

# RANGE MANAGEMENT

---

---

## Editorials

### The Local Section

THE following remarks of a retiring member of the Editorial Board are not meant as a complaint that local sections of the American Society of Range Management have been neglected or maltreated, either by the parent organization or the members. They merely reiterate that sections occupy a place of great importance in accomplishing our expressed objectives and will attempt to call to mind some basic concepts concerning the relationship of sections to the rest of the organization.

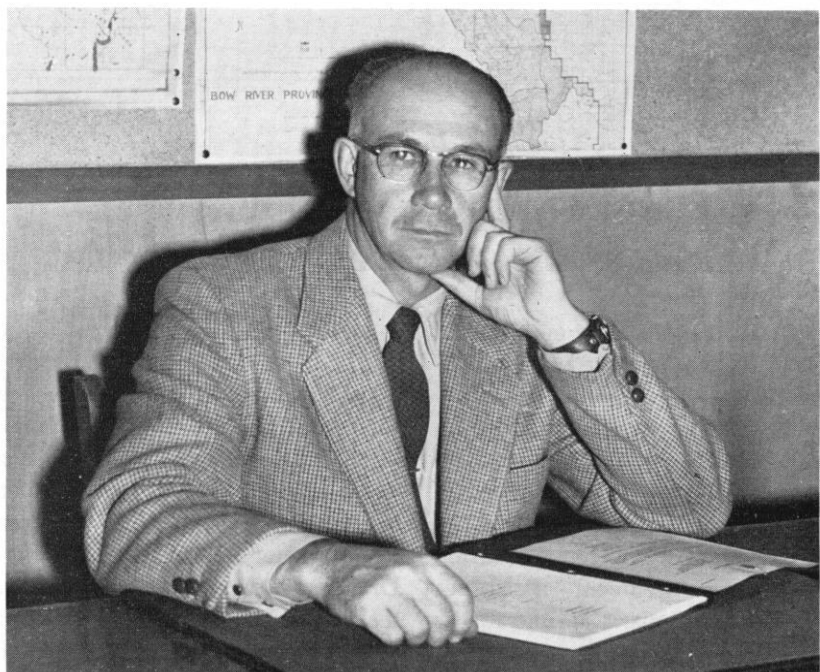
When the Society came into being at the first meeting in Salt Lake City the attendance and enthusiasm there bespoke big things for its future. Such anticipation has been justified in a continued expansion. So rapid was the growth and spread of membership that local sections were required almost immediately to properly serve the members. It is fortunate that the need for a division into smaller and more intimately-associated groups was recognized at such an early stage of development. Few organizations recognize this need until stagnation sets in and the local-section idea is then adopted as a means of revitalization. It can be said with impunity that the continued healthy growth, beyond the initial spurt, and the high degree of activity of our Society can be attributed, at least in part, to the fact that the ideals and purposes were brought close to the people of a wide area by the formation of active sections.

One danger which threatens every large organization is over-centraliza-

tion. The natural tendency is to centralize and voluntary effort to counteract the trend is necessary, if such is to be avoided. A completely centralized organization with policies originating at headquarters and emanating outward and downward to the members, loses vitality and either dies or becomes an automaton. With decentralization the individual members are important and their ideas make the program of the local section and these eventually consolidate into the policies and ideals of the parent body. This latter situation encourages healthy growth and vitality from the bottom up.

Our Society cannot be accused of leaning seriously toward centraliza-

tion or of unduly hampering the freedom of the sections. Incidents which have occurred are more annoying than serious but they may serve as object lessons to point out ways to take and those to be avoided. The case of the local group whose proposed name was rejected by headquarters comes to mind. The members live in Montana and Alberta and proposed to call themselves the International Section. Objections were raised by the Council and new proposals were made. In the end, a name which nobody liked was tacked on: The Northern International Mountain Section. Just try to say it and see if anyone is still listening when you finish. Not that the central body should not integrate activities and keep the sections in line with agreed policies but sections need plenty of freedom to thrive and grow new



WALLACE R. HANSON

wood. They should have freedom in things like the name they choose, their boundaries, their constitutions and their activity programs. If locals are ever subjected to dictation by the parent body stagnation will begin. On the other hand our whole society will remain vital and growthy as long as policies and ideals originate with the membership in the locals and work upward to be sorted and consolidated into the policies and principles of the parent body.

With optimum freedom allowed local sections, great responsibility is placed upon them and their members. To function most efficiently a section must be closely knit in organization and membership. Groups that are too large and too widespread may fail to keep the unanimity and close contact needed. For this reason some of our sections may be too large. Some members are finding it difficult to travel the distance required to attend the functions of the section. True, we have machinery whereby sub-sections can be formed but, in some cases, local sections may be more appropriate.

The members of each section should have common interests and problems. To ensure this they should be regionally located rather than be limited to political boundaries. The Northern Great Plains Section is a good example. The members of this group felt that the range problems of their region needed special attention and they were determined to have a section with that purpose at heart. In spite of pressure to the contrary they persevered and organized their section to include parts of Montana, North Dakota, southern Saskatchewan and southeastern Alberta.

The broad base of this Society and its opportunity for world influence is attested by the announcement that a Middle East Section has been formed and approved. At the organization meeting it was the expressed intent that the word "American" in the Society's name was "Continental" rather than "National" in concept. And now our influence is spreading beyond the seas. The formation of this section accentuates the points expressed above; the need for

freedom on the part of local sections to meet their special conditions and the value of flexibility in boundaries to allow members with common interests to get together.

It may not be out of place at this point to congratulate those who formed the new section in the Middle East; both those of our members from this continent, who undoubtedly sparked the organization, and also our friends in those lands who know even better than we do the need for range conservation. We might add our best wishes and encouragement to the members of the Middle East whose responsibility it will be to keep this section going in the years to come and to form new sections as they are needed.

Let each of us see that his local section is a strong one and the influence of its good work is felt in the range country where it functions and is reflected in the strength of the American Society of Range Management.—*Wallace R. Hanson*, Assistant Chief Forester, Eastern Rockies Forest Conservation Board, Calgary, Alberta.