

Conservation And The Area Of Santa Cruz

By Robert E. Burton

Conservation is a far broader term than it is usually understood to be. At first the topic evokes thoughts of timber and water; lately of soil and minerals. Such subjects have been well covered by disciples of the cause, until today we have civilian and government agencies at work on these phases of conservation.

Because of repeated fires, large areas of California have become fireproof, in the sense that after each fire, the succeeding plant growth becomes sparser than the former, until, we have large areas so thinly populated by plants and inflammable material that a fire cannot be sustained.

We have such areas in Santa Cruz, especially in the north coast section where once existed wooded acres which show the rocky foundations of the earth. Elsewhere large acreages which were once forests are now cleared areas, with orchards or pastures, which because of the erosion are bringing in diminishing returns to a point where they are gradually abandoned. Fortunately for us these areas are often taken up by city dwellers who find thereon a refuge for their jagged nerves, their shattered health, new hopes and, strange enough an escape from excessive income taxes. Rehabilitating these places does absorb large portions of otherwise taxable incomes.

Men have learned that contentment is far different from pleasures. While city life may give pleasures, it seldom gives that natural contentment which comes from owning a few acres with some trees. Our Santa Cruz mountains, because of their proximity to cities and because of their natural beauties have become a veritable Mecca towards which people young and old look for contentment.

There are ominous signs that in our attempt to swell our population, a rather irrational aim in this case, we are overlooking the conservation of one of our richest natural resources: that is a wonderful place to live and that our first duty is to keep it as such.

An active chamber of commerce spends funds for what we call "advertising" Santa Cruz. We say: "Let us bring in people and industries." Who knows if we are successful along that line we might become like Los Angeles and South San Francisco, who have become so suc-

cessful that they are now engulfed in hordes of people and the smog of their industries; also with increasing budgets to protect their persons and property. Far from raising the average well being of its citizens, these cities have increased their worries and lowered many of their standards.

Santa Cruz, someone will always say, "Offers no opportunity to its young men." There are notable exceptions to that statement in our city and county. But if our young men did go away to seek their fortune, literally speaking our woods are full of those who did return in later life to settle on a piece of ground larger than a city lot and enjoy these blessings of contentment rather than the effervescent pleasures of a city life. They always had a home in this little city or county they could look forward to as a refuge.

The attractiveness of Santa Cruz has been that, instead of being a land to be advertised it was a land to be discovered, a land with not only a healthy physical climate but it also had a genial social climate.

What are we doing in the way of: conservation, education, beautification, good government, religious and cultural activities and friendly neighborliness to conserve the natural and intangible values which are, we may say, the soul of Santa Cruz?

Our highways are they blessed with restful vistas or have they become advertising mediums for soaps, liquors, lingerie, etc., the detritus of which clutter the gutters?

Our beaches, less restricted of access because of their monopoly by more fortunate dwellers along their shores, are they overcrowded with one day tourists who leave us: cans, papers and broken bottles to be gathered as souvenirs of their visit?

We cannot hold back the march of progress as it is called, by the disciples of this new order, but, somewhere in this world there must be places where human society can escape the curse of Isaiah, the prophet of old (Chap. 5 v. 8): "Woe unto them that join house to house that lay field to field, till there be no place that they may be placed alone in the midst of the Earth."

This prophecy has come true many a time in the history of nations, since the time of Isaiah, and, most of the men in this country are here because they or their ancestors tried to escape that doom.