

Merry-Go-Round*SF Chronicle Jan. 3 1967***Corroding Pipelines
Dangerous Menace****Drew Pearson**

Today's column is by Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson

THE NEW CONGRESS will take a sharp look at the menace of corroding oil and gas pipelines which could cause a Vesuvius in some of the nation's most populous areas.

Some of the gas pipelines that run through towns and suburbs, often unmarked, are aging. Laws requiring replacements simply do not exist in most states. In fact, 24 states have no code at all governing pipelines.

One pipeline explosion at Natchitoches, La., last year killed 17 and injured three. The exploding gas sent three heavy chunks of metal hurtling distances of 130 to 350 feet and dug a crater 27 feet long, 20 feet wide and 10 feet deep.

IN FAIRFAX, VA., a suburb of the nation's capital, a stuck valve at a tank farm recently allowed 90,000 gallons of high-octane gasoline to escape. This inflammable and explosive flood poured down a storm drain, flowed through the sewage system, endangering several homes in the area and finally wound up in a three-acre pond at the Army-Navy country club where the nation's top generals and admirals relax.

When the fire marshal arrived at the tank farm, he could get no blueprints of the piping layout.

"No plans were available so we had to draw them by hand," Fire Marshal George Alexander reported to the city manager.

Fortunately it was a damp day, and no one flicked a cigarette butt into a storm drain. Otherwise the whole area might have gone up in a fireball.

During the past 15 years, 2294 pipeline

failures have been reported. Yet this is probably a mere fraction of the failures that have actually occurred. For not until last September did the Federal Power Commission demand that pipeline failures be reported. Previously only nine states required reports.

Of the 150,000 miles of interstate pipelines, an alarming 60 per cent is subject to no state regulation. The industry has established its own safety code, which is not mandatory and has no enforcement provisions. Nevertheless all attempts by the Federal Power Commission to set uniform safety standards have been opposed by the oil and gas lobby.

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SENATOR ROBERT KENNEDY'S denial that he authorized J. Edgar Hoover to engage in widespread eavesdropping is not likely to go down with some of the people who saw him during his trip to South Africa.

When Kennedy visited the South African student leader Ian Robertson, a critic of the South African government on Negro rights, he asked Robertson whether he thought the place was bugged. Robertson replied that he was sure it was.

Whereupon the senator from New York jumped into the air and came down with a resounding thud. His host was flabbergasted. Kennedy explained that a jar would throw any bugging device off balance for 10 or 15 minutes.

The South African student leader was curious as to how Kennedy happened to be an expert on such matters.

"I was once attorney general," Bobby replied.

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