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## THE PINCHOT AND BALLINGER EPISODE

### Impressions of the Two Principals. Who Differ as to the Method of Conserving America's Natural Resources.

By JAMES A. EDGERTON.

**C**ONGRESS may have adjourned and the president may have gone to Beverly, but the country is not left without midsummer topics. We yet have Mr. Gifford Pinchot and Mr. Richard Achilles Ballinger, who have put on the official gloves and will favor us with a few rounds to let us know that the government still lives; otherwise we might have concluded that it had gone on a vacation along with its chief officials.

Mr. Pinchot is our head tree planter and knows more about forestry than Willis Moore thinks he knows about the weather. Pinchot did not write "Woodman, Spare That Tree," but might have done so if George P. Morris had not beat him to it. Pinchot has done more than write a poem. He has made forestry an applied science in this land that never did know what to do with a piece of woodland except to clear it off. He has taught us that the presence or absence of forests determines the rain supply. In fact, he has made us look upon the tree as a friend and brother, not a mere awning or ornament. Many people have regarded him as the most useful man in the world. That is what Roosevelt used to think when he wanted to play tennis and could not find any other available partner. Mr. Pinchot was always ready to take a hand at the game and thus became a far shilling figure in white flannels in the "tennis cabinet." He has plenty of money and thus can afford to hold office in Washington. He has many other distinctions, such as being an expert angler and a mighty hunter. Or per-

### Side Lights on the Controversy Involving the Chief of the Forestry Bureau and the Secretary of the Interior.

one hand, and, on the other, a large collection of amiable gentlemen with greedy eyes and yawning pocketbooks.

It was about this time that the governors foregathered in Washington at the call of President Roosevelt and decided to take a hand in the conserving game. So they made speeches, adopted resolutions and appointed a commission with Mr. Pinchot at its head. Since that proud day the natural resources of the country have been able to sleep nights without the harrowing fear that they would be kidnapped before morning.

In addition to all his other activities Mr. Pinchot was made member of the country life commission, which went about asking questions of the American farmer and then returned and told him what was the matter with him. It was this commission which made Uncle Joe Cannon grow real sarcastic and say things that caused glee in the hearts of the scoffers and snickers on the back benches. The only sort of "uplift" that Uncle Joe ever practiced in that of the front end of his cigar.

#### Ballinger Once a Cowboy.

Mr. Ballinger, the other end of this difficulty, has lived pretty much all over the face of the country. At one time he was a cowboy in Kansas and rode seventy miles every week to recite Latin. At an earlier age he was at the front with his father, who was colonel of a negro regiment. The boy, though only five or six years old, was supplied with a drum made out of a fig box, on which he hammered away for liberty.

After the war the elder Ballinger became a country editor in Illinois

wide open. Mayor Ballinger not only closed the worst of the dives, but made Seattle a model city. His life was threatened often, but that is a tribute offered every man who does real work. Ballinger's life was threatened in Alabama also by a "colonel" who wanted to pull a gun on him and was made to desist only by a little judicious choking. The secretary of the interior does not like to have these old stories told of him now, it is said. But why did he get into the cabinet if he did not want to be talked about?

#### The Point at Issue.

Having introduced the two principals in the "mill," it may be as well to tell what the row is all about. Primarily it is over one of the Roosevelt policies. Just before the ex-president left office he withdrew nearly one million acres of timber and water site lands from public entry. The ostensible reason was to preserve the forests, but the real purpose was to protect the water power sites on a portion of this domain. Hardly had Secretary Ballinger entered office than he again threw this land open to entry. Mr. Pinchot thereupon appealed to President Taft, with the result that 25,000 acres, containing some of the most valuable water sites, was a second time withdrawn.

At the national irrigation convention recently held at Spokane and at the transmississippi congress, still more recently in session at Denver, Mr. Pinchot defended his conservation policy amid immense enthusiasm. He was especially cheered when he asserted that conservation of natural resources is a Roosevelt policy that Taft is pledged to carry out. In his Spokane address he boldly asserted that a power trust is being formed in the country which is seeking to obtain possession of the government water site lands, leaving the inference plain that Ballinger's action in throwing open these lands left the way clear for their acquisition by the trust. This was universally construed into an attack on Ballinger. At the same convention ex-Governor Pardee of California assailed the secretary of the interior openly for having played into the hands of private interests as against the public weal.

#### The Legal End of It.

The defense offered by the friends of Mr. Ballinger is that he is himself an ardent conservationist, but that he is only trying to obey the law. They say that this is a lawyer's administration and that strict construction is the rule. Thus the difference is more apparent than real, being one of method rather than of principle.

The opinion is expressed that this is the view President Taft himself takes of the matter. Rumors have been persistent that he has sought to make peace between the two officials and in the main has succeeded. As the question involves two opposing forces and as the conflict between these two has in nowise abated, such a peace can scarcely be permanent. So long as there is opposition between private selfishness and public good so long will the movement for conservation of natural resources be endangered by combinations of capital that seek to exploit these resources for their own ends.

Of the great conservation crusade Gifford Pinchot has been the virtual creator. Theodore Roosevelt became its ardent champion. Despite legal technicalities and the antagonism of special interests, it will go on, for the reason that it is meant to protect the rights of the people and to benefit the future. This nation is learning, as older nations have learned, that it cannot eat its cake and have it, that it cannot waste its resources without impoverishing the unborn. In so mighty and meritorious a work individuals are nothing; the cause is everything. It is above politics and above men.

#### Coal Fields Also Involved.

An interesting sidelight thrown on the question has come out of Alaska. There immensely rich coal fields were a few years ago discovered, and a number of individuals at once filed claims. It is now asserted that before making their entries these individuals organized a syndicate, to which the lands would be turned over, a plan clearly against the law. The case has been pending in the interior department since the days of Hitchcock. After resigning from the general land office Mr. Ballinger became the attorney of these coal land claimants.

As secretary of the interior he finds the case before him as judge in which he was before interested as counsel. To his credit be it said that he has turned the decision over to his assistant secretary, but nevertheless the matter is being crowded to trial. It forms one more of the complications in this nation-wide controversy.

Discussion is rife as to what action the president will finally take in the matter, if any. The general belief is that he must stand by his secretary of the interior, but this view does not take into account that he is also pledged to the Roosevelt conservation program. If he should uphold Ballinger, will that mean the dismissal of Pinchot? Were the forester directly under the secretary of the interior probably would, but as he belongs to the agricultural department Secretary Wilson, who upholds Pinchot, will have a word to say in the matter.

Frederick H. Newell, the head of the reclamation service, is also involved in the controversy, and as he is directly under Ballinger it is currently reported that his removal has already been decided upon. Newell is a scientist, not a politician. He has stood between the public interests and the selfish grabbers, and he has been actively identified with the government's immense irrigation projects from the beginning.

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