

Sportsmen's Damage to Land, Property Proves Major Problem

By VINCENT THOMAS
68th District Assemblyman

California's population explosion is having its effect even on hunting and fishing. At its recent hearing, the Senate Fact Finding Committee of Natural Resources considered several fish and game problems, most of which have been enlarged by the huge increases in the numbers of hunters and fishers.

One perennial problem taken up is that of damages to private property caused by hunters and fishermen. Property owners are particularly harassed by their inability to secure reimburse-

ment for such damage. The committee was informed that as a result, many owners are posting their land to prohibit entry for hunting or fishing. It was pointed out that this action only increases the sports population pressure on other available lands.

THE GROUP was told that present law is considered sufficient to protect landholders from trespass or damage, and also contains provisions under which they may recover compensation for damage.

Specific language in both the Penal and Fish and Game

Codes was cited, and one case was mentioned, in which two rabbit hunters who killed two cows and badly damaged a water tank by using it for target practice, were forced to pay several hundred dollars to the property owner. The spokesman for the department of fish and game therefore recommended against any new law in the field.

MEMBERS OF the committee, however, maintained that present law is not an adequate answer to the problem. It was said that water tanks and fuel tanks on farm equipment have

become favorite targets for acts of vandalism, and also that damage is not confined to that caused by firearms, because fishermen, who carry none, are known to have damaged gates and fences. It was further pointed out that it is practically impossible for the property owner to apprehend a sportsman who causes damage, so the chances for reimbursement are very slight.

IT WAS indicated that owners might be more willing to open their lands to hunters and fishermen if there were assurance that any damage would

be paid for. One tentative suggestion offered was that fish and game funds, which are raised entirely from license fees, be used to pay for such damage. This was opposed by the representative of organized sportsmen.

Another possibility was discussed. This was that every hunter or fisherman be encouraged or required to take out liability insurance to cover any damage he might cause. This idea was better received by the spokesman for the nimrod group, and it was understood that the availability of such insurance would be fur-

ther investigated. Earlier the department representative had stated that such insurance had once been offered by a sportsmen's group to its members, but that the program has been abandoned for an unknown reason. It was stated that such protection would be expensive, and therefore very likely to be resisted by license buyers.

A CLOSELY related matter is the advisability of enacting legislation which would permit the suspension of hunting or fishing privileges for trespass on private property. Here

Pupils Hear Painter Talk

Charles Trousdale of Long Beach, an artist specializing in religious subjects, lectured re-

cently before the art students at Bishop Montgomery High School.

His talk was based upon his current studies for a "Stations of the Cross" which consists of 14 interrelated panels. "Stylization or exaggeration for the sake of emotional content or design is an exacting science, which can be employed only after one is completely competent in reproducing reality," states Trousdale.

Also on exhibit are some of Trousdale's award-winning paintings.

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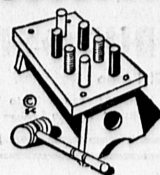
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