Principles of Conservation

GIFFORD PINCHOT

THE PRINCIPLES WHICH the word Conservation has come to embody are not many, and they are exceedingly simple. I have had occasion to say a good many times that no other great movement has ever achieved such progress in so short a time, or made itself felt in so many directions with such vigor and effectiveness, as the movement for the conservation of natural resources.

Forestry made good its position in the United States before the conservation movement was born. As a forester I am glad to believe that conservation began with forestry, and that the principles which govern the Forest Service in particular and forestry in general are also the ideas that control conservation.

The first idea of real foresight in connection with natural resources arose in connection with the forest. From it sprang the movement which gathered impetus until it culminated in the great Convention of Governors at Washington in May, 1908. Then came the second official meeting of the National Conservation movement, December, 1908, in Washington. Afterward came the various gatherings of citizens in convention, come together to express their judgment on what ought to be done, and to contribute, as only such meetings can, to the formation of effective public opinion.

The movement so begun and so prosecuted has gathered immense swing and impetus. In 1907 few knew what Conservation meant. Now it has become a household word. While at first Conservation was supposed to apply only to forests, we see now that its sweep extends even beyond the natural resources.

The principles which govern the conservation movement, like all great and effective things, are simple and easily understood. Yet it is often hard

From *The Fight for Conservation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), 40–52. (Originally published 1910.)

Primary Sources - Conservation

From Conservation in the Progressive Era: Classic Texts (UW, 2004)

to make the simple, easy, and direct facts about a movement of this kind known to the people generally.

The first great fact about conservation is that it stands for development. There has been a fundamental misconception that conservation means nothing but the husbanding of resources for future generations. There could be no more serious mistake. Conservation does mean provision for the future, but it means also and first of all the recognition of the right of the present generation to the fullest necessary use of all the resources with which this country is so abundantly blessed. Conservation demands the welfare of this generation first, and afterward the welfare of the generations to follow.

The first principle of conservation is development, the use of the natural resources now existing on this continent for the benefit of the people who live here now. There may be just as much waste in neglecting the development and use of certain natural resources as there is in their destruction. We have a limited supply of coal, and only a limited supply. Whether it is to last for a hundred or a hundred and fifty or a thousand years, the coal is limited in amount, unless through geological changes which we shall not live to see, there will never be any more of it than there is now. But coal is in a sense the vital essence of our civilization. If it can be preserved, if the life of the mines can be extended, if by preventing waste there can be more coal left in this country after we of this generation have made every needed use of this source of power, then we shall have deserved well of our descendants.

Conservation stands emphatically for the development and use of waterpower now, without delay. It stands for the immediate construction of navigable waterways under a broad and comprehensive plan as assistants to the railroads. More coal and more iron are required to move a ton of freight by rail than by water, three to one. In every case and in every direction the conservation movement has development for its first principle, and at the very beginning of its work. The development of our natural resources and the fullest use of them for the present generation is the first duty of this generation. So much for development.

In the second place conservation stands for the prevention of waste. There has come gradually in this country an understanding that waste is not a good thing and that the attack on waste is an industrial necessity. I recall very well indeed how, in the early days of forest fires, they were considered simply and solely as acts of God, against which any opposition was hopeless and any attempt to control them not merely hopeless but childish. It was

assumed that they came in the natural order of things, as inevitably as the seasons or the rising and setting of the sun. To-day we understand that forest fires are wholly within the control of men. So we are coming in like manner to understand that the prevention of waste in all other directions is a simple matter of good business. The first duty of the human race is to control the earth it lives upon.

We are in a position more and more completely to say how far the waste and destruction of natural resources are to be allowed to go on and where they are to stop. It is curious that the effort to stop waste, like the effort to stop forest fires, has often been considered as a matter controlled wholly by economic law. I think there could be no greater mistake. Forest fires were allowed to burn long after the people had means to stop them. The idea that men were helpless in the face of them held long after the time had passed when the means of control were fully within our reach. It was the old story that "as a man thinketh, so is he"; we came to see that we could stop forest fires, and we found that the means had long been at hand. When at length we came to see that the control of logging in certain directions was profitable, we found it had long been possible. In all these matters of waste of natural resources, the education of the people to understand that they can stop the leakage comes before the actual stopping and after the means of stopping it have long been ready at our hands.

In addition to the principles of development and preservation of our resources there is a third principle. It is this: The natural resources must be developed and preserved for the benefit of the many, and not merely for the profit of a few. We are coming to understand in this country that public action for public benefit has a very much wider field to cover and a much larger part to play than was the case when there were resources enough for every one, and before certain constitutional provisions had given so tremendously strong a position to vested rights and property in general.

A few years ago President Hadley, of Yale, wrote an article which has not attracted the attention it should. The point of it was that by reason of the XIVth amendment to the Constitution, property rights in the United States occupy a stronger position than in any other country in the civilized world. It becomes then a matter of multiplied importance, since property rights once granted are so strongly entrenched, to see that they shall be so granted that the people shall get their fair share of the benefit which comes from the development of the resources which belong to us all. The time to do that is now. By so doing we shall avoid the difficulties and conflicts which

will surely arise if we allow vested rights to accrue outside the possibility of governmental and popular control.

The conservation idea covers a wider range than the field of natural resources alone. Conservation means the greatest good to the greatest number for the longest time. One of its great contributions is just this, that it has added to the worn and well-known phrase, "the greatest good to the greatest number," the additional words "for the longest time," thus recognizing that this nation of ours must be made to endure as the best possible home for all its people.

Conservation advocates the use of foresight, prudence, thrift, and intelligence in dealing with public matters, for the same reasons and in the same way that we each use foresight, prudence, thrift, and intelligence in dealing with our own private affairs. It proclaims the right and duty of the people to act for the benefit of the people. Conservation demands the application of common-sense to the common problems for the common good.

The principles of conservation thus described—development, preservation, the common good—have a general application which is growing rapidly wider. The development of resources and the prevention of waste and loss, the protection of the public interests, by foresight, prudence, and the ordinary business and home-making virtues, all these apply to other things as well as to the natural resources. There is, in fact, no interest of the people to which the principles of conservation do not apply.

The conservation point of view is valuable in the education of our people as well as in forestry; it applies to the body politic as well as to the earth and its minerals. A municipal franchise is as properly within its sphere as a franchise for water-power. The same point of view governs in both. It applies as much to the subject of good roads as to waterways, and the training of our people in citizenship is as germane to it as the productiveness of the earth. The application of common-sense to any problem for the Nation's good will lead directly to national efficiency wherever applied. In other words, and that is the burden of the message, we are coming to see the logical and inevitable outcome that these principles, which arose in forestry and have their bloom in the conservation of natural resources, will have their fruit in the increase and promotion of national efficiency along other lines of national life.

The outgrowth of conservation, the inevitable result, is national efficiency. In the great commercial struggle between nations which is eventually to determine the welfare of all, national efficiency will be the deciding factor.

So from every point of view conservation is a good thing for the American people.

The National Forest Service, one of the chief agencies of the conservation movement, is trying to be useful to the people of this nation. The Service recognizes, and recognizes it more and more strongly all the time, that whatever it has done or is doing has just one object, and that object is the welfare of the plain American citizen. Unless the Forest Service has served the people, and is able to contribute to their welfare it has failed in its work and should be abolished. But just so far as by cooperation, by intelligence, by attention to the work laid upon it, it contributes to the welfare of our citizens, it is a good thing and should be allowed to go on with its work.

The Natural Forests are in the West. Headquarters of the Service have been established throughout the Western country, because its work cannot be done effectively and properly without the closest contact and the most hearty cooperation with the Western people. It is the duty of the Forest Service to see to it that the timber, water-powers, mines, and every other resource of the forests is used for the benefit of the people who live in the neighborhood or who may have a share in the welfare of each locality. It is equally its duty to cooperate with all our people in every section of our land to conserve a fundamental resource, without which this Nation cannot prosper.

Special Message from the President of the United States

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

I TRANSMIT HEREWITH a report of the National Conservation Commission, together with the accompanying papers. This report, which is the outgrowth of the conference of governors last May, was unanimously approved by the recent joint conference held in this city between the National Conservation Commission and governors of States, state conservation commissions, and conservation committees of great organizations

From Henry Gannett, ed., *Report of the National Conservation Commission*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1909), 1–9.

of citizens. It is therefore in a peculiar sense representative of the whole nation and all its parts.

With the statements and conclusions of this report I heartily concur, and I commend it to the thoughtful consideration both of the Congress and of our people generally. It is one of the most fundamentally important documents ever laid before the American people. It contains the first inventory of its natural resources ever made by any nation. In condensed form it presents a statement of our available capital in material resources, which are the means of progress, and calls attention to the essential conditions upon which the perpetuity, safety, and welfare of this nation now rest and must always continue to rest. It deserves, and should have, the widest possible distribution among the people.

The facts set forth in this report constitute an imperative call to action. The situation they disclose demands that we, neglecting for a time, if need be, smaller and less vital questions, shall concentrate an effective part of our attention upon the great material foundations of national existence, progress, and prosperity.

This first inventory of natural resources prepared by the National Conservation Commission is undoubtedly but the beginning of a series which will be indispensable for dealing intelligently with what we have. It supplies as close an approximation to the actual facts as it was possible to prepare with the knowledge and time available. The progress of our knowledge of this country will continually lead to more accurate information and better use of the sources of national strength. But we can not defer action until complete accuracy in the estimates can be reached, because before that time many of our resources will be practically gone. It is not necessary that this inventory should be exact in every minute detail. It is essential that it should correctly describe the general situation; and that the present inventory does. As it stands it is an irrefutable proof that the conservation of our resources is the fundamental question before this nation, and that our first and greatest task is to set our house in order and begin to live within our means.

The first of all considerations is the permanent welfare of our people; and true moral welfare, the highest form of welfare, can not permanently exist save on a firm and lasting foundation of material well-being. In this respect our situation is far from satisfactory. After every possible allowance has been made, and when every hopeful indication has been given its full weight, the facts still give reason for grave concern. It would be unworthy of our history and our intelligence, and disastrous to our future, to shut our eyes to these

facts or attempt to laugh them out of court. The people should and will rightly demand that the great fundamental questions shall be given attention by their representatives. I do not advise hasty or ill-considered action on disputed points, but I do urge, where the facts are known, where the public interest is clear, that neither indifference and inertia, nor adverse private interests, shall be allowed to stand in the way of the public good.

The great basic facts are already well known. We know that our population is now adding about one-fifth to its numbers in ten years, and that by the middle of the present century perhaps one hundred and fifty million Americans, and by its end very many millions more, must be fed and clothed from the products of our soil. With the steady growth in population and the still more rapid increase in consumption, our people will hereafter make greater and not less demands per capita upon all the natural resources for their livelihood, comfort, and convenience. It is high time to realize that our responsibility to the coming millions is like that of parents to their children, and that in wasting our resources we are wronging our descendants.

We know now that our rivers can and should be made to serve our people effectively in transportation, but that the vast expenditures for our waterways have not resulted in maintaining, much less in promoting, inland navigation. Therefore, let us take immediate steps to ascertain the reasons and to prepare and adopt a comprehensive plan for inland-waterway navigation that will result in giving the people the benefits for which they have paid but which they have not yet received. We know now that our forests are fast disappearing, that less than one-fifth of them are being conserved, and that no good purpose can be met by failing to provide the relatively small sums needed for the protection, use, and improvement of all forests still owned by the Government, and to enact laws to check the wasteful destruction of the forests in private hands. There are differences of opinion as to many public questions; but the American people stand nearly as a unit for waterway development and for forest protection.

We know now that our mineral resources once exhausted are gone forever, and that the needless waste of them costs us hundreds of human lives and nearly $300,000,000 a year. Therefore, let us undertake without delay the investigations necessary before our people will be in position, through state action or otherwise, to put an end to this huge loss and waste, and conserve both our mineral resources and the lives of the men who take them from the earth. . . .

The function of our Government is to insure to all its citizens, now and

hereafter, their rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. If we of this generation destroy the resources from which our children would otherwise derive their livelihood, we reduce the capacity of our land to support a population, and so either degrade the standard of living or deprive the coming generations of their right to life on this continent. If we allow great industrial organizations to exercise unregulated control of the means of production and the necessaries of life, we deprive the Americans of today and of the future of industrial liberty, a right no less precious and vital than political freedom. Industrial liberty was a fruit of political liberty, and in turn has become one of its chief supports, and exactly as we stand for political democracy so we must stand for industrial democracy. . . .

We have realized that the right of every man to live his own life, provide for his family, and endeavor, according to his abilities, to secure for himself and for them a fair share of the good things of existence, should be subject to one limitation and to no other. The freedom of the individual should be limited only by the present and future rights, interests, and needs of the other individuals who make up the community. We should do all in our power to develop and protect individual liberty, individual initiative, but subject always to the need of preserving and promoting the general good. When necessary, the private right must yield, under due process of law and with proper compensation, to the welfare of the commonwealth. . . .

All this is simply good common sense. The underlying principle of conservation has been described as the application of common sense to common problems for the common good. If the description is correct, then conservation is the great fundamental basis for national efficiency. In this stage of the world's history, to be fearless, to be just, and to be efficient are the three great requirements of national life. National efficiency is the result of natural resources well handled, of freedom of opportunity for every man, and of the inherent capacity, trained ability, knowledge, and will, collectively and individually, to use that opportunity. . . .

The unchecked existence of monopoly is incompatible with equality of opportunity. The reason for the exercise of government control over great monopolies is to equalize opportunity. We are fighting against privilege. . . .

Our public-land policy has for its aim the use of the public land so that it will promote local development by the settlement of home makers; the policy we champion is to serve all the people legitimately and openly, instead of permitting the lands to be converted, illegitimately and under cover, to the private benefit of a few. Our forest policy was established so that we might

use the public forests for the permanent public good, instead of merely for temporary private gain. The reclamation act, under which the desert parts of the public domain are converted to higher uses for the general benefit, was passed so that more Americans might have homes on the land. . . .

The obligations, and not the rights, of citizenship increase in proportion to the increase of a man's wealth or power. The time is coming when a man will be judged, not by what he has succeeded in getting for himself from the common store, but by how well he has done his duty as a citizen, and by what the ordinary citizen has gained in freedom of opportunity because of his service for the common good. The highest value we know is that of the individual citizen, and the highest justice is to give him fair play in the effort to realize the best there is in him.

The tasks this nation has to do are great tasks. They can only be done at all by our citizens acting together, and they can be done best of all by the direct and simple application of homely common sense. The application of common sense to common problems for the common good, under the guidance of the principles upon which this republic was based, and by virtue of which it exists, spells perpetuity for the nation, civil and industrial liberty for its citizens, and freedom of opportunity in the pursuit of happiness for the plain American, for whom this nation was founded, by whom it was preserved, and through whom alone it can be perpetuated. Upon this platform—larger than party differences, higher than class prejudice, broader than any question of profit and loss—there is room for every American who realizes that the common good stands first.

What Is Meant by Conservation?

LADIES' HOME JOURNAL

THE REQUEST FROM THE MOTHER:

I WONDER IF you ever realize, you who live and move in the big world of things, how little a woman like myself, living quietly up here, really knows of the great questions that seem so vital and throbbing to the country. "Where is your newspaper?" you will ask. But the newspaper is too verbose, to say nothing of the prejudiced writing and the previous knowledge its writers take for granted. I suppose I am like hundreds of women: I would keenly like to understand these great problems, but who is there to tell us, simply and clearly, and, don't forget, briefly?

What is meant by "Conservation"? Why do you say it should be more than a mere word to me? How does it affect me personally?

THE SON'S ANSWER:

I know, my dear Mother, just what's the matter. Conservation is a word so big and important-looking that it frightens you; but the idea behind it is as old as the Pharaohs, who in the seven plenteous years gathered corn to carry their people through the seven years of famine which followed. We have several words in common use with about the same meaning, like "economy," "thrift," "prudence," "forehandedness."

When you open a parcel from the store do you throw away the paper and string? Not a bit of it. You smooth out the paper and roll up the string, and lay both aside till you wish to wrap a package yourself. In the autumn you gather the seeds of your choicest flowers before burning up the dried stalks. The bones the butcher sends home with the meat you drop into the soup-kettle, and the surplus fat into the soap-can; the rain water from your

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roof you catch for laundry purposes; your table refuse makes the pig and the chickens happy. So you have been practicing conservation all your life, doing on a small scale what the Government is beginning to do on a huge one, but you never spelled with a capital *C*. If the Government had begun as long ago as you did the people of the country would have been educated to the idea by degrees, just as you educated us boys not to be stingy, but to despise waste.

Now the Government is in a way the good mother of us all. She used to be rather easy-going, but she has lately come to realize that if she lets your generation and mine use up everything worth having there won't be enough for the next generation to live on. Where you save flower-seeds, therefore, she saves forests; where you store rain water for the washtub she fills reservoirs for irrigating desert lands and producing power for machinery.

Advantage Was Taken of the Government's Indifference

While the Nation was young and the supply of everything needful seemed inexhaustible people took advantage of the Government's indifference. Private parties fenced in and used for their own profit lands which belonged to all of us. If they wanted lumber for their houses, rails for their fences, or fuel for their stoves, they would cut down half a forest at a time; and whatever they could not use or sell they would leave to rot on the ground. They never bothered their heads to inquire where more wood was coming from when this was gone. As a result not only was the timber in some regions permanently exhausted, but the ground on which it had stood, being no longer shaded, parched under the strong sunshine and refused to bear any more trees or anything else.

That, Mother, is what went on for generations, and might have been going on still if ex-President Roosevelt had not interfered. He insisted that all good Americans must think as much of preserving their country for their children as of enjoying it themselves. . . .

Are you wondering why the name Conservation has been adopted for this movement, rather than Preservation? There is a nice shade of distinction between the two words. If you put a hindquarter of mutton into the icebox and keep it there for an indefinite period you *pre*serve it, certainly, but who gets any good from it? On the other hand, if you cut off from time to time what the family want to eat, chopping into hash the cooked meat left on the platter, turning the coarser fragments into a stew, and finally

making soup of the bones, you *con*serve it: that is, you use every bit of it for the satisfaction of the family's hunger, but make it go twice as far as it would in the hands of a careless housekeeper. . . .

Our Forests and Mines Need Protection

About one-fourth of all the surface of the United States is timberland. We take out of this yearly some twenty-three billion cubic feet of wood. The yearly growth, however, is only about seven billion cubic feet; in other words, we are taking out more than three times as much as Nature is putting back. But that's not the whole story. Of the wood taken out not less than one-quarter is wasted, chiefly by carelessness in cutting or removing the logs. An average of fifty million dollars' worth is lost by fire every year, besides a good many human lives; and the young growth destroyed by fire is worth even more than the mature timber destroyed. Yet in spite of these fearful inroads on our supply we export a great deal of lumber, thus diminishing our own resources to make up the deficiencies of other countries.

No forest, once cut away, will grow again of itself as well as it did at first; so if we are going to replace what we remove we have got to plant new trees. To show you how little we are doing in this line all the forest land successfully replanted in this country, from the beginning till the present day, could be set down inside of Rhode Island, the smallest State on the map, whereas we ought to have planted at least a hundred times that much. . . .

Try to Educate Your Neighbors

Now, Mother dear, don't lie awake nights worrying over what our descendants are going to suffer as the result of our neglect, or I shall be sorry I wrote you all this. There are more profitable occupations than worrying, and one is lending a hand promptly at stopping the leaks. Try to educate your neighbors a little by inducing them not to cut down a whole grove because they want to send a few logs to the sawmill or replenish the winter woodpile, but to select a tree here and there, where its removal will do least harm to the rest, and then to clear away the choppings and rubbish so that these will not furnish tinder for a forest fire. You can show the women of their families, also, how to make everything on the farm go farther by turning it to more than one use. You can stir up the school-teachers in the neighborhood to impress upon the children the idea of taking care of a hundred

things they are accustomed idly to destroy. Here is really the proper starting-point for the whole movement—with the children—for it is they who will have to pay the piper after we have had our dance.

If you wish to find out in what other ways a woman can help, send a postage stamp to the National Conservation Association at Washington, District of Columbia, and ask them to advise you. This reform is a big thing, and I only wish that every wide-awake woman like yourself could be enlisted in it.

The Other Side Of Conservation

GEORGE L. KNAPP

FOR SOME YEARS past, the reading public has been treated to fervid and extended eulogies of a policy which the eulogists call the "conservation of our natural resources." In behalf of this so-called "conservation," the finest press bureau in the world has labored with a zeal quite unhampered by any considerations of fact or logic; and has shown its understanding of practical psychology by appealing, not to popular reason, but to popular fears. We are told by this press bureau that our natural resources are being wasted in the most wanton and criminal style; wasted, apparently, for the sheer joy of wasting. We are told that our forests are being cut at a rate which will soon leave us a land without trees; and Nineveh, and Tyre, and any other place far enough away are cited to prove that a land without trees is foredoomed to be a land without civilization. We are told that our coal-mines would be exhausted within a century; that our iron ores are going to the blast-furnace at a rate which will send us back to the stone age within the lifetime of men who read the fearsome prophecy. In short, we are assured that every resource capable of exhaustion is being exhausted; and that the resource which cannot be exhausted is being monopolized. Owing to the singular pertinacity of the sun in lifting water to the mountain tops, and of the earth in pulling that water back to the sea, even the disciples of conser-

From *North American Review* 191 (1910), 465–81. Original footnotes have been removed.

vation by scareheads cannot say that in a few years we shall be a land without water-power. But they say the next worst thing. From official bureau and lecture platform, and from the hypnotized, not to say subsidized press, goes forth the cry that the water-power sites of the land are being hogged at a rate which will soon subject us all to the exactions of a cruel, soulless, grasping "power trust," the acme and consummation of all other trusts.

For all these evils which make the future a thing to dread, the remedy is "conservation." The "government," that potent "conjuh word" of civic atavists and political theologians, must stint its natural and proper tasks to engage in the regulation of this, that or the other industry, to "conserve" our resources. To "conserve" our timber, the wooded areas of the public domain, together with all lands touching on and appertaining to the wooded areas, and all other lands that might, could, would or should bear trees and don't, must be segregated from ordinary use and put under despotic control as "National Forests." To "conserve" our coal supply, the coal lands must be kept from passing into individual ownership, and operated, if at all, by persons who lease the privilege from the national government. To "conserve" our water-power, the power sites must be treated as the coal lands, and developed, if at all, as leaseholds. In a word, the Federal Government must constitute itself a gigantic feudal landlord, ruling over unwilling tenants by the agency of irresponsible bureaus; traversing every local right, meddling with every private enterprise, which seems to stand in the way of the sacred fetish of "conservation."

Only by such drastic means, we are told, can the rights of the people be protected, and the continued prosperity of the nation be assured. So persistently and adroitly has this view been urged by this press bureau, that millions of people wonder, in their innocence, why any one should object to so needful and righteous a work. Acting doubtless on the suggestion of the founder of the Ananias Club, the conservation press bureau has impugned the motives of all who disagree with it. If one objects to the inclusion of non-forest land within forest reserves, he is ranked forthwith as a would-be robber of the public domain. If he doubts the propriety of the Federal Government setting up in business as a professional savior from imaginary ills, he is an "individualist"—that being the bitterest term of reproach in the "conservation" vocabulary. If one objects to the leasing of the coal lands, he is plainly an undesirable citizen of some sort; and if he declares the proposed "conservation charge" for water-power to be both unconstitutional

and silly, he is marked at once as an emissary of that fearful "power trust" which is so unconscionably long a-borning.

Notwithstanding the ban thus threatened, I am going to enter the lists. I propose to speak for those exiles in sin who hold that a large part of the present "conservation" movement is unadulterated humbug. That the modern Jeremiahs are as sincere as was the older one, I do not question. But I count their prophecies to be baseless vaporings, and their vaunted remedy worse than the fancied disease. I am one who can see no warrant of law, of justice, nor of necessity for that wholesale reversal of our traditional policy which the advocates of "conservation" demand. I am one who does not shiver for the future at the sight of a load of coal, nor view a steel-mill as the arch-robber of posterity. I am one who does not believe in a power trust, past, present or to come; and who, if he were a capitalist seeking to form such a trust, would ask nothing better than just the present conservation scheme to help him. I believe that a government bureau is the worst imaginable landlord; and that its essential nature is not changed by giving it a high-sounding name, and decking it with home-made haloes. I hold that the present forest policy ceases to be a nuisance only when it becomes a curse. Since that forest policy, by the modest confession of its author, is set forth as the model to which all true "conservation" should conform, I shall devote most of my attention in this paper to the much-advertised "National Forests" and their management. . . .

The terrors from which "conservation" is to save us are phantoms. The evils which "conservation" brings us are very real. Mining discouraged, homesteading brought to a practical standstill, power development fined as criminal, and, worst of all, a Federal bureaucracy arrogantly meddling with every public question in a dozen great States—these are some of the things which result from the efforts of a few well-meaning zealots to install themselves as official prophets and saviors of the future, and from that exalted station to regulate the course of evolution.

It is no more a part of the Federal Government's business to enter upon the commercial production of lumber than to enter upon the commercial production of wheat, or breakfast bacon, or hand-saws. The judiciary committee of the Sixtieth Congress, reporting on the proposed Appalachian reserve, declared that the sole ground on which Congress could embark in the forest business was the protection of navigable streams. Will any one pretend that a forest reserve on the crest of the Rocky Mountains, with the

nearest navigable water a thousand miles away, can be brought under this clause? Even on the Pacific slope, I have not heard that the lumber mills of Washington have seriously impaired the navigability of Puget Sound; nor that the Golden Gate would shoal up if the cutting of timber in the Sierras were unchecked. And will the champions of "conservation" claim that the Federal Government has greater rights and powers in the newer States than in the older ones?

But the public lands belong to the whole people. Undoubtedly; but in what sense do they so belong? As a landed estate, from which to draw rentals, or as an opportunity to be used? Which interpretation of this ownership has prevailed in the past? Which doctrine caused the settlement of a region as large as half Europe within the lifetime of a single generation? And passing this larger aspect of the question, if the "people" do own the public lands, and especially the "National Forests," in the sense of being possessors of a rentable estate, are they quite sure that it will pay to treat that estate in that fashion? The total receipts from the "National Forests" in 1908 were $1,842,281.87. The expenditures for the same year were $2,526,098.02, leaving a deficit of $683,816.15. If the "people" really want that deficit and would feel robbed without it there might be less bothersome ways of supplying their need than the maintenance of a Federal bureau. It might be cheaper to sell the estate on reasonable terms and trust to the patriotic endeavors of Congress to provide the indispensable deficit.

Our natural resources have been used, not wasted. Waste in one sense there has been, to be sure; in that a given resource has not always been put to its best use as we now see that use. But from Eden down, knowledge has been the costliest thing that man could covet; and the knowledge of how to make the earth best serve him seems well-nigh the most expensive of all. But I think we have made a fair start at the lesson; and considering how well we have already done for ourselves, the intrusion of a Government schoolmaster at this stage seems scarcely needed. The pine woods of Michigan have vanished to make the homes of Kansas; the coal and iron which we have failed—thank Heaven!—to "conserve" have carried meat and wheat to the hungry hives of men and gladdened life with an abundance which no previous age could know. We have turned forests into villages, mines into ships and sky-scrapers, scenery into work. Our success in doing the things already accomplished has been exactly proportioned to our freedom from governmental "guidance," and I know no reason to believe that a different formula will hold good in the tasks that lie before. If we can stop

the governmental encouragement of destruction, conservation will take care of itself.

To me the future has many problems but no terrors. I belong to the generation which has seen the birth of the electric transformer, the internal-combustion engine, the navigation of the air and the commercial use of aluminum, and I quite decline to worry about what may happen "when the world busts through." There is just one heritage which I am anxious to transmit to my children and to their children's children—the heritage of personal liberty, of free individual action, of "leave to live by no man's leave underneath the law." And I know of no way to secure that heritage save to sharply challenge and relentlessly fight every bureaucratic invasion of local and individual rights, no matter how friendly the mottoes on the invading banners.

Another National Blunder

H.J.M. MATTES

WHY DO THE common people object to reserves? It is a question between kinds of government—popular government and monarchical government. Under the former the people are supreme; under the latter they have no rights until they are granted them by the supreme ruler. Outside reserves, the common people legally help themselves to the timber; inside, they must first ask permission from some representative of the supreme ruler, the Honorable Secretary of the Interior. Talk about imperialism!

But should the people be allowed so much liberty? It is wise that they should be. Timber is one of the vital necessities of life—for fuel, for buildings. The East has allowed all its coal to come under private ownership, and with a country full of coal they are having a famine. Would it be wise to put all our timber in charge of one man? Even the common law protects the people's right to free timber. In Colorado last year a gardener dug a tree from one man's yard and planted it in another's as a gift. In the absence of

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any statute, common law was applied, and it was found that there was no theft, no trespass, and not even malicious mischief.

What then becomes of the great cry of "stealing government timber"? In a monarchy it might be stealing—in some very tyrannical monarchy—and has been punished by death, but in America it has always been our right even as we have a right to the land, to the rain that falls, and to the air we breathe. There is an old national statute making it a trespass, but other laws have been passed restoring the right to the people while keeping it from the corporations.

"How, then, shall we protect our timber?" It does not need protecting. After building up the mightiest nation on earth, one-third of our land still grows timber; and while that may not be enough for the future, we can draw on the governor of Canada, who has discovered the largest forest of the world in his dominions, 4,000 miles long, 700 miles wide, and offers to supply us all we can use for a century if we will merely take off the tariff.

"But the sawmills are slaughtering it." The poor sawmills! They have borne more abuse than the early Christians. They only cut the big, ripe trees. It was the farmers that girdled the trees and made bonfires of them, and then pulled everything up by the roots. It was the farmers that turned the impervious subsoil on top of the spongy mold and caused the freshets and dried up the springs. Yet [President Grover] Cleveland devoted his first term trying to annihilate them. With more than Christian meekness they said nothing and went on sawing wood. The sawmill men appreciate their high vocation. When they stop sawing the nation will stop growing, and civilization will come to a halt and the world start back toward chaos again. They even get blamed for all the bad weather, but if the chief of our Weather Bureau knows anything about climate, timber has no appreciable effect upon it. . . .

Let the sawmills alone. Drop the timber question. Those two great world builders, the settler and the sawmill man, have marched across the American continent hand in hand and built up the mightiest nation on the earth in one of the greatest wildernesses; and they have much work ahead of them. Let them alone.

What, then, shall we do with the Forestry Bureau? If these "scientists" will not keep out of mischief and let the West alone, abolish it. Look at their ignorant interference. They are telling us that the little sheep pack the ground so that the rain will not sink into our gravelly soil, while the big cows and horses do no harm. They are telling the sawmill men to cut this tree and

not cut that one, while we have to make the kind of lumber the settlers need and choose the trees that will make it. We know our business. They are telling us to burn the offal, when a lighted cigar will easily start a fire in our tinderbox forests. And the Interior Department tries to compel the frequenters of the reserves to do these things or go to prison. . . .

Shall this nation go on growing, or shall we go on making forest reserves and forever stop its growth? Shall the people have their natural rights restored to them and preserved, or shall the government cater to the spirit that depopulated Europe and built up America? Shall our pioneers be our natural heroes, or the forestry faddists and "scientists," the nation's pets? Read "Forest Law," in Encyclopedia Britannica, and compare those laws with the reserve laws shown in the Land Office circulars, and you will agree with me that forest reserves and human liberty cannot stand upon the same ground. One or the other must go down.