

FAREWELL ASHRAMA?

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It has been brought to our attention that the area containing the Assembly's Ajna Ashrama is to be designated a wilderness area, and all roads and buildings within the area are to be destroyed. The news comes as a sharp blow to those who know and love the place, and they do not intend to let it be destroyed without a fight. A hearing for such cases as ours is to be held in February of 1964, and so far, interested students have written an appeal to congressmen and the secretary of agriculture and are awaiting some action.

The ground, leased from the government, was acquired in 1930 for the purpose of establishing a permanent building for the school of the Wisdom Religion, and to serve likewise as a summer camp and a retreat in time of emergency. It was stipulated that the building must be used for ninety days out of each year. Unfortunately, the delicate health of the late Sherifa necessitated removal in 1950 to a more favorable climate, and the Ashrama fell into disuse for thirteen years. In the interim vandals broke in and destroyed or removed everything they could. The building itself, being stone, remains solid and with a little work could be restored in a short time. A recent pilgrimage by local students and the Wolffs was made to the place in a concerted effort to clean it up for possible inspection with the idea of possibly influencing the officials in our favor. Also, with the aid of the tractor, some road work was done on the trail, but much of the journey must still be made on foot.

The building, located in Tuttle Creek Canyon at an elevation of about 8000 feet is one canyon removed from that leading to Mt. Whitney, and overlooks Owens Valley, 4000 feet below. It is in the shape of a balanced cross, contains a large fireplace, and at one end, an altar of stone. Most of the work of building was performed by Dr. Wolf, with the aid of the students, some working throughout the summers, others on week-ends and vacations. The work consumed twenty years. One is amazed to see the tremendous amount of work that went into the buildings, grounds and trail. It was the aim of making this area the general headquarters for the Assembly of Man, and to provide winter storage and some income for the group, that the Assembly Ranch was purchased nearby, in 1943. Besides becoming a center of learning and general headquarters, plans were made for a future colony here. It was with the aim of restoring the Ashrama and carrying out the original plans that Dr. Wolff returned in 1960 to take up permanent residence at the Ranch. All activity since then, the purchase of a tractor mainly for road building and maintenance, the building of his new home, etc., has centered on plans for restoration of the Ashrama and resumption of all activities there.

So it is we look with sadness upon the threat of its passing, yet there is some glimmer of hope. We do not feel that its destruction can do anybody any good. We will ourselves refuse to tear down the structure, and it would not be easy for others to do so.