

Southland on Guard

United action by Southern California counties to set up an effective blockade against the winter invasion of hobos and other undesirables can be foreseen as the result of the conference of Southland supervisors at the Hall of Records in Los Angeles this afternoon.

Regardless of opinion as to the strict legality of measures taken by Chief of Police Davis and his border guards last winter, the fact remains that their action in turning back tramps and tin can tourists saved Californians a lot of money and reduced crime. There can be no quarrel by anyone if Southern California counties decide to act as a unit in defense of their own interests.

Chief Davis has a workable plan to offer at today's meeting. He tested it in advance when, with the co-operation of San Bernardino and Riverside county officials, he supervised round-ups of transient vagrants in both counties last month. By agreement, the suspect immigrants from the congealing east were informed that the price of their enjoyment of this section's mild climate and doled bounty would be hard work on rock piles. The number that turned back on a homeward trek in the face of that decree was revealing.

The great majority in the army that rides the beams, hitch-hikes and mooches gas to get to this land of winter sunshine dreads work more than chilblains. Surveys in recent weeks confirm deductions arrived at in the border campaign and in investigations made by Sheriff Biscailuz and brother sheriffs—that half the nomads have criminal records.

Somewhat distressing is the problem of dealing with those who are merely without funds or means of support and who come here in the hope of finding employment. The parasite type of indigent who drags his brood across deserts and mountains just to go on charity in the land of his dreams belongs, of course, in the same category as the vicious in point of downright undesirability—he must be sent on his way. The pity is there is not work for the deserving, but there isn't. Unemployed Californians come first; California tax payers have their own unfortunates to look after.

The problems of California and Florida in looking after transient indigents are unique. They are the States that always have them on their hands. The Federal responsibility in times of widespread unemployment like those of the past several years is clear, especially upon the part of an administration that has never itself hesitated to cross State lines in regulating public affairs. Washington cannot consistently back down on the job it once assumed of aiding the helpless of forty-six other States who flock to the two regions that escape wintry blasts and cold.

From today's meeting, it is assured, will emerge a plan for effective dealing with the vicious elements. A patient public will hope, too, that a start at least can be made toward a humane solution of the other problem.

Florida lumps all immigrants who cannot look after themselves in with other undesirables and deliberately thrusts them back from her borders. California may have to adopt the same policy.