



Conservation

. . . with Marie Mellinger

The Ogres of Our Age

Conservation News for October coined a new word, "eye pollution," to refer to the unsightly billboards, conglomerations of old cars, rubbish, litter, and trash that we must look at along our highways and byways. Water pollution, sky pollution, noise pollution, and eye pollution, the four ever-growing ogres that haunt our land. Spring in a once fair land, becomes a nightmare of dumpyards and debris floating down once clear-flowing rivers. What are we going to do about these ogres?

When historian H.G. Wells visited the United States in 1942 he wrote that there should be a "ministry of foresight." Think how many of our present nightmares might possibly have been prevented had an enlightened citizenry been able to plan ahead. This is especially true of the coastal areas of South Carolina suddenly threatened with the invasion of a foreign chemical plant.

On 6 January disturbed citizens of the Hilton Head-Bluffton-Beaufort areas met for a conservation symposium and the discussion of the proposed Badische Anilin Soda Fabrik plant, or BASF for short. This first meeting with a debate between representatives of the company and local citizens was to try to get competent help and scientific leadership to fight BASF. It is feared that such a plant would increase pollution hazards, and further endanger natural coastal resources by upsetting the balance of nature. This is particularly significant in view of E.D. Golbert's statement (from the Scripps Institute of Oceanography) that "man is changing his environment much more rapidly than nature ever did, and the human race is running the risk of letting pollution change the temperature of the oceans and alter the earth's climate."

As an outgrowth of the Hilton Head Conservation symposium, a committee met on 17 January to form a South Carolina Conservancy. Officers are Robert P. Wilkins,

president; Adm. D.P. Polatcey, vice-president; and Orion Hack, treasurer. A constitution was worked out, and plans laid for the furtherance of the South Carolina Conservancy.

Something like this has been greatly needed in South Carolina and all citizens concerned about environmental problems and conservation should actively offer their support to the South Carolina Conservancy.

North Carolina has created a Conservation Council of 15 state and local conservation groups "to use legislative lobbying, court action, and public relations in campaigning for conservation measures." Arthur W. Cooper, professor of botany at North Carolina State University is president of this group. Such a council can be an effective clearing house for problems, and possibly eliminate duplication of effort by various agencies.

The House and Senate have agreed on provisions of the Endangered Species Bill and sent it to President Nixon. This bill prohibits importation of endangered fish and wildlife species and interstate shipments of reptiles, amphibians, and other wild life contrary to law. It is considered a significant step forward in the protection of rare and endangered species.

On 6 December still another hearing on the Chattooga River was held at Highlands, N.C., with a surprisingly large crowd in attendance. Many people spoke in favor of the inclusion of the Chattooga in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Only two people spoke against the plan, one a land owner afraid of higher taxes, and one a citizen who wished to promote development and the selling of lots along the river. Gov. McNair sent official South Carolina endorsement of the plan. A representative of Georgia Power, with the National Forest, the principal land owners along the Chattooga, also endorsed the inclusion of the Chattooga as a Wild and Scenic River.

A final hearing on the inclusion of the Chattooga as a Wild and Scenic River was held at Clayton, Georgia, 17 March. Again the testimony was overwhelmingly in favor of such inclusion, even the Corps of Engineers coming out strongly in favor of the proposal. Disagreement was mainly as to which sections of the River were to be listed as Wild, and which as Scenic. The consensus of opinion was to keep as much of the Chattooga in a Wild designation, as possible, even to taking away two of the present Forest Road bridges that span the river. This is a most significant action, and the best conservation news for this area in the last decade.

Walking catfish have been declared illegal in North Carolina, under inland fishing regulations adopted by the State's Wildlife Resources Commission. It is illegal to transport, purchase, possess, or sell any walking catfish. Now it only remains to tell the fish, themselves, not to walk into North Carolina.

And lest the season become too dark and gloomy to contemplate, spring is the time to attend a Wild Flower Pilgrimage, go to the Carolina Bird Club Meeting, join the nearest hiking club, become a member of the Ancient and Honorable Order of Squirrels or the Waterfall Watchers, or the Save the Turtle League. Whatever your particular thing, go to the woods and fields for the ever recurring miracle of a flower opening or a bird