

CURRENT ARCHAEOPOLITICS IN CALIFORNIA

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"Archaeopolitics" is a sort of slang term for the frankly political activities that archaeologists must engage in if they are to cope with the impact of the modern world on archaeological resources. This may not be the most auspicious time possible to summarize archaeopolitical activity in California, since we have of course recently failed in our first attempt to obtain passage of really significant state archaeological legislation. On the other hand, it may be well to take a look at what we did, at what happened -- insofar as this can be discussed in polite company -- and what sorts of archaeopolitical trends can be seen developing at the present time.

The essential problem requiring archaeopolitical attention needs no elaboration; archaeological sites continue to be ripped off at an amazing rate, by large-scale urbanization and its concomitant patterns of non-urban land use and misuse. The most effective response to the problem, however, is not entirely agreed upon. Do we need tighter anti-pothunting laws? Better salvage laws? Establishment of inviolable preserves? More public involvement? Or simply more money for archaeological institutions? The obvious and no doubt correct answer is "all of the above," but priorities and possibilities are not entirely clear or certain.

One idea, however, that seems to command broad agreement, is that California archaeology needs to become better coordinated if

it is to cope. "Lone-wolf" scholarship is no longer justified in the context of modern theory, no longer effective in the context of modern interdisciplinary technology, and no longer responsible in the context of modern archaeological destruction. This recognition that coordinated team research must now be the order of the day is widespread in this country and abroad, but nowhere is the problem of achievement greater than in California. Here we are, in a huge, geographically diverse state, with massive problems in the control of land-use, with at least forty institutions and organizations actively involved in fieldwork, most of them supporting this fieldwork on a shoestring or less, and with nothing but the SCA to promote or facilitate cooperative or concerted action. The diversity of the archaeological discipline in California is potentially a source of strength, providing the sort of broad base needed for efficient regional research amid the complications of the present, but to be strong in this way the discipline has to be able to function as a system, not as a mere collection of parts rattling around within the state lines.

Everyone seems to recognize that being able to operate as a system would be advantageous to all concerned; it was this recognition that motivated us to form the SCA, and I imagine that a similar desire for coordination was responsible for the formation of such earlier organizations as the Archaeological Survey Association of Southern California. The problem of archaeological organization, however, is simply too big to be handled effectively

by a non-funded, outside-the-system congregation of volunteers like the SCA. Whatever the exact things that need to be done in California archaeology, it was clear very early that we needed some sort of recognized, properly staffed, coordinative "brain" to help the body of archaeologists to pursue its goals. This need was articulated in the SCA's general plan outline presented to the Society in 1970, and it formed the basis for the organization of last year's archaeological program.

What California archaeologists were asking for in last year's A.B. 1788 was not a complete, self-contained archaeological bureaucracy, but an organizational framework that would permit the present amorphous mass to become better integrated vis-a-vis the highly structured, effective forces that impinge upon the resources that it is our business to protect and interpret. We requested a coordinative center, the California Archaeological Survey, that would have the job of building interaction among archaeologists and between the archaeological community and the "outside world," including destructive agencies, the state educational system, and the general public. Further, we asked for the establishment of procedures to insure that the Survey - and through it, the state archaeological community - was brought in on the early planning of all projects that could modify the archaeological environment. The results, we argued, would be a higher rate of site preservation through more intelligent planning, avoidance of confrontations between archaeologists and builders, and a research program that

would really give California something - in terms of scientific data and public education - for its salvage dollars.

As most of you are well aware, A.B. 1788 passed the legislature only to meet a veto at the hands of the Governor, though S.B. 215, creating a task force to develop further legislation, was approved and is now in force. Actually, until the last moment when we apparently ran afoul of a political situation quite beyond our capacity to control, it looked as if the Governor would sign both bills. As it was, however, the fact that we got as far as we did, with a legislature that before we began hardly knew that archaeology existed, was remarkable in itself. It is neither possible nor necessary, in this company, to recount in detail our adventure through the political wonderland, but it is worth looking a bit at what happened to see what it reveals about trends that may continue into the future.

First, we found politicians generally receptive to the idea of archaeological preservation, once they knew what it was about. This is not to say that a horde of archaeological partisans was created in the legislature, but we did find that lawmakers - presumably primed by the environmental movement - were quite open to our arguments.

Second, we were able to demonstrate that - for awhile at least - California archaeologists were able to overcome their quite deep-seated suspicions, philosophical divergences, and fears of each other to work in unison. Following the lead of

Arkansas's successful campaign for its Archaeological Survey, we organized ourselves into a rather elaborate system. At the center, of course, was the group of archaeologists and their allies with direct access to Sacramento - primarily the group centered at Sacramento State College - who were responsible for most direct contacts with legislators. In each urban center - Sacramento, the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, and San Diego - a group was organized including, insofar as possible, archaeologists residing in each legislative district of the area. In the non-urban areas one or more persons were found who could represent the cause in each legislative district; it was one of my jobs to communicate with and coordinate these people. Finally, there was a considerable group of people who happened to have personal or professional contact with legislators and other policy makers, who volunteered themselves and were integrated into the system for action when needed. Once the bill was moving through the legislature, the system enabled us to identify and contact the members of each committee that was to review it, through their own constituents, and advance arguments for passage. It also made it possible to identify legislators who needed more convincing, and provide the data and personnel necessary to do it; it enabled us to generate publicity in appropriate places at appropriate times, and to muster the right testimony before the right committees. The system was certainly not 100% effective, and we certainly made plenty of mistakes, but the demonstration that archaeologists could climb out of their holes

and work together as an explicitly political entity was really impressive, and generates hope that another attempt can be made that will meet with success.

Shifting away from the fight for A.B. 1788, there is another trend that is worth examining; this is the intimate association between archaeology and the environmental movement. This is a pretty complex, growing, and multifaceted relationship, but there are two things going on that I recommend to your attention.

First, anyone who is not familiar with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and its California equivalent of 1970, should certainly look into them. Steve Colgrove of Archaeological Research Inc. has made a very thorough study of these laws and can direct anyone's interest. Beyond establishing protection of the environment as a basic national and state policy, the NEPA and its state version require all public agencies and agencies requiring public permits to conduct an "environmental impact study" prior to any action that is likely to affect the environment. On the basis of this study, means must be developed for mitigating the expected impact of the action. Ideally construed, this would mean that the effect of any legislation, construction project, or public policy on the environment - specifically including the "cultural" environment represented by archaeological values - would have to be thoroughly studied prior to action being taken. Both immediate local impacts and long-range, long-term regional impacts of the proposed action are supposed to be considered,

and the action, if taken, must allow for modifications to protect the environment insofar as is possible; presumably, in archaeological cases this would mean preservation and/or excavation. The Act has not, of course, been ideally construed, and no impact statement that I have had an opportunity to review has been much better than a whitewash job for the proposed action. There are signs, though, that this is changing. The Council on Environmental Quality is planning to set up new and tighter guidelines for the preparation of impact statements, and the various federal agencies that maintain their own guidelines are expected to modify them to fit. Douglass Scoville, of the National Park Service, has drafted guidelines for archaeological impact reports that would require really comprehensive archaeological studies prior to all activities covered by the Act, and would make excavation the very lowest of acceptable options for mitigation of impact. That adherence to such guidelines is not impossible is demonstrated by the case of Southern California Edison Co., which has recently let a contract to the University of California, Riverside, for an impact study on its proposed Fry Mountain generating plant, whose archaeological element approximates Scoville's guidelines. Another vastly encouraging sign is that some California counties - notably Orange and possibly Santa Barbara - are adopting ordinances similar to the Environmental Policy Act, which in Orange county at least are to apply to all kinds of construction, public and private. It is not too much to suggest that genuinely effective implementation

of these environmental policies on all levels would virtually bring an end to the destruction of archaeological values without full pre-destruction research. I avoid calling this research "salvage" advisedly; the sort of shoestring, mindless, "grab-it-and-run" activity that even with the best of funding we have been inclined to think of as salvage has no part in this picture of the future. As Don Miller, who is developing archaeological policies for the U.S. Forest Service in California, has said, under the developing environmental policies "salvage archaeology is dead."

The millenium, however, is not yet quite upon us, and there are battles to be fought. This brings us to another element in the archaeologists' alliance with the environmental movement: direct involvement in politico-legal pressure. Mr Hallinan will no doubt discuss this in much greater detail, but it is worth noting here that a difficulty that environmentalists frequently have in confronting destroyers in the courts is the demonstration that they actually have standing - that their interests are directly impinged upon by the actions of the destructive agent. Inasmuch as any land-disturbing project that touches an archaeological site at all impinges upon our ability to do research there, archaeologists should always have standing to sue. Environmental groups, after what seemed to me an initial period of wondering what in the world we were about, are beginning to see archaeological participation in their activities, and we can

expect our involvement in the effort to save the environment to increase over time.

A final trend that I would like to mention is closely related to the archaeological move into the environmental battle: the ability of archaeologists to organize, and the recognized need for coordination and team research, but it is slightly differently expressed. This is the trend toward the development of regional cooperatives. The basic idea behind the cooperative in archaeology is the recognition that archaeology is no longer a pedantic hobby for slightly peculiar dilettantes, but a complex scientific research system. No longer can the field be simply divided into the professionals, who always dig good, and the amateurs, who dig gooder or badder depending on how closely they approximate the way the professionals dig. As a system, archaeology is composed of a large number of interacting parts - pure cerebration, research design, excavation mechanics, analytic techniques, community relations, team organization, relations with funding and destroying agencies, and so on. Obviously, some people and some institutions are better equipped to be some kinds of subsystems than are others; a regional cooperative seeks to develop these subsystems and the pathways between them, so that a group of institutions, agencies and individuals in a given region can work effectively together on mutual problems. As far as I know, there are two explicitly recognized cooperatives in California at this time - the Bay Area

Archaeological Cooperative on San Francisco Bay and, a bit less explicitly, the California Desert Archaeological Committee of the SCA. The group of individuals and schools that cluster around the UCLA Archaeological Survey constitute the beginnings of another cooperative, and initial steps in this direction can be seen in Orange, San Diego, and Ventura Counties. Each co-op links a number of kinds of institutions and agencies - museums, universities, colleges, community colleges, high schools, avocational groups, historical societies, and so on. To a greater or lesser extent, each recognized to have a unique something to offer and a unique need to be fulfilled, and it is the purpose of the co-op to make these needs and offerings complement one another, while making the activity of the whole co-op complementary to the research and service needs and opportunities advanced by the region and its modern-day communities. The cooperative is a fragile entity, but I think it is an idea whose time has come. Increasingly, I think, if archaeology is to survive and grow as a contributing member of the social sciences, regional programs that encourage the growth and operation of cooperatives must replace the particularistic contractual support for piecemeal research that characterizes present-day public supported salvage, and I think that the kinds of things that are growing out of environmental bills pertaining to archaeology are steps toward such a replacement.