

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

The vast possibilities of our great future will become realities only if we make ourselves, in a sense, responsible for that future. The planned and orderly development and conservation of our natural resources is the first duty of the United States. It is the only form of insurance that will certainly protect us against the disasters that lack of foresight has in the past repeatedly brought down on nations since passed away.

CHAPTER II

HOME-BUILDING FOR THE NATION

THE most valuable citizen of this or any other country is the man who owns the land from which he makes his living. No other man has such a stake in the country. No other man lends such steadiness and stability to our national life. Therefore no other question concerns us more intimately than the question of homes. Permanent homes for ourselves, our children, and our Nation — this is a central problem. The policy of national irrigation is of value to the United States in very many ways, but the greatest of all is this, that national irrigation multiplies the men who own the land from which they make their living. The old saying, "Who ever heard

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

of a man shouldering his gun to fight for his boarding house?" reflects this great truth, that no man is so ready to defend his country, not only with arms, but with his vote and his contribution to public opinion, as the man with a permanent stake in it, as the man who owns the land from which he makes his living.

Our country began as a nation of farmers. During the periods that gave it its character, when our independence was won and when our Union was preserved, we were pre-eminently a nation of farmers. We can not, and we ought not, to continue exclusively, or even chiefly, an agricultural country, because one man can raise food enough for many. But the farmer who owns his land is still the backbone of this Nation; and one of the things we want most is more of him. The man on the farm is valuable to the Nation, like any other citizen, just in proportion to his intelligence, character, ability, and patriotism;

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

but, unlike other citizens, also in proportion to his attachment to the soil. That is the principal spring of his steadiness, his sanity, his simplicity and directness, and many of his other desirable qualities. He is the first of home-makers.

The nation that will lead the world will be a Nation of Homes. The object of the great Conservation movement is just this, to make our country a permanent and prosperous home for ourselves and for our children, and for our children's children, and it is a task that is worth the best thought and effort of any and all of us.

To achieve this or any other great result, straight thinking and strong action are necessary, and the straight thinking comes first. To make this country what we need to have it, we must think clearly and directly about our problems, and above all we must understand what the real problems are. The great things are few and simple, but they are too often hidden by false issues,

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

and conventional, unreal thinking. The easiest way to hide a real issue always has been, and always will be, to replace it with a false one.

The first thing we need in this country, as President Roosevelt so well set forth in a great message which told what he had been trying to do for the American people, is equality of opportunity for every citizen. No man should have less, and no man ought to ask for any more. Equality of opportunity is the real object of our laws and institutions. Our institutions and our laws are not valuable in themselves. They are valuable only because they secure equality of opportunity for happiness and welfare to our citizens. An institution or a law is a means, not an end, a means to be used for the public good, to be modified for the public good, and to be interpreted for the public good. One of the great reasons why President Roosevelt's administration was of such enormous value to the

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

plain American was that he understood what St. Paul meant when he said: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." To follow blindly the letter of the law, or the form of an institution, without intelligent regard both for its spirit and for the public welfare, is very nearly as dangerous as to disregard the law altogether. What we need is the use of the law for the public good, and the construction of it for the public welfare.

It goes without saying that the law is supreme and must be obeyed. Civilization rests on obedience to law. But the law is not absolute. It requires to be construed. Rigid construction of the law works, and must work, in the vast majority of cases, for the benefit of the men who can hire the best lawyers and who have the sources of influence in lawmaking at their command. Strict construction necessarily favors the great interests as against the people, and in the long run can not do

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

otherwise. Wise execution of the law must consider what the law ought to accomplish for the general good. The great oppressive trusts exist because of subservient law-makers and adroit legal constructions. Here is the central stronghold of the money power in the everlasting conflict of the few to grab, and the many to keep or win the rights they were born with. Legal technicalities seldom help the people. The people, not the law, should have the benefit of every doubt.

Equality of opportunity, a square deal for every man, the protection of the citizen against the great concentrations of capital, the intelligent use of laws and institutions for the public good, and the conservation of our natural resources, not for the trusts, but for the people; these are real issues and real problems. Upon such things as these the perpetuity of this country as a nation of homes really depends. We are coming to see that the simple things are the things

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

to work for. More than that, we are coming to see that the plain American citizen is the man to work for. The imagination is staggered by the magnitude of the prize for which we work. If we succeed, there will exist upon this continent a sane, strong people, living through the centuries in a land subdued and controlled for the service of the people, its rightful masters, owned by the many and not by the few. If we fail, the great interests, increasing their control of our natural resources, will thereby control the country more and more, and the rights of the people will fade into the privileges of concentrated wealth.

There could be no better illustration of the eager, rapid, unwearied absorption by capital of the rights which belong to all the people than the water-power trust, perhaps not yet formed but in process of formation. This statement is true, but not unchallenged. We are met at every turn by the indignant denial of the water-power inter-

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

ests. They tell us that there is no community of interest among them, and yet they appear by their paid attorneys, year after year, at irrigation and other congresses, asking for help to remove the few remaining obstacles to their perpetual and complete absorption of the remaining water-powers. They tell us it has no significance that there is hardly a bank in some sections of the country that is not an agency for water-power capital, or that the General Electric Company interests are acquiring great groups of water-powers in various parts of the United States, and dominating the power market in the region of each group. And whoever dominates power, dominates all industry.

Have you ever seen a few drops of oil scattered on the water spreading until they formed a continuous film, which put an end at once to all agitation of the surface? The time for us to agitate this question is now, before the separate circles of centralized

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

control spread into the uniform, unbroken, Nation-wide covering of a single gigantic trust. There will be little chance for mere agitation after that. No man at all familiar with the situation can doubt that the time for effective protest is very short. If we do not use it to protect ourselves now, we may be very sure that the trust will give hereafter small consideration to the welfare of the average citizen when in conflict with its own.

The man who really counts is the plain American citizen. This is the man for whom the Roosevelt policies were created, and his welfare is the end to which the Roosevelt policies lead.

I stand for the Roosevelt policies because they set the common good of all of us above the private gain of some of us; because they recognize the livelihood of the small man as more important to the Nation than the profit of the big man; because they oppose all useless waste at present at the

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

cost of robbing the future; because they demand the complete, sane, and orderly development of all our natural resources; because they insist upon equality of opportunity and denounce monopoly and special privilege; because, discarding false issues, they deal directly with the vital questions that really make a difference with the welfare of us all; and, most of all, because in them the plain American always and everywhere holds the first place. And I propose to stand for them while I have the strength to stand for anything.

CHAPTER III

BETTER TIMES ON THE FARM

EVER since I came to have first-hand knowledge of irrigation, I have been impressed with the peculiar advantages which surround the irrigation rancher. The high productiveness of irrigated land, resulting in smaller farm units and denser settlement, as well as the efficiency and alertness of the irrigator, have combined to give the irrigated regions very high rank among the most progressive farming communities of the world. Such rural communities as those of the irrigated West are useful examples for the consideration of regions in which life is more isolated, has less of the benefits of coöperation, and generally has lacked the stimulus found in irrigation farming.

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

The object of education in general is to produce in the boy or girl, and so in the man or woman, three results: first, a sound, useful, and usable body; second, a flexible, well-equipped, and well-organized mind; alert to gain interest and assistance from contact with nature and cöoperation with other minds; and third, a wise and true and valiant spirit, able to gather to itself the higher things that best make life worth while. The use and growth of these three things, body, mind, and spirit, must all be found in any effective system of education.

The same three-fold activity is equally necessary in a group of individuals. Take for example the merchants of a town, who have established a Chamber of Commerce or Board of Trade. They have three objects: first, sound and profitable business; second, organized cöoperation with each other to their mutual advantage, as in settling disputes, securing satisfactory rates from railroads, and inducing new industries to settle

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

amongst them; and third, to make their town more beautiful, more healthful, and generally a better place to live in. Take a labor union as another example, and you will find the same three-fold purpose. A good union admits only good workmen to membership in its sound body; the members get from the Union the advantages of organized cöoperation in selling their labor to the best advantage; and in addition they enjoy certain special advantages often of overwhelming importance.

The practical value of organization and cöoperation is obvious, and they are being utilized very widely in nearly every branch of our national life. But what is the case with the farmer? The farmers are the only great body of our people who remain in large part substantially unorganized. The merchants are organized, the wage-workers are organized, the railroads are organized. The men with whom the farmer competes are organized to get the best results

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

for themselves in their dealings with him. The farmer is engaged, usually without the assistance of organization, in competing with these organizations of other groups of citizens. Thus the farmer, the man on whose product we all live, too often contends almost single-handed against his highly organized competitors.

How have the agricultural schools and colleges and the Departments of Agriculture of State and Nation met this situation? Largely by the assertion, in word or in act, that there is only one thing to be done for the farmer. So far as his personal education is concerned, they have tried to give him a sound body, a trained mind, and a wise and valiant spirit. But so far as his calling is concerned, they have stopped with the body. They have said in effect: We will help the farmer to grow better crops, but we will take no thought of how he can get the best returns for the crops he grows, or of how he can utilize those returns so as

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

to make them yield him the best and happiest life.

It is not wise to stop the education of a boy or a girl with the body, and to neglect the mind and the spirit. But we have done the equivalent of that in dealing with farm life. Along the line of better crops we have done more for the farmer, and have done it more effectively, than any other Nation. But we have done little, and far less than many other Nations, for better business and better living on the farm. Hereafter we shall need in State and Nation not only the work of Departments of Agriculture such as we have now, but we shall need to have added to their functions such duties as will make them departments of rural business and rural life as well. Our Departments of Agriculture should cover the whole field of the farmer's life. It is not enough to touch only one of the three great country problems, even though that is the first in time and perhaps in importance.

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

Of course we all realize that the growing of crops is the great foundation on which the well-being not only of the farmer but of the whole Nation must depend. First of all we must have food. But after that has been achieved, is there nothing more to be done? It seems to me clear that farmers have as much to gain from good organization as merchants, plumbers, carpenters, or any of the other trades and businesses of the United States. After we have secured better crops, the next logical and inevitable step is to secure better business organization on the farm, so that each farmer shall get from what he grows the best possible return.

Consider what has been accomplished in Ireland through agricultural coöperation. The Irish have discovered that it is not good for the farmer to work alone. Since 1894 they have been organizing agricultural societies to give the farmer a chance to sell at the right time and at the right price. The

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

result is impressive. In Ireland the coöperative creameries produce about half the butter exported. There are 40,000 farmers in the societies for coöperative selling, which, as we know in this country, means better prices. There are about 300 agricultural credit societies with a membership of 15,000 and a capital of more than \$200,000. In a word, in Ireland, which we have been apt to consider as far behind us in all that relates to agriculture, there are nearly 1,000 agricultural societies with a total membership of 100,000 persons. Since 1894 their total business has been more than \$300,000,000.

But, after the farmer has begun to make use of his right to combine for his advantage in selling his products and buying his supplies, is there nothing else he can do? As well might we say that, after the body and the mind of a boy have been trained, he should be deprived of all those associations with his fellows which make life worth living, and to which every child has an inborn

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

right. Life is something more than a matter of business. No man can make his life what it ought to be by living it merely on a business basis. There are things higher than business. What is the reason for the enormous movement from the farms into the cities? Not simply that the business advantages in the city are better, but that the city has more conveniences, more excitement, and more facility for contact with friends and neighbors: in a word, more life. There ought then to be attractiveness in country life such as will make the country boy or girl want to live and work in the country, such that the farmer will understand that there is no more dignified calling than his own, none that makes life better worth living. The social or community life of the country should be put by the farmer—for no one but himself can do it for him—on the same basis as social life in the city, through the country churches and societies, through better roads, country

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

telephones, rural free delivery, parcels post, and whatever else will help. The problem is not merely to get better crops, not merely to dispose of crops better, but in the last analysis to have happier and richer lives of men and women on the farm.

CHAPTER IV

PRINCIPLES OF CONSERVATION

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

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

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

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

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 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 FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

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

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

development and use of water-power 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

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

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

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

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

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

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

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

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 com-

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

mon-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

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

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 move-

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

ment, 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 coöperation, 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 coöperation 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

THE FIGHT FOR CONSERVATION

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 coöperate with all our people in every section of our land to conserve a fundamental resource, without which this Nation cannot prosper.

CHAPTER V

WATERWAYS

THE connection between forests and rivers is like that between father and son. No forests, no rivers. So a forester may not be wholly beyond his depth when he talks about streams. The conquest of our rivers is one of the largest commercial questions now before us.

The commercial consequences of river development are incalculable. Its results cannot be measured by the yard-stick of present commercial needs. River improvement means better conditions of transportation than we have now, but it means development too. We cannot see this problem clearly and see it whole in the light of the past alone.

The actual problems of river development

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ag 333.72 P651

Pinchot, Gifford, 1865-1946.
The fight for conservation.
S942 .P5

\$ 5.00

To
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Copyright © 1910 by Doubleday, Page and Company
University of Washington Press
Americana Library edition 1967
"Introduction" by Gerald D. Nash copyright © 1967 by the
University of Washington Press
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 10-19948
Printed in the United States of America

UT 6/25/68