



Every person on the City Council distinguished himself or herself by supporting the SMUD campaign. Steve Souza was the treasurer, Don Saylor held a fundraiser, Sue Greenwald has been a long time supporter and Lamar Heystek walked precincts. Ruth Asmundson, at the right, contributed \$1000. Dan and Lorna Berman in the center helped found the Yolo movement for public power.

Hundreds of unpaid volunteers deserve our thanks for working to bring public power to Yolo County. In Davis, dozens turned out for the SMUD Power Walk and rewarded themselves with a lunch of Sally Parker's Pomegranate Chicken and Forbidden Rice. In Woodland and West Sacramento many others walked door-to-door and phone-banked themselves hoarse. Dean kept PublicPowerNow.org on-line and up-to-date. Two hundred SMUD employees volunteered their time to walk precincts and make phone calls. Our electeds held fundraising parties and spent countless hours dialing for dollars to pay campaign expenses, and personally made substantial contributions.

Crucial to winning support from the SMUD board were the unanimous votes for SMUD service from the city councils of Davis, Woodland and West Sacramento, from the Woodland and Davis school boards, and from the Yolo County Board of Supervisors as well. Without their early and emphatic support, our audacious project could not have moved forward.

The campaign to bring SMUD to Yolo County began four years ago. Five independent studies agreed that annexation was a good idea. With due diligence, scores of hearings were held at a dozen public forums before deciding to move forward. But PG&E was able buy its way to victory by spending millions on TV and radio, where most people get their news. Voters who do not read newspapers had no way of finding out that all local dailies: the *Sacramento Bee*, the *Woodland Democrat*, and the *Davis Enterprise*—emphatically endorsed the extension of SMUD electricity service to Yolo County.

PG&E is a privately-owned electric monopoly, which enjoys many of the perquisites of governments, like the right to carry out eminent domain proceedings. As a private company carrying out a public service under exclusive city and county franchise agreements, PG&E should not have the right "to spend what it takes" to stop municipalization... or to shape public opinion on any other issue. We have given PG&E a franchise to provide reasonably priced electricity and gas service, not to instruct us on how to vote.

Nevertheless, PG&E spent millions on the Big Lie—repeated in dozens of slick mailers—that SMUD's present customers would be stuck with a \$520 million bill for PG&E's Yolo electricity facilities. Sadly enough it worked. Those who get their news from radio and television rarely heard that the Sacramento LAFCO, an independent government agency which analyzed the issue, concluded that PG&E's poles and wires in the annexation area were worth \$110 million.

## Jousting with the Octopus: The Ratepayer Revolt for Public Power

Dan & Lorna Berman

Public power still lives. At SMUD, you, the ratepayers, vote for the board of directors. You vote and own the company. At PG&E, private owners hand down decisions according to whatever profits their stockholders. For the last 25 years, SMUD has consistently charged electric rates 20% cheaper than PG&E. The Woodland School District would have saved \$1 million last year if it paid SMUD's prices.

In Davis over 60% of the electors voted "Yes" on Measures H & I, to remove PG&E's exclusive electricity franchise and to replace it with SMUD. In the Yolo County annexation area as a whole, voters chose to take away PG&E's exclusive electricity franchise, by a 934-vote margin. By a 10-vote whisker, Yolo voters just missed calling for SMUD to replace PG&E. But that's all academic for now, because expansion lost big in SMUD's existing service territory in Sacramento County.

In this election, PG&E pulled out all the stops, admitting to electoral expenditures of \$11.3 million dollars from October 2005 through the November 7th election. The real figure must be well over \$15 million, when we count the millions PG&E has spent on push polling, image advertising, and "donations" to schools and soccer leagues and senior centers over the last few years. (As a public agency, SMUD is forbidden by law from spending money on politics.). About 300,000 people voted on the issue on both sides of the river. PG&E's astronomical outlay of \$50 per voter set a record for one-sided California campaign expenditures.

"What PG&E fears the most," said SMUD director Peter Keat, "is competition between business models.... They understand that the threat from SMUD comes from the fact that we operate more efficiently, we're open, and we actually listen to people... We do not have to serve two masters. We do not have a conflict of interest between our ratepayers on the one hand and investors on the other... which is why PG&E's rates are 30 percent higher than ours."<sup>a</sup>



Schools are hit hard by PG&E's high rates. Davis High School would have saved over \$100,000 last year if it paid SMUD prices. The Woodland School District would have saved a million dollars. Both Woodland and Davis school boards unanimously endorsed SMUD annexation.

Tom DuHain of KCRA Channel 3 Evening News, was the only mainstream TV reporter who explained the significance of that point. Moreover, KCRA's AdWatch gave two PG&E TV ads their "lowest ratings" on "truthfulness."<sup>b</sup> Peter Brundage, LAFCO's executive director, called annexation a "win-win" proposition for Yolo County and for existing SMUD customers, but his conclusion was twisted and drowned in the PG&E propaganda barrage.

For PG&E to wrap itself in the banner of "free enterprise," like Nugget Market or the Hunan Restaurant, is laughable, because PG&E has no competition. If people don't like the food at Nugget or the Hunan, they can go elsewhere. But we PG&E customers are stuck with PG&E's monopoly, monitored only by the ineffectual California Public Utilities Commission. The ballot box is our vehicle for change.

In closing, we would like to remind readers of the words of Franklin D. Roosevelt in his "Portland Speech" of September 21, 1932: "I therefore lay down the following principle: Where a community--a city or county or a district--is not satisfied with the service rendered or the rates charged by the private utility, it has the undeniable basic to set up, after a fair referendum to its voters, its own governmentally owned and operated service."

To implement this theoretical right to choose, public power supporters should contact our elected representatives at the local, state, and federal levels, and call for public

hearings, with sworn testimony, on PG&E's "disinformation" campaigns.<sup>c</sup> And please stay in touch with your local public power advocates. We're looking at everything and we need your input. Our ratepayer revolt is alive and well and stronger than ever. We'll be back. We guarantee it.

\*Dan Berman wrote WHO OWNS THE SUN? and served on the Citizens' Task Force on Energy Issues of Davis. Lorna Enero Berman is a marriage and family therapist and editor. They have been active in the public power movement for years, and are raising two sons in Davis.



<sup>a</sup> Peter Keat, remarks at SMUD Board of Directors meeting, May 19, 2005, published in *THE FLATLANDER*, December 2005.

<sup>b</sup> To view Tom DuHain's excellent KCRA Channel 3 Evening News and AdWatch programs... and to keep up with our Ratepayer Revolt, go to [www.publicpowernow.org](http://www.publicpowernow.org).

<sup>c</sup> Yolo Assemblymember Lois Wolk spoke about PG&E's "disinformation" campaign in remarks to a late June "SMUD Yes" fundraiser in Davis. She also co-authored a press release critical of PG&E campaign tactics with Senator Deborah Ortiz and Assemblymember Dave Jones, both representing Sacramento on October 31. Supervisor Mariko Yamada, Mayor Sue Greenwald, and City Council member Stephen Souza have also been extremely critical of how PG&E's tactics.

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