

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

Science serves its readers as a forum for the presentation and discussion of important issues related to the advancement of science, including the presentation of minority or conflicting points of view, rather than by publishing only material on which a consensus has been reached. Accordingly, all articles published in *Science*—including editorials, news and comment, and book reviews—are signed and reflect the individual views of the authors and not official points of view adopted by the AAAS or the institutions with which the authors are affiliated.

Editorial Board

ROBERT L. BOWMAN	WILLARD F. LIBBY
MELVIN CALVIN	GORDON J. F. MACDONALD
JOSEPH W. CHAMBERLAIN	EVERETT I. MENDELSON
FARRINGTON DANIELS	NEAL E. MILLER
JOHN T. EDSALL	JOHN R. PIERCE
DAVID R. GODDARD	COLIN S. PITENDRIGH
EMIL HAURY	KENNETH S. PLIZER
ALEXANDER HOLLAENDER	ALEXANDER RICH
ROBERT JASTROW	DEWITT STELLEN, JR.
EDWIN M. LERNER, II	EDWARD L. TATUM
	CLARENCE M. ZENER

Editorial Staff

Editor

PHILIP H. ABELSON

Publisher Business Manager
DAEL WOLFE HANS NUSSBAUM

Managing Editor: ROBERT V. ORMES

Assistant Editors: ELLEN E. MURPHY, JOHN E. RINGLE

Assistant to the Editor: NANCY TEIMOURIAN

News and Comment: DANIEL S. GREENBERG, JOHN WALSH, ELINOR LANGER, LUTHER J. CARTER, MARION ZEIGER, JANE AYRES

Europe: VICTOR K. McELHENY, Flat 3, 18 Kensington Court Place, London, W.8, England (Western 5360)

Book Reviews: SARAH S. DEES

Editorial Assistants: ISABELLA BOULDIN, ELFA-NORE BUIZ, BEN CARLIN, SYLVIA EBERHART, GRAYCE FINGER, NANCY HAMILTON, OLIVER HEATWOLE, ANNE HOLDSWORTH, ELLEN KOLANSKY, KATHERINE LIVINGSTON, BARBARA SHEFFER

Advertising Staff

Director Production Manager
EARL J. SCHERAGO RAYMONDE SALAMA

Sales: New York, N.Y., 11 W. 42 St. (212-PE-6-1858): RICHARD L. CHARLES, ROBERT S. BUGBEE
Scotch Plains, N.J., 12 Unami Lane (201-889-4873): C. RICHARD CALLIS

Chicago, Ill. 60611, 919 N. Michigan Ave., Room 426 (312-DE-7-4973): HERBERT L. BURKLUND
Los Angeles 45, Calif., 8255 Beverly Blvd. (213-653-9817): WINN NANCE

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE: 1515 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. Phone: 202-387-7171. Cable: Advancesci, Washington. Copies of "Instructions for Contributors" can be obtained from the editorial office. ADVERTISING CORRESPONDENCE: Rm. 1740, 11 W. 42 St., New York, N.Y. 10036. Phone: 212-PE 6-1858.

Conservation and Natural Beauty

Once a powerful factor in American politics, the conservation movement is relatively weak, and divided as to objectives. During the heyday of Theodore Roosevelt's administration, tremendous progress was made in setting aside large areas as national parks. After the initial success, the movement chose to pursue other social objectives and gradually lost its force. During Franklin Roosevelt's administration there was another peak in conservation interest and accomplishment. In contrast to these two exemplary periods there have been other times of less activity. Vigor and initiative in conservation were lacking at a time of great expansion in population and industry. We permitted the pollution of most of our great rivers, the proliferation of urban sprawl, and destruction of much natural beauty. Even the national parks have suffered. In the use of these priceless resources, a major criterion of progress has been increase in the number of "visitor days." As a result, part of Yosemite Park on a weekend is like a city slum.

The need for action in conservation has been recognized. More than 30 major organizations are now active. One of the most dynamic of these is the Sierra Club. Membership is relatively small (about 32,000), but it is growing fast, and it has become national in scope. The group is adept at mobilizing support in specific controversies. The Sierra Club played a large role in forcing the Pacific Gas and Electric Company to abandon its plans for a reactor at Bodega Bay. Lately, the Sierra Club has made itself heard with respect to the power lines associated with the Stanford linear accelerator. Unfortunately, these are local skirmishes, and while such skirmishes may be won and their winning may be exemplary, many others are lost by default. Thus, while a few battles go well, the war as a whole is lost.

If we are to arrest the trend toward mass ugliness we must do more than stop or modify a few construction projects. An outline of broader goals was enunciated by President Johnson in his message on natural beauty. He said, "Our conservation must not be just classic protection and development but a creative conservation of restoration and innovation." This statement should be viewed as a challenge to conservationists to come up with ideas and plans. At least one leader has done so. In a recent speech Russell E. Train, president of the Conservation Foundation, has suggested a number of types of initiative that might be fostered. For instance, he would increase the opportunities for recreation associated with limited-access highways. Through expansion of rights-of-way, it would be possible to provide footpaths, bicycle paths, trails to natural features, picnic grounds, and even camp sites. One can imagine, further, a series of small but beautiful plots devoted to local flora.

In a recent issue of this journal (*Science*, 3 December), E. C. Stone discusses the problem of preserving vegetation in parks and wilderness. He makes it clear that we have already unwittingly conducted large-scale ecological experiments in our parks. By controlling predators we have permitted overexpansion of ungulates, with resultant large-scale destruction of flora. By controlling fires we have changed the natural succession of vegetation. Perhaps in our approach to conservation and natural beauty we would progress best by making some experiments. We should give over much of the areas of our parks to wilderness, letting nature take its course, while observing closely what is happening. At the same time, we might well devote limited areas to controlled experimentation.

These are only suggestions for initiative. But they illustrate the kind of approach the conservation movement must make if it is to change from an effort devoted to rear-guard action into a dynamic force for constructive achievement.—PHILIP H. ABELSON

Science

Conservation and Natural Beauty

Philip H. Abelson

Science **150** (3703), 1539.
DOI: 10.1126/science.150.3703.1539

ARTICLE TOOLS

<http://science.sciencemag.org/content/150/3703/1539.citation>

PERMISSIONS

<http://www.sciencemag.org/help/reprints-and-permissions>

Use of this article is subject to the [Terms of Service](#)

Science (print ISSN 0036-8075; online ISSN 1095-9203) is published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1200 New York Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20005. The title *Science* is a registered trademark of AAAS.

1965 by the American Association for the Advancement of Science