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Santa Fe, N. M.
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26 January 1969

Mr. Hugh Nash, Editor
Sierra Club Bulletin
1050 Mills Tower
San Francisco, California

Dear Hugh:

This is a letter to the Editor which I would like to have published in the Bulletin. I hope it gets by Wayburn, but if it doesn't please let me know so I can take the matter up with him.

The Directors of the Board of the Sierra Club with whom I agree are criticized for their persistent opposition to the construction of a nuclear power plant at Diablo Canyon. I believe - and experience supports me - that compromise on conservation matters with commercial interests always leads to a loss for conservation. The burden of accommodation is placed on conservationists, whereas exploiters concede only what is forced on them by physical circumstances or government regulation. But the reputation of the Sierra Club rests on its victories over exploiters not on compromise; it has gained only respect by sticking to principle. Those who condemn, as symptoms of unreliability, a policy reversal where consistency with principle is involved are not truly dedicated to the cause of conservation. It is often said that whatever else may divide the Board of Directors at least it is in agreement on conservation. This statement rings a little hollow to me when some members of the Board are more concerned about offending Pacific Gas & Electric Company than about Pacific Gas & Electric Company's offending nature at Diablo Canyon.

The issue is presented as saving either Napomo Dunes

Mr. Hugh Nash, Editor

26 January 1969

or Diablo Canyon. No unqualified, unretractable commitment, however, was obtained from P.G.&E. for the preservation of Napomo Dunes. The Sierra Club accepted this trade without obtaining security for Napomo Dunes and lost Diablo Canyon. The Club conceded without even obtaining an offsetting concession. This is an archexample of the way the Club can be misled into a compromise which results in a net loss of wildness. To avoid offending a powerful utility the Club agreed to an accommodation under which wilderness and uninvaded shores are being whittled away, and the natural environment degraded. This one-sided process, this surrendering our heritage in order to escape a confrontation, is not, in my opinion, compatible with the purposes of the Sierra Club. If such a policy is pursued it amounts to a tacit intention to fade the Club out. But whenever the Sierra Club has refused to compromise expected losses have been reduced. Its victories, however, are always negative, for it is clear that the Sierra Club cannot create wildness to replace what our opponents seize.

Every acre that is lost diminishes our stake in the future. That is why a compromise is always a losing game. The wildness that we have set as our task to protect is finite, but the appetite of the developers is infinite. They never retreat, they only shift their place of attack and with tireless determination seek to control all that remains of unexploited wild lands. And if they attain this end they will not stop there but will intensify the exploitation of all they have already expropriated. The forces working for profit are calculating and impersonal, and the conclusions they strive for ^{if obtained} will end the

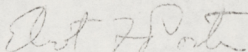
Mr. Hugh Nash, Editor

26 January 1969

cause of conservation because they will leave nothing to
conserve.

For these reasons I urge the membership of the
Sierra Club to vote, however hopeless the cause, to oppose
the construction of a power plant at Diablo Canyon.

Yours respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Eliot F. Porter".

Eliot F. Porter, Director