, waxed more powerful than ever in state agribusiness circles and conservative Inland Empire politics. Then, with chilling punctuality, death struck down Fontana's founders: Miller (April 1941), followed within months by leading businessman Charles Hoffman, water system founder William Stale, and Fontana Farms Citrus Director J.A. McGregor.³²

With the passing of the pioneer generation, and the growing awareness that California would soon become the staging ground for a vast Pacific war, boosters in spring 1941 began a xenophobic promotion of Fontana as an ideal location for war industry. Miller's Fontana Farms successor, R.E. Boyle, joined local supervisor C.E. Grier and congressman Henry Sheppard,

in cajoling Fontanans into accepting that their 'patriotic duty . . . based on real American principles' was to create the new 'Partnership of Agriculture and [War] Industry'.³³ But six months of aggressive advertising and patriotic bombast yielded not a single munitions plant or aircraft factory. Instead, the hysteria that followed Pearl Harbor, when Japanese aircraft were daily 'sighted' over Long Beach and Hollywood, prompted a sudden rush for 'safe', inland residences. In the early weeks of 1942 Fontana Farms was selling two ranches per day to anxious refugees from Los Angeles.³⁴ Even supervisor Grier, chief advocate of the military industrialization of the Inland Empire, was forced to admit that Fontana would contribute 'in great measure to winning the war by the productivity of its poultry'.³⁵ Then came the great bolt from Kaiser headquarters in Oakland.³⁶

Prevented from building at tidewater, Kaiser was attracted to Fontana for two different reasons. On the one hand, his engineers and their military counterparts added up the ready-made advantages of Miller's infrastructural investments: cheap power from Lytle Creek (now augmented by Boulder Dam), excellent rail connections near two major railyards (San Bernardino and Colton), and, most importantly in a semi-desert, an autonomous, low-cost water supply.³⁷ The weak claims of local government over the unincorporated Fontana area were also considered an asset. San Bernardino was a 'poor rural county' with an unusually large relief load, and Kaiser clearly preferred to deal with, and if necessary, overawe and intimidate, its unsophisticated officials, desperate for any type of industrial investment, than face more powerful and self-confident public bureaucracies elsewhere.

On the other hand, Kaiser was personally captivated by Miller's utopia. As in Richmond, he placed social engineering on par with the priorities of production engineering, figuring that hens and citrus might mitigate the class struggle.

He saw advantages to building in a rural community. Workers at the steel mill had the opportunity to raise chickens on the side or plant gardens. Kaiser believed these 'hobby farms' created a more relaxed atmosphere and the workers would be more content. It was something that could not be found in the Eastern steel towns [and, therefore, a comparative advantage].³⁸

On the first anniversary of A.B. Miller's interment, Kaiser broke ground on a former Miller ranch a few miles west of Fontana township, his



**WE WISH
TO
EXPRESS
OUR
MOST SINCERE FELICITATIONS TO
HENRY J. KAISER**
And to His Able Co-Workers as the Operators of the Building of Production at the
FONTANA STEEL PLANT

We are happy to have this great and most vitally important industry in our district, which made it possible for Fontana to carry out the partnership of industry and agriculture.

SINCE THE AMERICAN EAGLE HAS GONE TO WAR we Americans have made up our minds to produce such an overwhelming number of ships and planes and tanks that no barbaric enemies can ever again threaten our freedom and the flag we live under. To this end we are engaged in the greatest battle of production the world has ever seen.

With complete faith in such a leader as Mr. Kaiser, America's builder, and his industrial might in building a new war production peak, no enemy in the world can challenge our Liberty and Democracy.

FONTANA FARMS COMPANY
H. E. BOYLE, President

THE MIRACLE MAN COMETH

bulldozers literally chasing the hogs away.³⁹ Under the supervision of veterans of Grand Coulee and Richmond, the construction shock-brigades made breathtaking progress. By 30 December 1942 the acrid smell of coke smoke hung over the citrus groves, and, as local radio announcer Chet Huntley officiated, Mrs Henry J. Kaiser threw the switch that fired the giant, 1,200-ton blast furnace named in her honor ('Big Bess'). An even more elaborate ceremony in May 1943 celebrated the tapping of the first steel. Surrounded by Hollywood stars and top military brass, Kaiser – with typical bravado – announced that Fontana was the beginning of the 'Pacific Era' and 'a great industrial empire for the West'. Fleets of diesel trucks began the long shuttle of Fontana-made plate to the steel-hungry shipyards of Richmond and San Pedro.⁴⁰

The vast, mile-square plant – Southern California's 'de luxe war baby'⁴¹ – seemed to erupt out of the earth before Fontanans had a chance to weigh the impact on their small rural society. Perhaps because of the rapidity of the transition, or because of patriotic consensus, there was no recorded protest against the plant construction. Kaiser spokesmen reassured residents that the plant 'could be erected in the middle of an orange grove and operated continuously without the slightest damage to trees'.⁴² By the end of the first year, however, disturbing evidence to the contrary had become obvious. The coking coal first employed at Fontana had high sulfur content, producing acidic vapors that withered saplings and burnt the leaves off trees. Ranchers across from the mill picked grapefruit from their trees for the last time in the fall of 1942.⁴³ This was the beginning of the end of Miller's Eden, as well as the start of a regional pollution problem of major proportions.

While Fontanans were watching their trees die, Kaiser was shattering the illusion of starry-eyed San Bernardino County supervisors that the plant would be an enormous tax windfall. Assessed at normal rates in July 1943, the Company rejected the County's bill out of hand, warning that they 'might be forced to close the plant'. Although reporters scoffed at the obviously absurd threat to shutter the brand-new, \$110 million mill, over-awed supervisors obediently reduced the assessment to a small fraction of the original.⁴⁴ Their concession set a precedent that allowed Kaiser officials to protest any prospective tax increase as undercutting the economic viability of the plant. As a result, San Bernardino County saw its major potential tax resource evolve into a net tax liability (a fact that helps explain official apathy to the plant's closure a generation later).

As the experts had foreseen, the major difficulty in producing steel in Fontana was the organization of raw material supply. Kaiser could purchase limestone and dolomite flux from local quarries, but it had no alternative but to develop its own network of captive mines to source iron and coal. Although geologists reassured Kaiser that the nearby Mojave Desert contained enough iron ore within a three-hundred-mile radius to supply the plant for several centuries, exploitation of the richest deposits required costly investments in rail-laying and mining technology. Initially Fontana was supplied with ore from the Vulcan Mine near Kelso; after the war, the company developed the great Eagle Mountain complex in Riverside County with its own rail line and mining workforce of 500. Coking coal – the most difficult supply variable – had to be imported 800 miles from Price, Utah (in 1960 Kaiser Fontana switched to new mines in New Mexico). Overall, Fontana was refining low-cost iron ore with the nation's highest cost coal: an equation that left its furnace costs well above other integrated mills (including US Steel's coalfield plant in Utah).⁴⁵

Despite the burden of these supply costs, Kaiser by 1944 was making steel more efficiently than anyone had expected to build ships in greater tonnage than anyone had dreamt possible. He was also smelting aluminum, assembling bombers, mixing concrete, even producing the incendiary 'goop' with which the Army Air Corps was systematically immolating Tokyo and Osaka. At the pinnacle of his popularity, he was widely rumored to be Roosevelt's favorite choice for a fourth-term running-mate. Meanwhile, his alliance with the New Deal had catapulted the Kaiser companies to the top rank of privately-owned firms, and, unlike the California aircraft industry, his operations were totally independent of Wall Street and Eastern banks. (When he was not borrowing government money, his old ally Giannini made available the Bank of America's largest single line of credit.)⁴⁶ Buoyed by the successes of his shipyards and steel and aluminum mills, Kaiser surveyed a bold, coordinated expansion into postwar markets for medical care, appliances, housing, aircraft and automobiles. In his wartime speeches, Kaiser was fond of adding a fifth 'freedom' to Roosevelt's original four: 'the freedom of abundance'.⁴⁷

He recognized, with singular prescience, that the conjuncture of rising union power (which he supported) and wartime productivity advances were finally going to unleash the mass consumer revolution that the New Deal

had long promised. He also calculated that the pent-up demand for housing and cars, fueled by the fantastic volume of wartime forced savings, created an explosive market situation in which independent entrepreneurs like himself might find the opportunity of the century to compete with the Fortune 500. Everything depended on the speed of reconversion/retooling and the ability to offer the kind of streamlined products that Americans had been dreaming about since the 1939 New York World's Fair.

With characteristic hubris, Henry J. attempted to expand into all markets simultaneously. His venture into experimental aviation was short-lived, when he abandoned to the obsessive Howard Hughes the further development of their prototype super-transport, the notorious 'Spruce Goose'.⁴⁸ In the field of mass-produced housing, on the other hand, Kaiser had substantial success. For two decades he had been building homes for his dam and shipyard workers, even master-planning entire communities. He had also been discussing the national housing crisis with such seminal thinkers as Norman Bel Geddes, the designer of the famous Futurama exhibit at the 1939 World's Fair. Shortly after V-J Day Kaiser dramatically announced a 'housing revolution': 'America's answer to the so-called accomplishments of Communists and Fascists'. Creating 'a nearly 100 mile plant-to-site assembly line' in Southern California (where he predicted that immigration would reach a million per year in the immediate postwar period), he launched construction of ten thousand pre-fabricated homes in the Westchester, North Hollywood and Panorama City areas. Defying an acute shortage of ordinary building materiel, Kaiser engineers innovated with fiberglass board, steel, aluminum siding, and sheet gypsum, while 'applying Richmond methods' to train armies of construction workers whom Kaiser promptly unionized.⁴⁹

But Kaiser Homes, however important in demonstrating the feasibility of postwar 'merchant homebuilding', were only a sideshow for their master. Henry J.'s real ambition was to challenge the Eastern corporate establishment on its own turf. Unfortunately, he chose to fight Detroit and Pittsburgh at the same time. 'Tilting at the most dangerous and dramatic of American windmills',⁵⁰ he launched Kaiser-Frazer Motors in a giant reconverted bomber plant in Willow Run, Michigan. Simultaneously, he brought Fontana steel into direct competition with Big Steel for control of Western markets.

Only one capitalist from the West had ever attempted such a brazen invasion of the East: Giannini in the late 1920s. For the impudence of

staking a seat on Wall Street, Giannini was temporarily deposed in his own house, as J.P. Morgan mounted a retaliatory raid on Transamerica, the Giannini bank holding company.⁵¹ (As a Morgan director told Giannini: 'Right or wrong, you do as you're told down here'.)⁵² It was poetic justice, therefore, that Giannini was allied to Kaiser's postwar schemes, introducing him to Joseph Frazer, the rebel Detroit capitalist, as well as supporting the campaign to refinance Fontana steel.

The 'debacle' of Kaiser-Frazer has been recently retold in Mark Foster's scholarly biography of Henry J. Fearing postwar layoffs as well as an anti-union backlash by the major automakers, the United Auto Workers had begged Kaiser to convert the Willow Run assembly lines (scheduled for closure after V-J Day) to auto production. Teamed up with Frazer, the former head of Willys-Overland, and cheered on by the unions, Kaiser and his engineers tried to duplicate the miracle of Richmond. Within a year of taking over Willow Run, they had built 100,000 cars and recruited an impressive national network of dealerships. The 1947 Kaiser-Frazer shock-wave rattled nerves in the executive suites of Dearborn Park and the Chrysler Building. But, endemically undercapitalized in face of the auto majors' billion-dollar plant expansions and model-changes, the new company sank deep into the red. In the meantime Giannini had died, Wall Street had boycotted Kaiser's offerings, and Frazier had resigned. After the failure of a last-ditch remodeling in 1954-5, Willow Run was sold off to General Motors and the dies were shipped to South America where Kaiser-body cars were still being assembled as late as the 1970s. Although Kaiser continued for another decade to build Jeeps at his Willys-Overland subsidiary in Toledo, the Western invasion of Detroit was over.⁵³

Fontana, by contrast, was an untrammelled success, despite bitter opposition from Big Steel and comparable financial problems to Kaiser-Frazer's. In the immediate reconversion period of steel shortages and turbulent industrial relations (1945-6), Kaiser's friendship with the CIO exempted Fontana from the bitter national steel strike. Expanding into new product markets, especially construction, Kaiser Steel strained at capacity during the steel drought, even briefly exporting to Europe. But, once the steel strike was settled and capacity had begun to adjust to demand, Fontana's inherent logistical and financial problems seemed to signal doom.⁵⁴

Fortunately, Kaiser metallurgists produced the kind of technical breakthrough at Fontana that eluded the design teams at Willow Run. Just as Henry J. had brashly promised, his engineers offset their high coal costs by radically reducing coke loads and increasing blast furnace efficiency. Similarly at Eagle Mountain, Kaiser mining engineers pioneered new economies in ore extraction, reducing their iron costs even further below Eastern averages. By the mid 1950s Fontana was an international benchmark of advanced steelmaking, keenly studied by steelmasters from Japan and other high raw-material-cost countries.⁵⁵

A more intractable problem was repaying the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) loan that had built Fontana. With Congress recaptured by the Republicans in 1946, and his New Deal allies leaving the Truman Administration in droves, Kaiser was politically isolated. Under fire in Congress for alleged profiteering on his wartime shipbuilding contracts (a calumny, he charged, that was spread by his Eastern corporate enemies), he was unable to persuade the RFC to discount or refinance any of his 1942 loan. Despite liberal support (the *New Republic* denounced the RFC for betraying the West's 'attempts to build its own steel mills and free itself from control by the East'), and innumerable resolutions from chambers of commerce, Kaiser had exhausted his political IOUs. To rub salt in his wounds, the War Assets Administration auctioned the Geneva, Utah, mill to US Steel (the *lowest* bidder) for a mere twenty-five cents on the dollar of its cost.⁵⁶

If steel demand had softened at this precarious point, Fontana might have floundered. Instead a big transcontinental gas pipeline deal provided Kaiser Steel with invaluable collateral, while the sudden outbreak of the Korean War revived the West Coast shipbuilding industry. Following the advice of the Giannini family (who also extended Fontana's credit), Kaiser made his steel operations public. The Los Angeles business elite, led by *Times* heir Norman Chandler (who became a Kaiser Steel director) and old friend John McCone, rallied to the initial stock offering, allowing Henry J. to retire the RFC loan in 1950.⁵⁷

With increased access to private capital, and with a Southern California market booming beyond all expectations, Kaiser Steel expanded and diversified. Two postwar expansions added a second blast furnace as well as new tinsplate, strip and pipe mills; a revolutionary pelletizing plant was installed at Eagle Mountain; and in 1959 Governor Brown joined Henry J.

for the dedication of a state-of-the-art basic oxygen furnace. With a workforce of eight thousand, and plans on the drawing board for doubling capacity, Kaiser Steel was a national midget, but a regional giant. In 1962, in a move that 'was a big step in the direction of eliminating that historic phrase "prices slightly higher west of the Rockies"', Kaiser Steel sharply reduced its prices. Eastern steel was virtually driven from the market, leaving Fontana, together with US Steel at Geneva, to co-monopolize the Pacific Slope.⁵⁸

Equally reassuring, Kaiser Steel seemed to continue in the forefront of enlightened industrial relations. Although, unlike in 1946, Fontana was closed down during the long 1959 steel strike, it broke ranks with Big Steel to embrace the United Steel Workers' proposals for a gains-sharing plan to integrate technological change into the collective bargaining framework. First a tripartite committee, with a public member, was established to study conflicts between local work rules and the introduction of automation. Then in 1963 the company and union, with considerable ceremony, formalized the landmark Long Range Sharing Plan (loosely based on the so-called 'Scanlon plan'), whose complex formulae and provisions were supposed to fairly compensate workers for accepting rapid productivity advance. The Plan, whose original backers had included the elite of academic industrial relations specialists and two future Secretaries of Labor (Goldberg and Dunlop), became the Kennedy Administration's prototype for New Frontier-era collective bargaining, and was soon cited as such in every industrial relations textbook.⁵⁹

This was the golden age of Kaiser Steel, Fontana – flagship of the West's postwar smokestack economy. Neither the captain on the deck, nor the crew below, could see the economic icebergs ahead.

HOLOCAUST IN FONTANA

Whites from the South compose the majority of the population of Fontana. They have brought to that community their backward community mores, their hate-mongering religious cults . . .

*O'Day Short, murdered by Fontana vigilantes, 1946*⁶⁰

For hundreds of Dustbowl refugees from the Southwest, still working in the orchards at the beginning of World War Two, Kaiser Steel was the happy

ending to the Grapes of Wrath. Construction of the mill drained the San Bernardino Valley of workers, creating an agricultural labor shortage that was not relieved until the coming of the *braceros* in 1943. Kaiser originally believed that he could apply his Richmond methods to shaping the Fontana workforce: leaving the construction crews in place and 'training them in ten days to make steel' under the guidance of experts hired from the East. But he underestimated the craft knowledge and folklore, only communicated through hereditary communities of steelworkers, that were essential to making steel. Urgent appeals, therefore, were circulated through the steel valleys of Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia, recruiting draft-exempt steel specialists for Fontana.⁶¹

The impact of five thousand steelworkers and their families on local rusticity was predictably shattering. The available housing stock in Fontana and western San Bernardino County (also coveted by incoming military families) was quickly saturated. With few zoning ordinances to control the anarchy, temporary and substandard shelters of every kind sprouted up in Fontana and neighboring districts like Rialto, Bloomington and Cucamonga. Most of the original blast furnace crew was housed in a gerry-built trailer park known affectionately as 'Kaiserville'. Later arrivals were often forced to live out of their cars. The old Fontana Farms colonists came under great pressure to sell to developers and speculators. Others converted their chicken coops to shacks and rented them to single workers – a primitive housing form that was still common through the 1950s.⁶²

Although areas of Fontana retained their Millerian charm, especially the redtiled village center along Sierra with its art-deco theater and prosperous stores, boisterous, often rowdy, juke joints and roadhouses created a different ambience along Arrow Highway and Foothill Boulevard. Neighboring Rialto – presumably the location of Eddie Mars's casino in Chandler's *The Big Sleep* – acquired a notorious reputation as a wide-open gambling center and L.A. mob hangout (a reputation which it has recovered in the 1990s as the capital of the Inland Empire's crack gangs). Meanwhile the ceaseless truck traffic from the mill, together with the town's adjacency to Route 66 (and, today, to Interstates 10 and 15), made Fontana a major regional trucking center, with bustling twenty-four-hour fuel stops and cafes on its outskirts.⁶³

Boomtown Fontana of the 1940s ceased to be a coherent community or cultural fabric. Instead it was a colorful but dissonant *bricolage* of Sunkist

growers, Slovene chicken ranchers, gamblers, mobsters, over-the-road truckers, industrialized Okies, *braceros*, the Army Air Corps (at nearby bases), and transplanted steelworkers and their families. It was also a racial frontier where Black families tried to stake out their own modest claims to a ranch home or a job in the mill. Although, as the war in the Pacific was ending, there was an optimistic aura of sunshine and prosperity in the western San Bernardino Valley, there were also increasing undertones of bigotry and racial hysteria. Finally, just before Christmas eve 1945, there was atrocity. The brutal murder (and its subsequent official cover-up) of O'Day Short, his wife and two small children, indelibly stamped Fontana – at least in the eyes of Black Californians – as being violently below the Mason-Dixon line.

Ironically Fontana had been one of the few locations in the Citrus Belt where Blacks had been allowed to establish communities. Every week during the 1940s, the *Eagle* – Los Angeles's progressive Black paper – carried prominent ads for 'sunny, fruitful lots in the Fontana area'.⁶⁴ For pent-up residents of the overcrowded Central Avenue ghetto, prevented by restrictive covenants ('L.A. Jim Crow') from moving into suburban areas like the San Fernando Valley, Fontana must have been alluring. Moreover, Kaiser's Richmond shipyards were the biggest employer of Black labor on the coast, and there was widespread hope that his new steel plant would be an equally color-blind employer. The reality in Fontana was that Blacks were segregated in their own tracts – a kind of citrus ghetto – on the rocky floodplain above Baseline Avenue in vaguely delineated 'north Fontana'. Meanwhile in the mill, Blacks and Chicanos were confined to the dirtiest departments – coke ovens and blast furnaces (a situation unchanged until the early 1970s).

O'Day Short, already well known in Los Angeles as a civil rights activist, was the first to challenge Fontana's residential segregation by buying land in town (on Randall Street) in fall 1945. Short's move coincided with the Ku Klux Klan's resurgence throughout Southern California, as white supremacists mobilized to confront militant returning Black and Chicano servicemen. In early December, Short was visited by 'vigilantes', probably Klansmen, who ordered him to move or risk harm to his family. Short stood his ground, reporting the threats to the FBI and the county sheriff, as well as alerting the Black press in Los Angeles. Instead of providing protection,

sheriff's deputies warned Short to leave before any 'disagreeableness' happened to his family. The Fontana Chamber of Commerce, anxious to keep Blacks above Baseline, offered to buy Short out. He refused.⁶⁵

A few days later, on 16 December, the Short house was consumed in an inferno of 'unusual intensity'. Neighbors reported hearing an explosion, then seeing 'blobs of fire' on the ground and the family running from their home with clothes ablaze. Short's wife and small children died almost immediately; unaware of their deaths, he lingered on for two weeks in agony. According to one account, Short finally died after being brutally informed by the district attorney of his family's fate. (The D.A. was later criticized for breaking the hospital's policy of shielding Short from further trauma.)⁶⁶

The local press gave the tragedy unusually low-key coverage, quoting the D.A.'s opinion that the fire was an accident.⁶⁷ That a coroner's inquest was held at all (on 3 April 1945) was apparently due to pressure from the NAACP and the Black press. 'Contrary to standard practice in such cases', District Attorney Jerome Kavanaugh refused to allow witnesses to testify about the vigilante threats to the Short family. Instead Kavanaugh read into the record the interview he had conducted with Short in the hospital, 'in which the sick man repeatedly said he was too ill and upset to make a statement, but yielded to steady pressure and suggestion by finally saying that the fire seemed accidental "as far as he was concerned"'. Fontana fire officials, conceding they had no actual evidence, speculated that the holocaust might have been the result of a kerosene-lamp explosion. The coroner's jury, deprived of background about the vigilante threats, accordingly ruled that the Shorts had died from 'a fire of unknown origin'. The sheriff declined an arson investigation.⁶⁸

The Black community in Fontana – many of whom 'themselves had been admonished by deputy sheriff "Tex" Carlson to advise the Shorts to get out' – were 'unanimous in rejecting the "accident" theory'. Fontana's most famous Black resident, Shelton Brooks (composer of the *Darktown Strutter's Ball*), demanded a full-scale arson investigation. J. Robert Smith, crusading publisher of the *Tri-Country Bulletin*, the Black paper serving the Inland Empire, decried an official cover-up of 'mass murder' – a charge echoed by Short's friends, Joseph and Charlotta Bass, publishers of the *Los Angeles Eagle*.⁶⁹

The case became a brief national *cause célèbre* after the Los Angeles NAACP, led by Lorenzo Bowdoin, hired renowned arson expert, Paul T. Wolfe, to sift through the evidence. Noting that the supposed cause of the fire, the kerosene lamp, had actually been recovered intact, he found compelling evidence that the Short home had been deliberately soaked in quantities of coal oil to produce an explosive blaze of maximum ferocity. He concluded that 'beyond a shadow of a doubt the fire was of an incendiary origin'. In the meantime, the *Tri-County Bulletin* discovered that the original sheriff's report on the fire had 'mysteriously' disappeared from its file, while the *Eagle* raised fundamental doubts about Short's purported testimony to D.A. Kavanaugh. Mass demonstrations were held in San Bernardino and Los Angeles, as scores of trade-union locals, progressive Jewish organizations, and civil-rights groups endorsed the NAACP's call for a special investigation of 'lynch terror in Fontana' by California's liberal attorney general Robert Kenny (another Gunther favorite). Catholic Interracial Council leader Dan Marshall pointed out that 'murder is the logical result of discrimination', while Communist leader Pettis Perry described the Short case as 'the most disgraceful that has ever occurred in California'.⁷⁰

But it was hard to keep the Short holocaust in focus. Attorney General Kenny succeeded in temporarily banning the Ku Klux Klan in California, but made no attempt to reopen investigation into the Short case or expose the official whitewash by San Bernardino officials. The Los Angeles NAACP, spearhead of the campaign, quickly became preoccupied with the renewed struggle against housing discrimination in Southcentral Los Angeles.⁷¹ The Trotskyist Socialist Workers' Party continued its own sectarian campaign through the spring of 1946, but used the Short case primarily to polemicize against Kenny (Democratic nominee for governor) and his Communist supporters.⁷² In the end, as protest faded, the vigilantes won the day: Blacks stayed north of Baseline (and in the coke ovens) for another generation, and the fate of the Short family, likely victims of white supremacy, was officially forgotten.⁷³

However, early postwar Fontana found it difficult to avoid notoriety. If the press downplayed the Short case, it sensationalized the murder trial of Gwendelyn Wallis – a local policeman's wife who confessed to shooting her husband's mistress, a pretty young Fontana schoolteacher named Ruby Clark. At a time when countless Hollywood films in the Joan Crawford vein

were beginning to sermonize against wartime morals and gender equality, the Wallis trial became a lightning rod for contending values. Girls argued with their mothers, husbands fought with wives, marriages reportedly even broke up, over Gwendelyn's justification for killing Ruby: that she was a 'scheming, single, working woman'. Her surprise acquittal in March 1946 was greeted across the country with both anger and celebration. At the courthouse in San Bernardino she was 'mobbed by sympathetic women' – mostly long-suffering housewives like herself, who had become her adoring fans in the course of this real-life soap opera.⁷⁴

Finally, to permanently reinforce the new Fontana's wild image, 1946 was also the year that the original nucleus of the Hell's Angels began to coalesce in the area. According to legend, the founders were demobbed bomber crewmen, right out of the pages of Heller's *Catch 22*, who rejected the return to staid civilian lives. Whatever the true story, the Fontana-based gang were surely participants in the infamous Hollister (July 1947) and Riverside (July 1948) motorcycle riots that were immortalized by Brando in *The Wild One* ('the bike rider's answer to the *Sun Also Rises*').⁷⁵ When the beleaguered American Motorcycle Association denounced an 'outlaw one per cent', the proto-Angels made that label their badge of honor. At a 'One-Percenters' convention in Fontana in 1950 the Hell's Angels were formally organized; the 'Fontana-Berdoo' chapter became the 'mother' chapter with exclusive authority to charter new branches. The founding philosophy of the group was succinctly explained by a Fontana member: 'We're bastards to the world, and they're bastards to us.'

Although 'Berdoo' continued through the 1960s as the nominal capital of outlaw motorcycling, power within the Angels shifted increasingly toward the ultra-violent Oakland chapter led by Sonny Barger, who also launched the group into big-time narcotics dealing.⁷⁶ As Hunter Thompson put it, 'the Berdoo Angels made the classic Dick Nixon mistake of "peaking" too early'. There are two different versions of the story of their decline. According to 'Freewheelin' Frank', the acidhead Nazi secretary of the San Francisco chapter, 'Berdoo' was ruined by the seduction of the movie industry and a lawyer-huckster named Jeremiah Castelman who convinced them that they would become rich selling Hell's Angels T-shirts.⁷⁷

In the other version of the story, they were driven off the streets by police repression. After the lurid publicity of a rape and two violent brawls,

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the Berdoo Angels became the *bête noire* of LAPD Chief William Parker, who organized a posse of law enforcement agencies to crush the chapter. Establishing police checkpoints on favorite motorcycle itineraries like the Pacific Coast Highway and the Ridge Route, he generated 'such relentless heat that those few who insisted on wearing the colors [Angel jackets] were forced to act more like refugees than outlaws, and the chapter's reputation withered accordingly'. By 1964, when Thompson was slumming with the Oakland chapter, Fontana – 'heartland of the Berdoo chapter's turf' – had been essentially pacified. Local Angels 'couldn't even muster a quorum' for an outlaw motorcycle scene in a Sal Mineo movie: 'some were in jail, others had quit and many of the best specimens had gone north to Oakland'.⁷⁸ Despite its eclipse, however, the Berdoo chapter never collapsed. A generation after Thompson's account, mother Angels are still bunkered in their Fontana redoubt, raising enough hell to force the cancellation of a major motorcycle show in Downtown Los Angeles (in February 1990) after a violent collision with another gang.⁷⁹

MILLTOWN DAYS

For Abel to win the nomination at Fontana, the public relations pivot of the McDonald administration, would be a definite psychological victory. *John Herling*⁸⁰

After the turbulent, sometimes violent, transitions of the 1940s, Fontana settled down into the routines of a young milltown. The Korean War boom enlarged the Kaiser workforce by almost 50 per cent and stimulated a new immigration from the East that reinforced the social weight of traditional steelworker families. The company devoted new resources to organizing the leisure time of its employees, while the union took a more active role in the community. The complex craft subcultures of the plant intersected with ethnic self-organization to generate competing cliques and differential pathways for mobility. At the same time, the familiar sociology of plant-community interaction was overlaid by lifestyles peculiar to Fontana's Millerian heritage and its location on the borders of metropolitan Los Angeles and the Mojave Desert. Although locals continued to joke that

Fontana was just Aliquippa with sunshine, it was evolving into a *sui generis* working-class community.

This is not to deny that there was a lot of Aliquippa (or Johnstown or East Pittsburgh) in Fontana. Mon Valley immigrants ended up as the dominant force in United Steel Workers Local 2869. Dino Papavero, for instance, who was president of the local in the early 1970s, moved out from Aliquippa in 1946 because his father was worried about a postwar slump at Jones and Laughlin. It was widely believed amongst Pennsylvania steelworkers that Kaiser, in booming California, was recession-proof. John Piazza – Papavero’s vice-president and current leader of the Fontana School Board – first came to San Bernardino County (from Johnstown, PA) as one of Patton’s ‘tank jockeys’ training for the Sahara in the Mojave. While hitchhiking Route 66 to the Hollywood USO he was intrigued by a billboard boasting of the opening of Kaiser Steel. After the war, he found himself trapped in an apparently hopeless cycle of layoff and rehiring at Bethlehem which seemed to preclude any advancement up the seniority ladder. Together with other Johnstownians, he headed out to Fontana – initially living in one of the converted chicken coops – because Kaiser advertised itself as a frontier of opportunity for younger workers.⁸¹

These young Mon Valley immigrants quickly discovered that mobility within the plant or union in Fontana, as in Aliquippa or Johnstown, depended upon the mobilization of ethnic and work-group loyalties. The oldest and most visible of local ethnicities were the Slovenes. Their community core – a group of Ohio coal miners who had amassed small savings – had come to Fontana in the 1920s as chicken ranchers, establishing a prosperous branch of the Slovene National Benevolent Society, a large meeting hall and retirement home. Some of their children worked in the mill. Although only informally organized, the ‘Roadrunners’ from West Virginia and the Okies constituted distinctive subcultures within both the plant and the community. But it was the local Sons of Italy chapter – attracting streetwise and ambitious young steelworkers like Papavero and Piazza – that ultimately generated a whole cadre of union leaders during the 1960s and 1970s.

Although the Southern California District of the USW in the 1950s and early 1960s, under Director Charles Smith and his henchman, Billy Brunton, was a loyalist stronghold of international president Donald McDonald, Local 2869 with its Mon Valley transplants became a hotbed of

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DREAM HOUSE

discontent. Many Kaiser workers resented Smith's and Brunton's proconsular powers and ability to bargain over their heads in a situation where Local 2869 was far and away the largest unit in the District. In 1957 the rank and file dramatically registered their dissent by electing Tom Flaherty, local spokesman for the national anti-McDonald movement (the Dues Protest Committee), as president of 2869. After several wildcat strikes, the Kaiser management demanded that McDonald intervene to force the local 'to discharge its contractual obligations'. Obliging the international imposed an 'administratorship' on 2869 and deposed Flaherty and his followers.⁸²

Although 'law and order' were now officially restored within Fontana by the international's police action, the opposition was simply driven underground. By 1963-4 the older dues protesters (led by Joe and Minnie Luksich) had been joined by younger workers embittered by the wage inequalities generated by the new 'fruits of progress' plan. To rub salt in rank-and-file wounds, the Committee of Nine who administered the plan virtually ignored Local 2869 and Fontana, preferring to conduct their deliberations in the more congenial setting of a Palm Springs resort. As a result, 'the situation deteriorated so badly in the summer of 1964 that the members picketed the union hall. Their signs read: "USWA Unfair to Organized Labor" and "Equal Pay for Equal Work".' At this point, Ronald Bitoni, former chairman of the plant grievance committee, began to unify the different opposition factions around the national insurgency of I.W. Abel, a dissident official supported by Walter Reuther. In his history of the successful Abel campaign, John Herling described Fontana as both the 'gem of McDonald's achievement in labor-management cooperation' and the Achilles heel of his power in the West. On election day, 9 February 1965, tens of thousands of pro-Abel steelworkers in the oppositional heartland of the Ohio and Monogahela valleys nervously watched to see how Fontana, two thousands miles away, would vote. Abel's commanding 2,782 to 1,965 victory within Local 2869 announced the end of the *ancien régime*.⁸³ But at the same time it warned of profound rank-and-file discontent with the 'textbook' gains-sharing model. Within a few years many Kaiser unionists would be as alienated from the 'reformist' administration of Abel as they had been from the absolutism of McDonald.

While Local 2869 was fighting to increase local control over the gains-sharing plan, the relationship between the company and the town was

evolving in a very curious way. Despite the stereotype of being a Kaiser 'company town', Fontana was no such thing. When Fontana incorporated in 1952, the mill was left outside the city limits in its own, low-tax 'county island'. Not contributing directly to the town's budget, Kaiser lacked the despotic fiscal clout that Eastern steelmakers conventionally exercised over their captive local governments. Nor did a majority of Kaiser management ever live in the Fontana area. Unlike Bethlehem or Johnstown, no corporate suburb or country-club district projected the social and political power of management into the community. Managers, instead, commuted from gentile redtile towns like Redlands, Riverside and Ontario. The dominating presence in Fontana was, rather, the huge union hall on Sierra. Local merchants and professionals were left in relatively unmediated dependence upon the goodwill of their blue-collar customers and neighbors. Although never directly controlled by labor, Fontana government, as a result, tended to remain on the friendly side of the union.

Yet while eschewing direct control, the Company still played an ubiquitous role in communal life. The location of the mill, far from big city lights, stimulated the organization of leisure time around the workplace. Kaiser's 1950s-60s personnel director, Vernon Peake, managed one of the most extensive corporate recreation programs west of the Mississippi. The internal structure of plant society was vividly reproduced in the composition of Kaiser's six bowling leagues during the kegling craze of the 1950s. While Hot Metal battled Cold Roll in the no-nonsense Steelers League, white-collar Bulb Snatchers traded spares with Pencil Pushers in the Fontana League, and Slick Chicks edged Pinettes in the Girls' (sic) League. Like other steel towns, Fontana prided itself on Friday night 'smokers', and there were usually half a dozen pros and scores of amateurs training in the mill's boxing club. 'Roadrunners' and Okies were especially active in the plant's various hunting and gun clubs, while others joined the popular fishing club.⁸⁴

But blue-collar Fontana also enjoyed recreations that were usually management prerogatives in the more rigid caste order of Eastern steel towns. Golf was popular in some production departments, and leading union activists were frequently seen on the fairways. Other steelworkers took up tennis, joined the toastmasters, became rockhounds, rehearsed with the excellent local drama society, or even moonlighted as stuntmen in

Hollywood. Others raced stockcars, dragsters and motorcycles, or simply spent weekends plowing up the Mojave in their dune buggies.⁸⁵ Whatever the avocation, the point was that Fontana tended to see itself differently – as more egalitarian and openminded (at least for white workers) – than the steel cultures left behind in the valleys of the Ohio.

DRIVIN' BIG BESS DOWN

The Fontana plant has the potential to be competitive with any in the world. (1980)

You can't melt steel in the middle of a residential valley profitably. (1981)
*Elliot Schneider, steel industry 'expert'*⁸⁶

Like every decline and fall, Kaiser Steel's was an accumulation of ironies. One was that the future began to slip away from Fontana, not in the midst of a recession, but at the height of the Vietnam boom. Kaiser was forced out of a rapidly expanding market. Another irony was that, although Kaiser executives in the last days would complain bitterly that Washington had abandoned them in the face of Japanese competition, the company had collaborated avidly with that very same competition in a vain attempt to restructure itself as a steel resource supplier. Kaiser was literally hoisted on its own corporate petard.

After firing up its first Basic Oxygen Furnace (BOF) in 1959, Kaiser Steel neglected plant modernization for almost fifteen years. Having wrested the West from Pittsburgh, it ceased looking over its shoulder at the competition. In the meantime Asian and European steelmakers were rapidly moving ahead with a technological revolution that included full conversion to BOF and the introduction of continuous casting. Kaiser fought the Japanese, its erstwhile protégés and main competitors (whose original plants Kaiser-made 'goop' had incinerated in 1945), with Pearl-Harbor era technology that included obsolete open-hearth furnaces, old-fashioned slab casting, thirty-five-year-old blast furnaces, and dinosaur, over-polluting coke ovens. Although Kaiser protested that the Japanese steel industry enjoyed 'unfair' state subsidies, this hardly explains why its own investment program (the company was in the black until 1969) failed to

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BIG BESS, 1990

sustain technological modernization. If Kaiser Steel squandered its once formidable technical leadership, it was because, unlike the more single-minded Japanese, it purposely diverted its cashflow into alternative accumulation strategies.

In truth, Fontana and the other fifty-odd Kaiser enterprises were an unwieldy legacy. After Henry J.'s retirement to Hawaii in the mid 1950s, Kaiser Industries evolved as a family holding company with decreasing hands-on affinity for the world of production. Orthodox financial management, not heroic technical problem-solving, became the order of the day. From this basically rentier perspective, Kaiser Aluminum, with its consistently high profit margins, became the family's darling. Kaiser Industries' long-range planning focused on how to complement aluminum sales to the Pacific Basin with other primary product exports. When, in the early 1960s, the Japanese demand for steel began to soar (as a result of the first stages of a 'Fordist', home-market-led expansion), Kaiser Industries (the major shareholder in Kaiser Steel) was more concerned about sourcing this demand with raw materials than with the future implications of expanded Japanese capacity for international competition. Specifically for Kaiser Steel this entailed a fateful diversion of its plant modernization budget to purchase export-oriented iron ranges in Australia and coal mines in British Columbia. Eagle Mountain was also expensively remodeled, with an elaborate pelletizing plant added to process iron ore for export to Japan. Thus, years before US Steel's notorious acquisition of Marathon Oil with funds coerced from its basic steel workforce in the name of 'modernization', Kaiser Steel was restructuring itself, with diverted capital improvements, to export resources to its principal competitor, while allowing its own industrial plant to become obsolete.⁸⁷

The Vietnam War – which jump-started the Japanese export offensive – dramatically transformed economic relationships around the Pacific Rim. In 1965 Japanese steel imports claimed a tenth of the US West Coast market; by the war's end, a decade later, nearly half the steel in California was Asian-made and the state was officially included in the Japanese steel industry's definition of 'home market'. Kaiser Steel made large profits exporting iron and coal to the Japanese only to see these raw materials shot back at them in the form of Toyotas and I-beams for skyscrapers. Together with US Steel's Geneva mill (still entirely open-hearth since USS's plant

modernization had been concentrated in the East), Kaiser Fontana could supply barely half of Western demand, and they were constrained from adding capacity because of their technological inability to compete at cost with the foreign steel. Thus the Japanese, and increasingly the Koreans and the Europeans as well, were able to confiscate all the Vietnam-boom growth in Western steel demand. The so-called 'trigger price mechanism', adopted by the Carter administration at Big Steel's urging, only worsened the situation on the West Coast. Trigger prices were too low to prevent Japanese imports and, because they were calibrated higher in the East, they actually encouraged EEC producers to dump steel in California.⁸⁸

In the meantime Kaiser's vaunted labor peace was beginning to erode. Over the years relations between workers and managers had calcified at the shop level – a situation that was exacerbated by the recruitment of truculent managers from Big Steel during the 1970s. At the same time the incredibly complex formulae of the Long Range Sharing Plan continued to generate pay inequalities that had already sparked protest in 1964–5. Workers retaining membership in the older incentive scheme were winning pay increases at a dramatically higher rate than participants in the general savings scheme (a trend which also aggravated inter-generational tension within the union). Likewise LRSP remuneration seemed arbitrarily detached from individual productivity efforts.⁸⁹

Faced with a new wave of rank-and-file discontent, the recently elected president of Local 2869, Dino Papavero, called a strike vote in February 1972. The resulting 43-day walkout was the first 'local issues' strike – apart from the two 1957 wildcats – in the plant's history. Papavero, who clearly visualized the import threat, hoped that the strike would be a safety-valve, releasing accumulating tensions and paving the way for a new labor-management detente. With the encouragement of the company, he launched a plant-wide 'quality circle' movement in a last-ditch effort to raise productivity to competitive levels. Although workers cooperated in hundreds of improvements, management appeared to go along for a free ride, refusing to implement the broad capital modernization program that was necessary to save the plant. Moreover there was the traditional dissonance between Local 2869's priorities and the International's goals. USW Regional Director George White – as always, concerned about the impact of Kaiser innovations upon Big Steel – opposed the workrule-weakening

precedent of the quality circles. He was supported, moreover, by Fontana rank-and-filers embittered by the long walkout and fearful of the loss of hardwon seniority rights and clearcut job boundaries. In 1976 Papavero, the main advocate of cooperativism in the historic spirit of the LRSP, was defeated by a more confrontationist slate.⁹⁰

The year 1976 was indeed one of bad omens. Steel profits had entirely collapsed and Kaiser Steel's net earnings were exclusively sustained by profits from resource exports. The long delayed modernization program, aiming at full conversion to BOF and continuous casting, was finally launched, only to immediately encounter complaints about the plant's role as chief regional polluter. Since the 1960s Fontana had emerged as the literal epicenter of air pollution in Southern California, and Kaiser Steel's huge plume of acrid smoke became indissolubly linked in the public mind with the smog crisis in the Inland Empire.⁹¹ (See map, p. 379.)

The actual situation was considerably more complex: aerial photographs taken by Kaiser during the 1972 strike, when the plant was entirely shut down, showed no abatement in air pollution.⁹² Moreover many ex-steelworkers still vehemently believe that the Kaiser pollution scare was purposely manufactured by developers who regarded the plant – smog-spewing or not – as a huge negative externality to residential construction in the Cucamonga–Fontana area. As San Bernardino County's West End fell under the 'urban shadow' of Los Angeles and Orange County, developable property values came into increasing conflict with the paycheck role of the mill as leading local employer. Inevitably the pollution debate reflected these divergent material interests. While developers became strange bed-partners with environmentalists in demanding a huge cleanup at Fontana, the Kaiser workforce joined with its management to protest the costs of abatement. As one ex-steelworker put it, 'Hell, that smoke was our prosperity.'⁹³

In the event, Kaiser was forced to sign a consent decree with the Southern California Air Pollution Control Board that mandated \$127 million dollars for pollution reduction. This was more than half of the modernization budget.⁹⁴ Partly as a result – from 1975 to 1979 while 'modernization' was being implemented – the union was forced to accept painful triage. Capacity was ruthlessly pared as older facilities were scrapped, including the open hearth, the cold weld, pipe and cold roll mills,

and, finally, the original BOF. The inefficient and polluting coke ovens, on the other hand, were deemed too expensive to replace and were left intact. Fontana, in quiet anguish, began to bleed away its future. Four thousand younger workers – sons, brothers, and a few daughters – were laid off by seniority. With the company reassuring them that the new technology would restore price competitiveness, Local 2869 accepted partial decimation as a necessary sacrifice to save the plant and the community of steelworkers.⁹⁵

When, at last, the new Kaiser Steel chief, Mark Anthony, launched the modernized facilities in an elaborate ceremony on 9 February 1979, he proclaimed the company's 'rededication to making steel in the West'.⁹⁶ But the new technology – including BOF 2, the continuous caster and state-of-the-art emission controls – proved cruelly disappointing. Startup costs were staggeringly over budget, and pollution from the antiquated coke ovens continued to embroil the plant in battles with local and federal air quality control agencies. In the face of this deteriorating situation, and with the vaunted modernization program near shambles, Anthony was removed and Edgar Kaiser, Jr. personally took the helm, advised by experts from his family's investment bankers, First Boston. Although company publicists extolled the return of 'Kaiser magic' to active management, most workers were skeptical.⁹⁷ Henry J.'s grandson was widely viewed as a 'playboy', more interested in his toys, like the Denver Broncos, than in saving California's ailing steel industry.⁹⁸

Mistrust became rampant as the Kaiser family's real strategy was gradually revealed. Years later Edgar Jr. confessed to an interviewer that, despite all the promises to the contrary, he had been sent to Fontana in 1979 by his father as a liquidator:

We were both in tears. I knew what it meant. Nobody else saw it, but I knew what I had to do . . . break up a lot of Steel. I sold off a lot of divisions of Steel. My first day on the job was the prodigal son returning. I had to go out after 30 per cent of the workforce at Fontana. . . . It sure wasn't fun.⁹⁹

The Kaiser family had in fact been engaged in negotiations with Nippon Kokan KK, the world's fifth largest steelmaker.¹⁰⁰ The Kaisers wanted the Japanese to take over Fontana while they restructured Kaiser Steel as Nippon Kokan's

resource supplier. This was, perhaps, the inevitable consequence of the company's long-term bias towards resources rather than steel products. But to Oakland's consternation Nippon Kokan did not take the bait as expected. Instead, following detailed technical inspections of Fontana by its engineering teams, the Japanese giant politely declined Kaiser's offer.¹⁰¹

As Kaiser Steel ran out of cash and its stock plummeted on the exchanges, a second merger deal was hastily concocted and put on offer to Dallas-based LTV. The negotiations collapsed in the face of the Volcker-Reagan recession which plunged the US steel industry into its worst crisis since 1930.¹⁰² On the West Coast, as explained in chapter five, local branch-plant manufacture was swept away by a typhoon of Asian imports. At the very moment when Fontana's fate depended on an iron will to survive – as during Henry J.'s fight to pay off the RFC loan after World War Two – the Kaiser heirs reached for the financial ripcord. The cherished goal of a resource-oriented restructuring was abandoned in favor of a staged liquidation of Kaiser Steel.

In order to keep Fontana temporarily afloat as an attraction to potential buyers, and to drive stock values up to assuage panicky stockholders, the Kaisers sold off the Australian ore reserves, the British Columbia coal mines, and the Liberian ore shipping subsidiary.¹⁰³ Edgar Jr. withdrew as CEO in 1981 after, as promised, 'breaking up a lot of Steel'.¹⁰⁴ The new managerial team, after a few months of bravado about a 'crusade' to save the blast furnaces, stunned the survivors of previous cutbacks with the announcement that ore mining at Eagle Mountain and primary steelmaking at Fontana would be phased out, while the modernized fabrication facilities were put up for sale. Barely two years after their ceremonious 'rededication', BOF 2 and the continuous caster were being written off as scrap, a \$231 million loss.¹⁰⁵

Local 2869 mustered for a last stand, as best it could, but it had tragically few friends or resources. A desperate move to trade wage and work-rule concessions for job-protection guarantees was cold-shouldered by the company before being vetoed altogether by the international.¹⁰⁶ As horrified members watched another two thousand pink slips being readied, the Local clutched at the final straw of an employee buyout, an 'ESOP'.¹⁰⁷ British Steel, long interested in finding a stable market on the West Coast for its unfabricated steel slabs, signaled that it was ready to consider a liaison with a restructured Fontana mill under ESOP ownership. Local 2869 retained the Kelson Group as advisors and sent representatives to Sacramento to lobby Governor Brown

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and the Democratic leadership.¹⁰⁸ In the event, however, Kaiser's intransigence about the ESOP frightened off British Steel, while government intervention on behalf of Fontana – or, for that matter, of any of California's floundering heavy industrial plants – was ruled out by Jerry Brown's new *entente cordiale* with the California Business Roundtable.

Meanwhile, San Bernardino County leaders were divided over the implications of the closure of Kaiser Steel. Having boasted for years that Kaiser pumped nearly a billion dollars annually into the local economy, they were anxious about the loss of so many paychecks. But apprehension was balanced by delight at the thought of rising real-estate values and the removal of the county's principal environmental stigma. As a result, with the exception of pro-union Democratic Congressman George Miller, the local elites and politicians sat on their hands.

In the face of this inertia in the local power structure, Local 2869's only remaining hope might have been a militant community-labor mobilization against shutdowns that allied Fontana with similarly threatened factories and communities, like Bethlehem–Maywood, General Motors–South Gate, or US Steel–Torrance.¹⁰⁹ Unfortunately there was no tradition of communication or mutual support between Southern California's big smoke-stack workforces. Moreover the international unions and the county federations of labor tended to oppose any rank-and-file or local union initiative that threatened their prerogatives. When the rudiments of such a united front – the Coalition Against Plant Closures – finally emerged in 1983 it was too little and too late to save Fontana. At best, some of the survivors managed to float a life raft: the Steelworkers' Oldtimers Foundation, which has helped unionists deal with the bitter aftermaths at Fontana and Bethlehem.

THE UNSCRUPULOUS SUITORS

How Kaiser Steel arrived at this sorry state is an American tragedy.
*Forbes*¹¹⁰

While Local 2869 was fruitlessly searching for friends in high places, Kaiser Steel was like Ulysses' wife Penelope: haplessly pursued by a hundred

unscrupulous suitors. Despite the reluctance of other steelmakers to assimilate Fontana to their operations, there was no shortage of corporate predators eager to stripmine the company's financial reserves. Following the sale of the offshore mineral properties, the company was temporarily awash in liquidity – by one estimate, almost one-half billion dollars.¹¹¹ Many Wall Street analysts believed that the plant was undervalued. With shrewd management, they guessed that the modernized core could be reconfigured as a profitable 'minimill', fabricating imported slabs or local scrap.¹¹²

While the new CEO (the sixth in seven years), Stephen Girard, feuded with the Kaiser family over the terms of sale, desperate unionists and stockholders looked toward San Francisco investor Stanley Hiller, who was rumored to represent billionaire speculators Daniel Ludwig and Gaith Pharaon. Hiller's offer of \$52 per share appeased the Kaiser family, but Girard, trying to retain control over a cash hoard still estimated at \$430 million, broke off negotiations. The Kaisers, backed by the union (which believed it could interest the Hiller group in its ESOP concept), rallied other large stockholders to override Girard.¹¹³ By March 1982, however, when Girard resumed talks with Hiller, the write-down costs of phased-out steel facilities, originally estimated at \$150 million, were admitted to be nearly \$530 million, including \$112 million in employee termination costs. The contingent liabilities in health and benefits for the laid-off workforce seemed especially to overawe the Hiller group, who, to the consternation of unionists and stockholders, abruptly retreated from the field on 11 March.¹¹⁴

The company promptly moved to claim tax write-offs by auctioning its primary steelmaking equipment for scrap: a final blow that killed any hope of an ESOP-based resurrection.¹¹⁵ In late October 1983 the last heat of Eagle Mountain iron ore was smelted into steel; for another month a skeleton crew of 800 (out of a workforce that once numbered 9,000) cold-rolled the remaining slabs into coils, sheets and plate. At 4 p.m. on Saturday, 31 December, Kaiser Steel Fontana died.¹¹⁶

While thousands of Kaiser workers and their families mourned the sinking of California's industrial flagship, sharks in grey flannel suits circled around the undervalued assets of Kaiser Steel, no longer hemorrhaging \$12 million per month in operating deficits. The first to strike was corporate

raider Irwin Jacobs of Minneapolis – known in the trade as ‘Irv the Liquidator’ – who had become the leading shareholder after the withdrawal of Hiller.¹¹⁷ Scared that he would simply ‘gut’ the company, Kaiser Steel management swung behind the rival bid of Oklahoma investor J.A. Frates. Then, as *Forbes* later reported, ‘Monty Rial suddenly appeared, uninvited and unknown’, swaggering like a corporate Butch Cassidy, and brandishing the high-powered law firm of Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen and Katz. Posing as a coal baron from Colorado (though his holdings had never actually produced a ton of coal), Rial dealt himself into the Kaiser Steel takeover game by boasting that he could profitably restructure the company around its billion tons of high-grade coal reserves in Utah and New Mexico.

What Jacobs and Frates didn’t realize, or bother to find out, was that Rial was simply bluffing. While laying siege to Kaiser’s half billion dollar equity, Rial’s ‘Perma Group’ was itself less liquid than some of the Fontana bars in which the ex-steelworkers grouched. According to *Forbes*, the ‘Perma Group couldn’t even pay its copying bills. A local copy shop was pursuing the company to collect a past-due \$1,200, which Perma paid in twelve monthly installments.’ No matter: an impressed and incredibly gullible Frates admitted Rial (‘it rhymes with smile’) as a fifty-fifty partner. In February 1984 they outbid Jacobs to take control of Kaiser Steel, offering \$162 million in cash and \$218 million in preferred stock.

The most viable sections of the Fontana plant were immediately sold off – for \$110 million (exactly the amount that Kaiser had borrowed from the RFC in 1942) – to a remarkable consortium that included a Long Beach businessman, Japan’s giant Kawasaki Steel, and Brazil’s Campanhia Vale Rio Doce Ltd. In a mindbending demonstration of how the new globalized economy works, California Steel Industries (as the consortium calls itself) employs a deunionized remnant of the Kaiser workforce under Japanese and British supervision to roll and fabricate steel slabs imported from Brazil to compete in the local market against Korean imports. Derelict Eagle Mountain, whose iron ores are five thousand miles closer to Fontana than Brazil’s, has meanwhile been proposed as a giant dump for the non-degradable solid waste being produced by the burgeoning suburbia of the Inland Empire.

While Fontanans were trying to absorb these strange economic dialectics, Rial – the guy who couldn’t pay his xerox bill ten months before

– was wresting control of the company from Frates (and transferring its headquarters to Colorado). His method of financing the takeover was ingenious: he sold to Kaiser Steel, at incredibly inflated prices, additional coal reserves which he owned and which it scarcely needed. The impact of the two back-to-back leveraged buyouts was little short of devastating. The original half-billion-dollar cash hoard was reduced to \$500,000 as the raiders ran away with their spoils.¹¹⁸ Moreover the company was hopelessly saddled with new, and utterly unnecessary, debt. As the rest of the business press was celebrating the contribution of corporate raiders to making the economy ‘leaner and greener’, two *Forbes* journalists saw a different moral in the story of Frates and Rial looting Kaiser Steel without spending a penny of their own money:

Frates staged a classic, no-money-down, 1980s takeover. Kaiser Steel changed hands for \$380 million. Where did the money come from? Not from the pockets of the people doing the takeover. The Frates Group used \$100 million borrowed from Citibank and \$62 million of Kaiser’s own cash to pay \$22 a share to Kaiser’s stockholders, and gave them \$30 [face value] of preferred stock for the rest of the price. Thus, for \$162 million that wasn’t his and \$218 million of paper in the form of Kaiser Steel preferred, Frates took over the company. Naturally, Frates took millions of dollars in fees and expenses, so his net cash investment was less than nothing.

[To buy out Frates] Rial traded illiquid assets to Kaiser for land and cash. . . . Kaiser shelled out \$78 million for the same Perma assets Frates valued 18 months earlier at only \$65 million. What’s more, because the SPS [coal contract] was valued at only \$12.2 million this time around, the value of Rial’s coal properties must have risen to \$65.8 million – a 65% increase. . . . When the dust settled Frates had \$20 million of cash, a \$5 million near-cash receivable . . . and \$15 million of Kaiser land. . . . Rial hasn’t stinted himself, however. He took \$2.4 million in salary last year.¹¹⁹

Rial’s swashbuckling depredations finally provoked a backlash from Kaiser Steel’s preferred stockholders who allied themselves with Bruce Hendry, the famous scrapdealer in distressed companies (he had previously picked over the remains of Erie-Lackawanna and Wickes).¹²⁰ Forcing Rial aside as CEO in 1987, Hendry proposed to rescue the stockholders’ equity at the expense of the ex-Kaiser workforce. Borrowing a leaf from Frank Lorenzo, Hendry plunged Kaiser Steel into a chapter-eleven proceeding in order to liquidate worker entitlements.

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'LIKE TOKYO IN 1945'
Ruins of Kaiser Steel, 1990

During the shutdown in 1983, workers had taken some solace in the assurance that cash-rich Kaiser, unlike some bankrupted Eastern steelmakers, would always be able to honor its obligations. Now, four years later, six thousand outraged former employees watched as Hendry cancelled their medical coverage and pension supplements, while transferring part of the burden of their pension funding to the federal Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation. In order to deflect worker anger, he also initiated lawsuits to recover the \$325 million in Kaiser reserves allegedly 'stolen' by Frates and Rial through their buyouts.¹²¹ At the moment of writing, three years further on, most of the benefits remain unrecovered, the various lawsuits have disappeared in a judicial logjam, and thousands of ex-steelworkers and their families have endured further, unexpected hardships.

THE MIRAGE OF REDEVELOPMENT

Nothing Is As Nice As Developing Fontana
Current official slogan

Fontana Headed For Economic Catastrophe
Headline, 1987¹²²

Even as the 'Reagan Boom' was taking off in 1983, steel towns were still dying across the country, from Geneva (Utah) to Lackawanna (New York), Fairfield (Alabama) to Youngstown (Ohio). Aliquippa, from which so many Fontanans had emigrated in the 1940s and 1950s, was amongst the hardest hit. The shutdown of the immense, seven-mile-long Jones and Laughlin (LTV) complex, and the lay-off of twenty thousand workers, was the equivalent of a nuclear disaster. A third of the population fled; of those left behind, more than half were still jobless four years after the closure. The Salvation Army became the town's leading employer. A 1986 study of three hundred Aliquippa families revealed that 59 per cent had difficulty feeding themselves, 49 per cent were behind in their utility bills, and 61 per cent could not afford to see a doctor.¹²³

Driving through the Valley on Thanksgiving Day 1988, on the way to lay a wreath at the union martyrs' monument in Homestead, I found little

improvement or new hope. For miles along the Ohio River the sides of the great mill had been stripped away by demolition crews, exposing the rusting entrails of pipework and machinery. Downtown Aliquippa, tightly wedged in its abrupt valley, was boarded up and as empty as any Western ghost town. At the old main gate, through which ten thousand Aliquippans had once daily streamed to work, a forlorn lean-to and some fading picket signs announced 'Fort Justice', the site of a futile, two-year vigil by local unionists to save the plant from demolition.

By any standard Fontana should have suffered the same fate as Aliquippa. Studies in the early and late 1970s confirmed that almost half of the town worked for Kaiser and nearly three-quarters drew paychecks dependent upon the mill.¹²⁴ Yet when the final shutdown came in December 1983, Fontana was a boom-, not a ghost-town. Side by side with the defeated milltown, a new community of middle-class commuters was rapidly taking shape. In the last years of the plant's life the population began to explode: doubling from 35,000 to 70,000 between 1980 and 1987, with predictions of 100,000–150,000 by the year 2000. In an interview with the *Times* as the last slabs were being rolled out at Kaiser, Fontana's Mayor Simon exulted about the city's new-found prosperity as the housing frontier of Southern California. 'Nobody expected what's been happening here. When Kaiser closed, everybody thought the town was going to go kaput, but that hasn't happened.'¹²⁵

The recycling of Fontana had begun in the mid 1970s after a clique of local landowners and city officials, led by City Manager Jack Ratelle, recognized that residential redevelopment was a lucrative alternative to continued dependence upon the waning fortunes of Kaiser Steel and its blue-collar workforce. Unlike Aliquippa they had the dual advantages of being the periphery of a booming regional economy and having access to an extraordinary tool of community restructuring – California's redevelopment law. Created by a liberal legislature in the late 1940s to allow cities to build public housing in blighted areas, the law had become totally perverted by the 1970s. Not only was it being employed for massive 'poor removal' in downtown San Francisco and Los Angeles, but 'blight' was now so generously interpreted that wealthy cities and industrial enclaves – from Palm Springs to City of Industry – were using the law to build luxury

department stores, convention centers, and championship golf courses with 'tax increments' withheld from general fund uses.

Fontana's particular riff on these redevelopment strategies was its creation of an open, some would say 'golden', door for developers. Ratelle and the other city fathers fretted about their ability to compete with Rancho Cucamonga to the west – a 'greenfield' city concocted out of several thinly populated, agricultural townships. In order to eventually become like Orange County, they started out by acting like Puerto Rico. To compensate for gritty Fontana's 'image problem', and to give it a comparative advantage in the Inland Empire's landrush, they bent redevelopment law to offer 'creative financing' for large-scale developers: tax-increment and tax-exempt bonds, waiver of city fees, massive tax rebates, and, unique to Fontana, direct equity participation by the redevelopment agency. Application and inspection processes were drastically streamlined to accelerate groundbreaking in the city that aspired to become the 'developer's best friend'.

Fontana's pioneer redevelopment project was an expensive – many would say, unnecessary – facelift of Sierra Avenue begun in 1975. David Wiener, whom the local paper likes to call the 'dean of Fontana developers', was given tax-exempt financing and sales-tax rebates to construct four new shopping complexes. A little later the Fontana Redevelopment Agency (FRA) began to uproot vineyards south of Interstate 10 to build the Southwest Industrial Park. But the big Orange County and West L.A.-based developers, already heavily involved in Ontario and Rancho Cucamonga, refused to consider Fontana until it was clear that Kaiser Steel was doomed and that the milltown onus could be removed.

Fontana's first megaproject, initiated in 1981, was the Village of Southridge, located in the Jurupa Hills redevelopment area south of I-10 and projected for a build-out of nine thousand homes by the year 2000. Creative Communities, the Huntington Beach-based developers of Southridge, seduced Fontana's civic leaders by giving them a tour of Irvine, the famous master-planned city in southern Orange County. They convinced the starstruck Fontanans that a simulacrum of Irvine could be developed in Fontana's own south end if the city were willing to provide adequate infrastructure and financing. As Mayor Simon later recalled, 'the city fathers wanted the project so bad that they could taste it'. Accordingly,

with visions of Fontana-as-Irvine dancing before their eyes, they signed a far-reaching agreement with Creative Communities that pledged the FRA to reimburse most of the infrastructural costs normally borne by developers.¹²⁶

In 1982, one year after the groundbreaking in Southridge, Fontana annexed a huge triangle of boulder-strewn fields north of the city, abutting Interstate 15 (then under construction). The completion of I-15 through western San Bernardino and Riverside and northern San Diego counties has created one of the nation's most dynamic growth corridors. (One of the corridor's boomtowns is 'Ranch California', a 100,000-acre project originated by Kaiser Development Co. in Temecula.) Three hundred thousand new residents are expected in western San Bernardino County alone.¹²⁷ Fontana, sitting at the strategic intersection of I-15 and I-10 (the San Bernardino Freeway), has superb linkages to this rapidly expanding commutershed. The North Fontana Project Area, which incorporates the old Fontana 'ghetto' (an area of ironically exploding land values), is the largest redevelopment project in California (fourteen square miles), encompassing a series of prospective master-planned communities. Largest is the upscale Village of Heritage, directly competitive with Rancho Cucamonga's Terra Vista, and Victoria, which is being developed by BD Partners of West Los Angeles (Richard Barclay and Joseph Dilorio), with heavy equity participation from FRA. Heritage will provide four thousand of the eighteen thousand new homes that the FRA wants to add in North Fontana over the next generation.¹²⁸

By the time the demolition crews had got around to dismantling Big Bess, Fontana's leaders had managed to put 20,000 new homes in the \$60,000-and-up range on the drawing boards in Southridge and North Fontana.¹²⁹ Within four years of Kaiser Steel's closure, raw land prices in Fontana had doubled.¹³⁰ This remarkable achievement garnered national accolades and much talk of a paradigmatic 'Fontana miracle'. The *Los Angeles Times*, for example, downplayed the impact of the Kaiser shutdown and resulting 15 per cent local unemployment (which it misreported as 9 per cent) in order to emphasize the city's 'bright future' under its redevelopment strategy.¹³¹ Journalists uncritically reproduced city officials' claims that Fontana would soon be wealthy from its soaring tax bases and profits on its equity position in different developments. Just as Kaiser

industrial relations had once been studied as a textbook model, now Fontana's resilience was presented as laboratory confirmation of the Reagan administration's claim that deindustrialization was only a temporary and marginal cost in the transition to postindustrial prosperity based on services, finance and real estate.

The first symptom that all was really not so well in Fontana *redux* was the sharp increase in white supremacist agitation and racial violence after the layoffs at the mill. During the course of 1983 the local Ku Klux Klan – about two dozen strong – crawled out from under their rock and began distributing leaflets in the high schools, holding public rallies and even offering to 'assist' the Fontana police. The Klan revival seems to have exercised a certain charisma upon a periphery of skinhead youth. In a savage October 1984 attack, a twenty-year-old Black man, Sazon Davis, was left paralyzed from the chest down after being beaten by three skinheads on Sierra Avenue – Fontana's main street. The Black community was further outraged – shades of O'Day Short – when the San Bernardino County district attorney refused to prosecute the white youth, one of whose mothers was the dispatcher for the Fontana police. (The reaction of Fontana development director Neil Stone to this local precursor of Howard Beach was to moan 'image has been our main problem'.)¹³²

Worse problems lay soon ahead. By Christmas 1986 the Fontana bubble had burst. City Finance Director Edwin Leukemeyer resigned in face of charges that he had embezzled public funds and sold off city-owned vehicles to his friends and relatives. Within six months the stream of resignations and indictments prompted one paper to claim that 'police detectives and auditors [are] almost as common a sight in City Hall as file clerks'.¹³³ Amongst the new casualties – a list that included the city treasurer, the motor pool director, the redevelopment director, and the development director – was City Manager and ex officio FRA chief Jack Ratelle, the chief architect of the 'third Fontana'. The city council forced Ratelle to resign after published reports of gratuities from leading developers made his position untenable.¹³⁴

Demoralization in Fontana City Hall was turned into panic in August 1987 by the release of an independent audit of the city by the regional office of Arthur Young. The Young report was devastating: the FRA was in a 'chaotic state of disarray' and the city was on the edge of bankruptcy.¹³⁵

The Young analysts discovered that the FRA had pawned Fontana's future in order to seduce developers. With 60 per cent of its tax base located in redevelopment areas, and obligated as payments or rebates to developers, the city could not afford to meet the needs of its expanding population. No tax revenue was left over to pay for the additional load that the new suburban population placed on its schools or public services.

Southridge alone, which Ratelle had always portrayed as a municipal gold mine, threatened to drive the city into bankruptcy as the FRA faced \$10,000 per day in new interest charges accumulating on the unreimbursed principal which it owed Creative Communities. Official estimates of the total tax revenue that will be absorbed in debt service to Southridge run as high as \$750 million by 2026 when the agreement expires.¹³⁶ It is unlikely that the principal will ever be repaid. Like a miniature Mexico or Bolivia, Fontana is a debtor nation held in thrall to its Orange County and West L.A. creditor-developers. With its suburban property tax streams diverted to debt service, the city has had both to impose austerity (in the form of overcrowded schools and degraded services) and (as in Southridge) special fee assessments on unhappy new arrivals. The alternative of raising additional city income from existing commerce is excluded by the FRA's profligate rebates of sales taxes and municipal fees to the owners of the new shopping centers.

The release of the Young report (which also included sensationalist details of financial mismanagement and the destruction of records in City Hall) emboldened local journalists to muckrake through the FRA's records, untangling the circumstances of the agency's incredible profligacy. Mark Gutglueck of the *Herald-News* eventually exposed in detail how various redevelopment schemes had pauperized the city.¹³⁷ The older mom-and-dad businesses along Sierra Avenue, for instance, were starved of redevelopment funds by FRA policies that favored chain-store 'K-Martization'. Thus the FRA, in a typical example, gave tax-exempt financing and a \$750,000 tax rebate to induce National Lumber to move into one of David Weiner's new shopping centers, itself financed by tax givebacks. The net result for the city was a large tax deficit and the closure of Ole's Hardware, an oldtime Fontana institution.¹³⁸

Likewise, in the case of Southridge, Gutglueck revealed how City Manager Ratelle and redevelopment lawyer Timothy Sabo (accused in the Young report

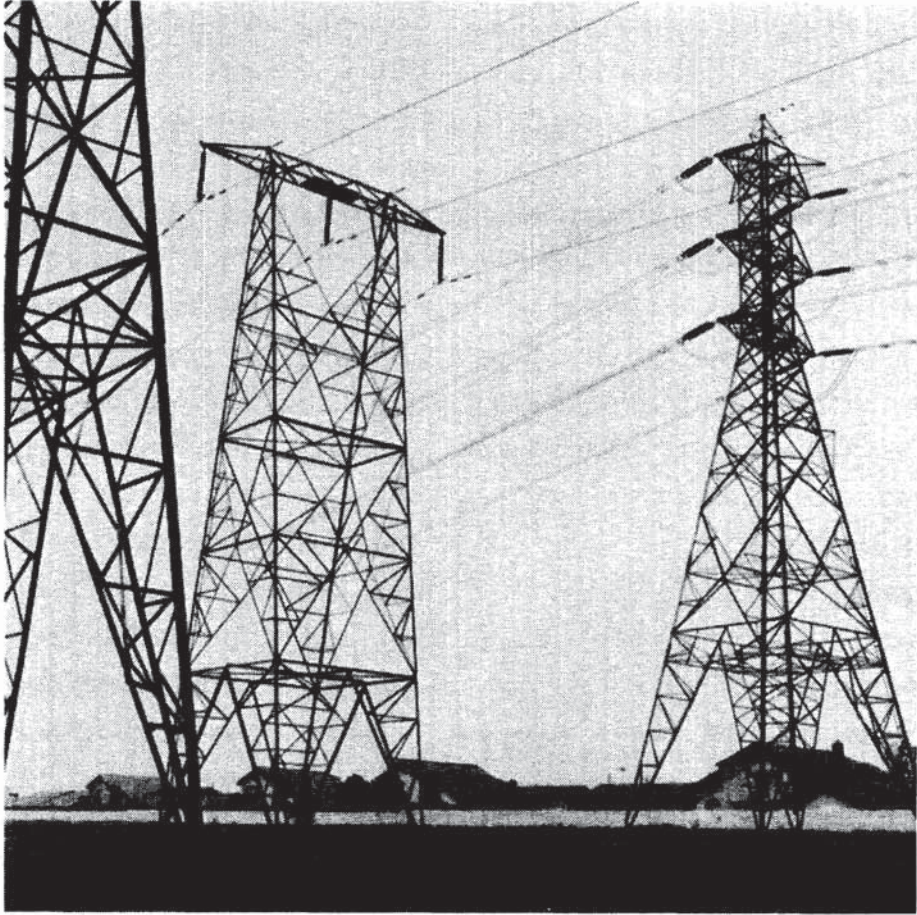
of raking off excessive fees) overrode the strong objections of the city attorney to provide Creative Communities (later Ten-Ninety Ltd.) with whatever they demanded: hiked-up interest rates on FRA's obligation, forgiveness for their failure to build schools on time per contract, and so on. Moreover, the developers were repeatedly allowed to modify the community's specific plan, successively reducing the quality of housing and local amenities. The developers, in turn, pampered officials (like planning chief Neil Stone) with 'finders fees', gratuities and the use of a lakeside resort, while Southridge – which Mayor Simon liked to call 'the Beverly Hills of Fontana' – evolved into misery.¹³⁹ One planner who worked there has described it as 'rabbit hutches with two-car garages, without adequate schools or public services'.¹⁴⁰ Not surprisingly the Young report and the Gutglueck revelations fueled a revolt by embittered Southridge residents who demanded a moratorium on further growth, the recall of the council majority, and a system of district elections.¹⁴¹

Given the enormity of Fontana's suddenly exposed problems – the venality of its officials, its Andean-sized debt and the lien on its tax base until the next millennium, its underfunding of essential services, a growing mismatch between housing and jobs, and so on, the voter revolt was strangely muffled. Closure of Kaiser had dispersed much of the political base once organized by Local 2869, while the new commuter citizens had little time or focus for civic engagement. As a result the growth coalition – minus a few leaders in jail or exile – handily dispersed its challengers.¹⁴² The Southridge-instigated recall campaign was easily defeated, while the demand for a growth moratorium was harmlessly converted into a 45-day temporary freeze on building permits. The council did scale back a few development plans in North Fontana, and gave lip service to the Young report's two hundred recommendations. But the most symptomatic reaction to the crisis came from Mayor Simon (then under investigation for making unlawful personal investments in one of the redevelopment areas), who simply urged Fontanans 'to just keep smiling'.¹⁴³

Since then the city fathers have tried to escape bankruptcy by tacking their sails to various, sometimes countervailing, winds. Like the rubes they are, they have ended up buying back into schemes virtually identical to those that Bolivianized Fontana in the early 1980s.

First, they have searched high and low for some commercial *deus ex machina* to generate a compensatory tax flow for their fiscal deficit. Mayor

JUNKYARD OF DREAMS



SOUTHRIDGE TURNED FONTANA INTO BOLIVIA

Simon's own pet-rock scheme – contrived during a Canadian vacation from his legal problems – was to induce a multi-billion-dollar investor to build the California version of the Edmonton supermall in Fontana.¹⁴⁴ In the absence of responses from Donald Trump or the Sultan of Brunei, the city teamed up instead with Alexander Haagen, Southern California's major mall builder, in a scheme to build a combination mall-entertainment complex in South Fontana. Just like Southridge, Haagen's Fontana Empire Center (scheduled for completion in 1995) was sold to local officials in a blaze of Orange County imagery: 'Fontana's answer to the South Coast Plaza'. Lest any of the Fontanans stop to ponder the absurdity of a Sears-anchored mall competing with the nation's wealthiest regional center anchored by Gucci and Neiman-Marcus, Haagen anesthetized opposition by generously donating to all ten candidates vying for the two vacant seats on the council.¹⁴⁵ (Recently Haagen has started to backtrack on his original promises, proposing to develop one-half of the mall site for luxury homes instead of commerce.)¹⁴⁶

Meanwhile, Fontana leaders have tried to scrub the city clean of its blue-collar, 'felony flats' image by drastically limiting the development of apartments and low-income units.¹⁴⁷ The revised Fontana masterplan even de-emphasizes 'starter homes' – the meat and potatoes of the previous plan – to favor more expensive 'move-up' or second homes.¹⁴⁸ Salesmen of Fontana's 'new look', however, were immediately embarrassed by a recrudescence of the old Fontana in 1988. Millions of television viewers nationwide watched as celebrants of Martin Luther King's birthday had to be escorted down Sierra Avenue by a hundred and twenty police as acrid little knots of Fontana Klansmen shouted 'Long live the Klan. Long live the white boys.' Subsequent 'Death to the Klan' counter-rallies by the Jewish Defense League contributed yet more unwanted notoriety.¹⁴⁹

The campaign for an upscaled Fontana also collided with plans for a reindustrialized Fontana. With an unerring sense for courting contradiction, as one group of Fontana planners was trying to increase residential exclusivity, another was simultaneously kicking out the jambs for break-neck factory and warehouse construction. Offering contractors the state's fastest track for industrial development, they guarantee building starts six days after application, rather than the nine months normal elsewhere.¹⁵⁰ As angry homeowners have pointed out, combining poorly monitored

industrial development – much of it highly toxic – with dense residential development is like mixing oil with water. This point was vividly illustrated in 1988 when more than 1,500 Southridge residents had to be evacuated after a nearby chemical spill.¹⁵¹

The final irony, however, is Fontana's ardent courtship of Kaiser Steel's residuum: Kaiser Resources. Left with a mile-long slag mountain and seven hundred acres of polluted wasteland, KR in partnership with Lusk-Ontario Industries has maneuvered brilliantly to get Fontana to foot the bill for the clean-up. By coyly flirting with Ontario and Rancho Cucamonga, then suddenly throwing kisses to advocates of independent cityhood for Fontana's unincorporated westside ('Rancho Vista'), KR drove Fontana officials into a jealous frenzy. As a result, debt-hobbled Fontana is offering a memorandum of understanding to KR and Lusk that would guarantee \$190 million in public funds to renovate the ex-Kaiser Steel site. In particular Fontana would help clean up the still spreading plume of soil and groundwater contamination that is the legacy of forty years of steelmaking, and which has replaced the smoke-cloud from Kaiser's coke ovens as the symbol of environmental distress in San Bernardino County. KR and Lusk, in turn, would accept annexation by Fontana and agree to develop a high-tech industrial park. But a centerpiece of KR's plan is a perverse environmental joke: importing Silicon Valley's toxic waste for processing in Kaiser Steel's still extant treatment facility.¹⁵²

SO WHAT'S LEFT?

It's tacky, very, very tacky. But, maybe I should be grateful. People tell me it used to be worse. *New Fontana commuter-resident*¹⁵³

Eat shit and die.

Reaction of old Fontana 'homeboy'

After so many schemes, scandals, and sudden upheavals, what is Fontana today? Begin, arbitrarily, with its Wild West, unincorporated fringe. Follow the fire-engine-red Kenworth K600A 'Anteater' pulling its shackled double reefers into the lot of 'Trucktown' off the Cherry Street exit of I-10, just south of the Kaiser ghost plant. There are more than one-hundred-and-