

EDITORIALS

CONFERENCES . . . Your editor has just returned to his desk from having attended an archaeological conference. His experiences at this and other, similar conferences have so convinced him of the benefits to be derived from meetings of this character that he can not resist the urge to relieve himself of some of his reactions to the subject, at the readers' expense.

The conference serves a number of excellent purposes. The individual worker in a given field is to a greater or less extent removed from his fellow workers. Frequent, even occasional contacts with each of them, without some coöperative program, is impractical if not impossible. His principal means of access to the results of their research is in the form of published reports, and such reports in many instances do not appear in print until years have elapsed following the completion of the work. Brief accounts, conveyed by means of letter or published in news mediums, may augment one's knowledge of the immediate situation in the general field to some slight extent, but the opportunity to become thoroughly acquainted with the phenomena of the general field is rarely afforded.

At least the broader aspects of the local student's problems are general for a relatively large area which includes that of his own experience, and a thorough comprehension of these general problems demands a basic knowledge of the general field. Nevertheless, the student, however assiduously he may guard against it, becomes a local specialist and reacts to the entire field in terms of his own comparatively limited experiences.

In short, the local student requires a basic understanding of the general field which includes the more specific province of his immediate experience, and is apt to be denied the opportunity to keep constantly informed on current developments.

The sectional archaeological conference contributes toward the solution of this problem: by bringing together research students in related

provinces of a field, each equipped to discuss and illustrate problems and developments from his own specific angle of approach; by fostering better coöperation between students, based upon contacts that tend to establish friendly personal relationships, and upon the acquisition of a broader factual framework; and by permitting one to visualize general problems not clearly apparent from any single, local viewpoint.

We believe in conferences, be they local or broadly sectional; specific or general in scope; invitational or open; staged in field or laboratory. We recommend that all students given the opportunity attend them.

W.C.M.

USE OF MEMBERSHIP CARDS . . . The membership card which is issued to each Affiliate of the Society is a symbol of his active participation in furthering the objectives of the organization. It represents a comradeship with the ever increasing group of those who seek to understand more clearly the native history of the American Indians. Between Affiliates it may well serve as a means of establishing a friendship based upon common interests. Yet the privileges and prerogatives which this card bestows upon its possessor are always measured in terms of the prestige enjoyed by the Society for American Archaeology. The reputation of the Society depends upon its members.

In a very real sense, this card is also a symbol of a contract between its owner and the Society. It signifies that the person whose name appears upon it is one who recognizes the importance and difficulty of archaeological research, as well as the thrill that comes with the realization that some new detail has been added to the present knowledge of past civilizations. Archaeological evidence must be handled carefully and preserved properly in order that it be not lost. Objects taken from sites must always be kept in association with their record. Only by carefully piecing together all the clues to the past will it be possible to obtain conclusions which will result in a wider appreciation of the aims and limitations of archaeological research.

The membership card carries with it both privileges and obligations. The degree to which each is met by the Affiliates will determine the prestige of the Society in the minds of its own members as well as in the opinion of the general public. A proper use of the card will place the Society in such an enviable position that each Affiliate will regard his membership with pride. Yet every misuse of the card, in order to secure consideration or privileges which the owner is not qualified to receive,

lowers the Society in public opinion and tends to reduce the value of membership and the usefulness of the activities of the organization.

Our membership card is not a magic lamp which grants its owner powers and abilities in archaeological work which he did not formerly possess. Rather might the card be likened to a conscience which causes the Affiliate to forego some of his individual desires in order that materials and evidence may be preserved for the benefit of the public and, more especially, of the students of native American history who, with him, are responsible for the future and the good name of the Society for American Archaeology.

C.E.G.