

CARTER IN MERCED ON THE 4th OF JULY

What better way to spend the 4th of July than at a town meeting in Merced, CA. with the president of the United States presiding? That is just what a group of Stanislaus supporters did last month and it was great!

About 25 of the less than 2000 people selected to go inside the Merced gymnasium were river supporters from the foothills. Outside, in the early morning hours, people waited in lines in quiet and excited anticipation of what was to come. Once inside things were different. Bands were playing. People were hurrying to their seats. They were clapping, cheering, and waving little American flags. A few people held banners for the Stanislaus. A choir sang, a musical group performed, the man at the microphone told the people to be prepared to give the president the most enthusiastic reception he had ever had!

The bands played some more and everyone sang the National anthem. Then came the announcement that the presidential helicopter had arrived. The band struck up "Hail to the Chief" and in came the president accompanied by his wife, Rosalynn, and his son, Chip. There was more clapping and cheering. Banners and flags were waved and smiles flooded the faces of those in attendance.

The president spent the next hour answering questions. The issue of the Stanislaus was covered by the 2nd questioner who asked Carter if he would join with environmentalists who want to protect the Stanislaus from the New Melones Dam by designating it a "wild river." Carter's response went as follows: "I think before I answer ... I'll take off my coat. It's kind of hot up here." "I believe in the wild river concept, and I believe that the Stanislaus River is one of the most beautiful rivers on earth. If Congress passes legislation to protect the upper reaches of the Stanislaus and the bill is 'otherwise acceptable', then I would sign the bill." The cheering was as strong as the pro-river contingent could muster in that farming town. The opposition was silent.

As Carter was leaving the hall after the meeting, an F.O.R. member was able to speak to him briefly. She thanked him for his support of the Stanislaus and informed him that the information he was receiving was incorrect. The water level was not being held at elevation 818 as he was told, (the approximate level at the time of the court injunction), but on that day was already at elevation 825 and rising.

Still, the president had come out for the River in a place where that was not the popular opinion, and it was a good day for the Stanislaus and a good day for all of its supporters as well.

TUOLUMNE COUNTY ELECTION