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## N. Utah to Fight Well Drilling

AMERICAN FORK — An executive committee comprised of mayors of northern Utah cities was set up Tuesday night to protest proposed drilling of a well near the mouth of American Fork Canyon.

The Metropolitan Water District of Salt Lake City has asked the state engineer for permission to develop new water supplies from that well and five proposed wells at 94th South on Salt Lake County's east bench.

However, two of the three members of the Utah County Commission formally moved to protest the proposed American

Fork water development "only after complete investigation of the matter."

The third member of the commission, Commissioner Burton H. Adams, precipitated the whole thing when he criticized the emtropolitan water district's application as a "water grab."

He was not present when Commissioners Sterling D. Jones and Verl G. Dixon moved to have County Atty. Arnold Roylance draft a protest after investigation of the matter.

Commissioner Jones said he did not consider the issue as significant since no water has been appropriated, no wells

drilled and since hundreds of such well applications are filed annually, all subject to full investigation and legal recourse.

State Engineer Joseph M. Tracy said the proposed American Fork well was advertised by error in a Midvale paper, but that it would be readvertised at a later date in a Utah County newspaper.

Then, he said, the matter would be set for public hearing.

Named to head the 10-member committee of protesting Utah County mayors at the meeting here Tuesday night was Mayor Lewis Wells of Pleasant Grove.

## Another Water Hole Scrap

Water meaning what it does to our economy, there is almost always a water dispute going on in the West.

If it is not between states—as witness the Upper Basin-Southern California fight over Colorado River water—it is between municipalities, or between farming neighbors along the same irrigation ditch.

At the moment the most publicized local disagreement is over plans of the Salt Lake Metropolitan Water District to drill wells at the mouth of American Fork Canyon in Utah County. Utah County officials are protesting vehemently and charging an attempt to "steal" their water.

For the information of the public, the basic facts in this, or any other Utah water dispute, are these:

All water, whether surface or underground, belongs to the state.

Any individual, corporation, municipality, etc., may file with the state engineer's office a request to use any unappropriated water in the state.

The state engineer must advertise the claim in a newspaper of general circulation in the area of the source of the water (this, by error, was not originally done in the Salt Lake-Utah County case) and invite protests. Protests will be heard and a public hearing held, if thought necessary.

If the engineer determines that the water in question has not previously been appropriated, it must be awarded to the first person or group to file on it. County borders have no bearing on the question: A Salt Lake individual or group may legally file on water originating in Utah County—or for that matter in any county—just as Utah County residents may file on (previously unappropriated) Salt Lake County water.

If either party declines to accept the state engineer's decision, the case can be appealed to district court—and eventually, if it is so desired, to the State Supreme Court.

That is the general procedure. In the American Fork Canyon case, the proper legal notices have now been published in Utah County papers and protests will be received. There seems to be no need, in view of the clean-cut legal procedure, for a public name-calling battle.

The state engineer will hear both sides, and will attempt to decide whether or not to grant the Salt Lake Metropolitan Board's request. Only one question will have any pertinency:

Has, or has not, the water which the proposed wells would produce been previously appropriated?