

LAND RESOURCES

Second Day's Session of Governors' Conference

PAPERS READ BY EXPERTS

Addresses Made by James J. Hill, Prof. T. C. Chamberlain and ex-Governor Pardee of California, Followed by a General Discussion.

WASHINGTON, May 14.—The second day's conference at the white house between President Roosevelt and the governors of the various states and territories for the conservation of natural resources of the country met this morning at ten o'clock.

President Roosevelt opened when he called Governor Johnson to preside. Perhaps the most distinguished speaker was James J. Hill, chairman of the Board of Directors of the Great Northern railroad on "The Natural Wealth of the Land and Its Conservation." Then followed addresses by Prof. T. C. Chamberlain of Chicago, president of the American Association for the "Advancement of Science, on Soil Wastage," and R. A. Long of Kansas City on "Forest Conservation." A general discussion of the subjects of addresses was then begun, in which a number participated.

At the afternoon session, "Land Resources" will be the theme of discussion. Addresses will be made by Former Governor of California Geo. C. Pardee on "Resources Related to Irrigation," and by the president of the American National Livestock Association, A. H. Jastro of Bakersfield, Cal., on "Grazing and Stock-raising." The general discussion of these subjects will be opened by Former U. S. Senator Joseph M. Carey of Cheyenne, Wyo. Gifford Finchot, chief of the bureau of forestry, will give a reception tonight to meet the governors and the members of the Inland Waterways Commission.

WASHINGTON, May 14.—Stratling was the warning sounded today at the conference of the governors of the danger that the nation confronts in soil waste and forest depletion. Governors listened and talked and applauded but took no action. This is left for tomorrow, the last day of conference and the plan is afoot to have prepared for that day and printed in the record without reading in order that time may be wholly devoted to results. The resolution committee was in session all day and will report tomorrow. Committee consisting of governors of Kentucky, Missouri and Nebraska was appointed to bring in suggestion for permanent organization for permanent organization of governors independent, perhaps of any other organization which may develop as a result of conference. The president opened both morning and afternoon presided over by Governor Johnson of Minnesota and Governor Deen of Illinois, respectively.

J. J. Hill, president of the Great Northern railroad who led a long list of speakers treated the depletion of nation's resources in very serious and impressive manner.

The issue was squarely joined as to the methods pursued by the government in the region of the forest reserves by the governors of Wyoming, Utah, Idaho and Montana. A general reply to the criticisms made by governors was made by Secretary Garfield.

By Ex-Gov. C. Pardee.

Ex-Gov. Pardee spoke of the states, rivers and forests.

He said forestry problems of the Southern part of the state consist of the planting of new, rather than in the preservation and conservation of existing forests. Its water problem, dependent upon that of re-forestation, consists in creating new natural forest-litter reserves for the retention of the melting snows and rains, which under present conditions, run off the bare mountains in floods to the ocean. In Northern California the stream and forest problems consist entirely, or practically so, in protection, preservation and conservation.

Upon the solving of these problems, control and that a vast future of habitation depended these important

matters for the future of the state: electric power, irrigation, navigation of rivers, reclamation of swamp and overflowed river lands, lumber and timber.

The streams from which power may be obtained have been, within the last few years, filed upon in such numbers, under the lax laws of California and the United States that the fear is expressed in many sections that the power has been already pretty well taken up. Many of these filings are for purely speculative purposes; others are for future development; but comparatively few of them, not more than a dozen or 15 are actually being used or in process of preparation of utilization. The fear is becoming prevalent that the acquisition of these water rights by private persons or corporations will lead monopolies and over-capitalizations, and that in this way these great and most important natural resources will not be at the chief disposal of the people. The action of the United States Government, however, in regulating the use of the streams, ought to prevent an absolute and oppressive monopolization of them.

A start has been made by the state toward an efficient forest service. It is not yet what it should be, but a beginning has been made and quite a number of those who formerly wastefully destroyed lumber on their lands and left it bare and fire-baked are beginning to appreciate the necessity and economy of scientific lumbering and forest protection.

Because the state is now but thinly populated, having only two million people on one million acres of territory her natural resources have not been, as in some other states, nearly, if not quite annihilated; nevertheless, her people have made quite extensive inroads on her forests. Because of the fact that unforested lands have been more than sufficient for the support of her population, California has not been compelled as other states have been, to sacrifice her forests in order to gain land for farming purposes. The destruction of her forests has resulted only from careless and prodigal commercial operations upon them together with fires resulting from these operations or carelessly set for other purposes. In Oregon, Washington and California the nation's future store of timber is situated. Both in quality and quantity the Pacific Coast states are possessed of the most valuable arboreal asset of the United States. Here, then is offered the best field for the interposition, between extermination and preservation, of the benevolence of the federal government for the future, the immediate future, beneficial to the people of the whole United States.

Here also is the government's best opportunity to set itself between the rapacity of private monopoly in these national resources and the people.

As the coal and petroleum production both decrease, the absolute need of the preservation, conservation and protection from monopoly of the water power in the country will become, and is becoming, more and more apparent.

Professor Thomas C. Chamberlain, of the University of Chicago, read a paper on Soil Wastage. He said in part:

To give thought to the future appeals to me with peculiar force, because recent studies have led me to the belief that the earth's future habitability is vastly greater than we have been wont to believe. It is a common conception that the earth sprang from chaos at the beginning of our era and is plunging on to catastrophe a final winter in the near future, but I have come to believe that the earth arose from regenerative process and offers a fair prospect of habitability for tens of millions of years to come. If this be true; it is eminently fit that our race should give thought to the distant results of its action. It is also a new conception of geology that climatic conditions have been much like the present from early eras, in spite of some notable variations, and that this generally uniformity is the result of a profound regulative system which has kept the temperatures and the constitution of the earth's atmosphere within the narrow range congenial to life for many millions of years. As a result there has been no complete break in land life since it came into being years ago. It is further conceived that the sources of the vital supplies are still adequate and likely to continue so for years, that the regulative system is still in effective control and that a vast future of habitation may fairly be predicted, sub-

ject only to some contingencies of disturbing approach or collision with celestial bodies.

It is familiar geologic doctrine that for years rains have fallen on the surface and soils have been produced by rock decay, while the surface has been washed away. Soil-production and soil removal have run hand in hand, and yet so controlled by nature's adjustments that no large part of the surface has been swept bare enough to altogether exclude vegetation. More than this, it appears that the usual adjustments of nature make rather for increased fertility of soil than depletion. It is true that at times deformations have intervened, giving mountainous heights and precipitous surfaces from which the soil-product has been washed faster than it could be produced; and desert conditions have also intervened locally; but these diastrophic effects are perhaps rather rejuvenations necessary to the preservation of the continents than destructive episodes. Whenever such heights and slopes have been raised, the atmosphere and its waters have at once began to grade them down, to cover them with soil and to give them a new habitability. So in this and other ways, the gifts of the great past shape themselves as products of a marvelous system of control that has checked excesses and forced movement toward the golden means in which have lain productivity and congeniality to life. Thus has come our inheritance of a land suitable for vegetation, of a soil-mantle of great fertility, of a precipitation conducive to productivity; of a system of streams endowed with great possibilities of water-foods, of water power, and of stream-navigation.

How shall we cooperate with nature in rendering conditions still more serviceable to ourselves and our successors? Clearly we may use the proper revenues of our inheritance, but surely we should not rob our successors of their share in it. To answer this fundamental problem, let us turn at once to the basal factors, rainfall, soil-formation, and soil-wastage. The rainfall is to be regarded as an inherited asset; the soil is clearly an inherited asset; even a little soil-removal may be regarded an advantage, but reckless soil-wastage is a serious error. Soils are the product of the atmosphere and its waters modifying the rock surface. When they have aided the air in producing soil by rock decay, the atmospheric waters may either pass into plants or back to the surface and out by evaporation, or they may pass on down to the ground waters, and thence into the streams, furnishing there the basis for water-foods, for water-power, and for stream-navigation. Here is a good work, soil-production, followed by advantageous courses of the water both up and down. On the other hand, water may rush away as a foul erosive flood on the surface, wasting soil and plant food, gully the surface, flooding the valleys, filling the reservoirs, sweeping out dams, barring the streams and clogging the deltas. If it shall be found that nearly all the rainfall should go into the soil, coming out thence slowly and steadily into the streams, clean and pure, these should present nearly ideal conditions for water-food, for water-power and for stream-navigation. The ideal solution of the soil problem may therefore solve the greater part of the whole complex of problems. The soil-problem may thus prove to be the key problem.

To see this more definitely, we must turn to details, but with brevity and omissions. While soils are formed by the atmosphere and its waters acting upon the rock, soil surfaces are carried away by wind and wash. At any moment, then the depth of soil measures the lag of production behind removal, and it is clear that the best results spring from the proper ratio of addition at the bottom to wastage at the surface.

We have no accurate measure of the rate of soil-production but it is clearly very slow. While it varies directly for different kinds of rock and for partially reduced rock, the usual estimate is a foot in 4000 to 6000 years, which includes channel cutting, etc. This is doubtless too high for soil-production alone. I should hesitate to name a rate greater than one foot in 10,000 years on the basis of observation. If we allow 40,000 years for the four feet of soil next the rock it is probably none too conservative. To maintain a good working depth, surface wastage should then not exceed

(Continued on page 7)

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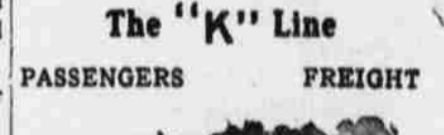


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