

May 22, 1953

OP4
Honorable A. A. Erhart
California Senate
State Capitol
Sacramento 4, California

Condors.

Dear Al:

I attended the meeting of the Fish and Game Commission yesterday in San Francisco and as a result am hurrying off this letter to you this morning.

As you probably are aware the subject of condor permits was on the agenda and requests that the present condor permit be cancelled were heard at that meeting.

Arguments supporting cancellation were presented by Mr. Sprunt and Mr. MacCaughey of the Audubon Society, Mr. Philpott representing the Sportsmen's Council of Central California, William P. Wreden representing a group of San Luis Obispo County Ranchers, Dr. Carl Koford of the University of California and myself. Presenting arguments supporting the zoo's permit were two representatives of the San Diego Zoo and Ben Glading of the Department of Fish and Game.

Obviously our side represented the people and organizations that are mainly responsible for what has been done to preserve condors and I also firmly believe that in general we represented by far the largest number of people. With Dr. Koford who is the foremost authority on condors as one of our spokesman I can't conceive of a more convincing argument than that which we presented.

I am very sorry to state, therefore, that despite all this, our request was ignored and the entire effort we have made to prevent this trapping came to a most ignominious and humiliating end. As the matter now stands the zoo is, if anything, more firmly established as the main authority in the welfare of condors and free to pursue its trapping program.

As you are aware, Al, we have done considerable in this area toward the conservation of wildlife and I have learned from previous experience to accept such defeat as this even when it is most unwarranted. Ignorance and misinformation are sometimes insurmountable obstacles. In this case however, issues have arisen that go far beyond the subject of condor preservation and deal instead with government in general. For instance to our consternation, Ben Glading actually used your resolution No. 51 at this hearing in a way to support the argument favoring the zoo's trapping program.

Perhaps I have been presumptuous but I have firmly believed and have led others to believe that through your action in the legislature this trapping could be stopped. While I realized that the wording of the resolution did not actually affect the present permit I had assumed from our conversation and correspondence that its intent was to voice the disapproval of the legislature which in addition to the obvious violations of the trapping agreement, would give the department sufficient grounds to cancel the permit.

Throughout this entire region people interested in this matter have come to believe that through your legislative action, the condors are not going to be trapped. Personally I must confess to an optimism about this that now puts me in a most ridiculous position. In view of the recent development of this case in which the irresponsibility of the trapping has become so obvious, the absurd propositions that reveal the publicity seeking nature of this venture, the ever mounting opposition, also, in view of the failure after three months of trapping to get the birds, I felt confident that the zoo people and the Commission would yield to our request. In this I was entirely mistaken.

But this is all aside from the real purpose of this letter Al, which is to make two final requests: Is there any hope whatsoever that effective legislative action could still be taken to stop this trapping? I found out yesterday that the present condor permit has no time limit but runs indefinitely or until a pair of birds are taken. In the event that action is yet possible I would appreciate word from you as to what can be done and what we can do to help you out.

The other question Al, pertains to something far more important than condors. As I have previously mentioned the Department of Fish and Game vigorously defended the trapping project at the hearing. Ben Glading presented your resolution in such a way that it actually appeared to support the caging project. We have been presenting it as one of the great achievements of our side in opposing the trapping. In discussing this astounding situation afterwards with a person who is well informed about such matters, I was told that the Department actually wrote your resolution No. 51 and had worded it so as to be innocuous and for use against us if need be.

If there is anything to this, Al, I firmly believe that it is not through any fault of yours but that we have all been tricked by some very slick maneuvering on the part of the Department of Fish and Game. From what we saw yesterday I wouldn't put anything past them.

I hope this matter does not burden you unnecessarily in these final busy days of the legislature and that I will hear from you before long.

With best personal regards,

Ian I. McMillan