

ADVISORY BOARDS

While all important decisions must be made by the full Authority and while, in the case of large Authorities, an executive carries out the routine work, in most cases the most active unit is the advisory board. Under the Act provision is made for appointing advisory boards (committees) for any subject which is considered necessary by an Authority. Such boards deal with the preliminary work, at least, in the following subjects: flood control, public relations, farm ponds and little dams, reforestation, land use, parks and recreation, and historical properties. As the membership of these boards is not limited to the Authority, it provides a splendid opportunity for assistance from groups of all kinds in the area which are interested in conservation; and while the final decisions must be made by the accredited members appointed by the municipalities, nevertheless, through the operation of advisory boards the work of conservation can become the personal concern of each individual living in the valley.

From the foregoing it will be seen that the Conservation Authorities movement in Ontario is still a comparatively recent program. Much has been done in the fifteen years since the Act was passed, but a great deal more is necessary. It may be too early to appraise the shortcomings and successes of all Authorities, but three observations may be made.

The Authorities which have become most active are those in which, prior to their establishment, there was a healthy interest in conservation among the civic leaders, the press and the people in general. This same interest spurred on by the fact that they now have power to plan and build in their own community, has been carried over to the Authority in action.

Rapid progress has also been made when the Government of Ontario, at the request of the authority, has appointed a field officer to direct and co-ordinate its work. It is difficult to make progress in a large Authority if the members, who are engaged in making a living, must find time to plan and carry out even to a limited degree the board program of conservation which the whole watershed demands. These fieldmen are employees of the Conservation Branch, whose salaries are paid by the Ontario Government and expenses paid by the Authority. Thirteen fieldmen are now employed in this work, distributed on the basis of the size of the Authorities they serve.

Finally, the Authorities which have gone farthest in this program—there are a few which have not been active—are those which have realized the true meaning of river valley development, namely, that it is a co-operative effort of all the people living in a valley. By the very nature of the problems, some areas must be dealt with first and others must wait their turn, but the valley must be considered as a unit. This is perhaps the most difficult concept to teach our people: to compel them to turn their conservation thinking not inward but outward; not to dwell on what the Conservation Authority can do for me, a private individual, but rather, what will conservation, with its multiplicity of good things, do for all the people living in the valley.

HISTORY

Measures of conservation aim not only at saving what natural riches still exist, but also at setting right the conditions which have caused waste and destruction in the past. To find methods of correction and cure it is necessary to get at the true story of how these evils came about. This involves a careful study of developments in the past. Former conditions of climate; the records