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Fulfilling American Democracy: The Conservation Movement, 1907 to 1921

By J. Leonard Bates

"Conservation," as related to an evolving government policy in the twentieth century, has not been a clearly defined term. For average citizens it has meant in a general way the prevention of waste. For scholars and government administrators it has frequently meant a little more definitely the careful management of natural resources. Herbert Hoover as food administrator in World War I and as secretary of commerce in the early 1920's helped to popularize such a concept, with emphasis on efficiency of use.[1] There is much to be said for this construction. The acceptance of conservation in a broad sense represents a considerable advance from the nineteenth century when with a few notable exceptions squandering of public and private resources went on recklessly and often cynically. Moreover, its acceptance was a tribute to a group of men whose concept of official responsibility for conservation was not a loose, vague theory, nor a matter of efficiency as such, but a fighting, democratic faith.

Historians of modern reform have given scant attention to a rationale of conservation or to conservation as a democratic movement.[2] In fact the program associated with Theodore Roosevelt

[1] Herbert Hoover, *Memoirs: Years of Adventure, 1874-1920* (New York, 1951), 244 and *passim*; Mark Sullivan to Philip P. Wells, September 30, 1926, and Wells to Sullivan, October 26, 1926, Gifford Pinchot Papers (Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress), Box 1676; Herbert Hoover, "The Part of the Federal and State Authorities in Promoting the Interstate Electric Super-Power Project," Address of October 13, 1923, *Economic World* (New York), XXVI (October 20, 1923), 544-46.

I am indebted to the Social Science Research Council and to the University of Illinois for grants in aid of research; also to Robert M. Albert of the University of Illinois for assistance in research and for helpful insights.

[2] See George E. Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement* (Madison, 1946); Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era* (New York, 1954); Eric F. Goldman, *Rendezvous with Destiny* (New York, 1952); Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York, 1955).

and Gifford Pinchot is occasionally disparaged as largely sound and fury. Doubtless the ambiguity and complexity of "conservation" have tended to obscure its democratic implications. Then too, this policy was both a product of and a stimulant to the larger, so-called Progressive Movement; it shared in certain weaknesses of this epoch of reform and has shared in the criticism. The usual interpretation today is that the Progressive Movement was essentially an uprising of the middle class, protesting against monopoly and boss control of politics, stressing heavily the virtues of competition, freedom, and morality.[3] With respect to conservation this view leads to the criticism that there existed a fundamental inconsistency between the ideas of protecting natural resources and the dominant beliefs in individualism and competition with the resultant low prices, heavy consumption, and waste.[4]

There was another side to the Progressive Movement — perhaps the most significant side: the decline of laissez faire, the development of a social conscience, the repudiation of Social Darwinism. Most leaders of progressivism believed in a positive state. Some came to believe in the sort of factory and social legislation, welfare action, utility regulation, and limited government ownership that is associated with the New Deal. A few wished to go farther than the New Deal ever went.[5] While the conservationists, like others progressively inclined, differed among themselves, nevertheless they had a program which may be described as limited socialism in the public interest. Influenced by Henry George, Edward Bellamy, Lester Ward, William James, Arthur Twining Hadley, Thorstein Veblen, Charles A. Beard, and others, these protectors of the public lands were far removed from classical economics.

[3] See for example George E. Mowry, "The California Progressive and His Rationale: A Study in Middle Class Politics," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (Cedar Rapids), XXXVI (September, 1949), 239-50; Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*, 143-48.

[4] Erich W. Zimmermann, *World Resources and Industries* (New York, 1933), 786-87, 789, and *passim*; Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*, 6, 93, and *passim*.

[5] Walter E. Weyl, *The New Democracy* (New York, 1914), 160-62, 320-23; Link, *Wilson and the Progressive Era*, 224 ff.; Mowry, *Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 380-81. See also letters of Harry A. Slattery, one of those closely associated with Gifford Pinchot: for example a "platform" written by Slattery for the Committee of Forty-eight, August, 1919, in Pinchot Papers, Box 1860. The Socialist party, which in 1912 received 5.97 per cent of the total vote, had a considerable influence on the left wing of the progressives. See David A. Shannon, "The Socialist Party before the First World War: An Analysis," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXXVIII (September, 1951), 279.

The organized conservationists were concerned more with economic justice and democracy in the handling of resources than with mere prevention of waste. One aspect of the matter was the price and income situation, the actual monetary rewards from the marvelous wealth of this land. Conservationists believed that somehow the common heritage, the socially created resources and institutions, had passed into the hands of vested interests and that the benefits were siphoned into the hands of a few. There were several ways in which this situation might be remedied, as they saw it: first, to hold on to the remaining public lands, at least temporarily, preventing further monopolization; second, to attempt to give the people a fuller share of opportunities and profits; and finally, in that period of low income to keep prices proportionately low. The monopolists who jacked up prices were anathema, even though their methods might contribute to conservation by reducing consumption. Conservation through penalizing the public was something which democratically motivated leaders were not prepared to accept.

The conservationists' approach was broad. They believed in government studies and safeguards for the preservation of irreplaceable resources such as petroleum; they recognized and struggled with problems which remain today only partially solved. They understood the need for federal leadership in an organic structure based on the unity of nature itself. As early as 1910 Gifford Pinchot proclaimed, "Every river is a unit from its source to its mouth." [6] They made mistakes, of course. Like most progressives, they concluded easily that the opposition on a particular issue consisted of "robber barons," conspirators, and frauds. Yet at times they were capable of a surprising detachment; a key conservationist, for example, referred admiringly to a "very scholarly and fine" argument that the public domain should be turned over to the states.[7]

[6] Gifford Pinchot, *The Fight for Conservation* (New York, 1910), 54, 110-13; Wells to Max W. Ball, July 25, 1917 (copy), and Wells memorandum for Pinchot at the bottom of above letter, with respect to enclosure, Max W. Ball, "Memorandum for the Director [Geological Survey]," March 30, 1916, concerning a mineral leasing bill; also Wells to Slattery, August 16, 1917, all in Pinchot Papers. J. O. Richardson, "Naval Petroleum Reserves No. 1 and No. 2," *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute* (Annapolis), XLII (January-February, 1916), 94-97; Irvine L. Lenroot in *Cong. Record*, 66 Cong., 1 Sess., 4111-12 (August 21, 1919), and Robert M. La Follette, *ibid.*, 4733-36 (September 3, 1919); Henry S. Graves, "Public Welfare in Relation to the Conservation of Natural Resources," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Philadelphia), CV (January, 1923), 11-12.

[7] Slattery to Pinchot, October 7, 1919, Pinchot Papers, Box 1842.

In a sense the conservation movement was a nonpartisan, statesmanlike cause, winning support from scientists, politicians, and others all over the country. But a fact of long-range significance was its Republican origin; Republicans led by Pinchot and Roosevelt were the main inspiration of this program. These men were proud of their work, many of them almost fanatically devoted to Roosevelt. They did not easily dissociate the Republican party or the "Republican Roosevelt," who had first given them their chance,[8] from the body of their accomplishments. Politics and personalities help appreciably to explain the conservation fight from 1907 to 1921.

In tracing the growth of a new attitude toward public resources it would be inaccurate to give credit only to the Republicans. This enlightenment was evolutionary, like reform in general, and Grover Cleveland, William A. J. Sparks as land commissioner, Hoke Smith as secretary of the interior, and other Democrats in later years made important contributions.[9] Even so, the concern here is with the full-fledged movement to which was given in 1907 the name "conservation." There is no doubt that progressive Republicans were the main actors.

Albert J. Beveridge of Indiana, United States senator, 1899-1911, a Republican and a progressive, was among those who witnessed the beginnings of the conservation policy. In 1921 he wrote to Gifford Pinchot:

> So, time, and time, and time again I thought of you, and the notable work you began more than twenty years ago, and have steadily pursued ever since, to save the country's woodland resources; and it suggested to me again your magnificent statesmanship known as the Conservation policy. For it is statesmanship, real statesmanship of the highest order. You may recall that after breakfast at your house, when you had developed your idea and before you presented it to President Roosevelt, you outlined it to me, and I said to you that forenoon that it was the biggest piece of constructive statesmanship that I had run across. . . . The whole Conservation system is yours, dear Gifford. I honestly think that you have done more than any other man for the future well-being of the Republic; and I have said this publicly as well as privately on every appropriate occasion — and I intend to go on saying it.[10]

[8] John M. Blum, *The Republican Roosevelt* (Cambridge, 1954), is discerningly appreciative of Roosevelt's inspirational qualities.

[9] An interesting inquiry is Gifford Pinchot, "How Conservation Began," *Agricultural History* (Washington), XI (October, 1937), 255-65.

[10] Albert J. Beveridge to Pinchot, September 2, 1921, Pinchot Papers, Box 236.

Pinchot remembered "with keen interest and satisfaction" the beginnings of this movement as described by Beveridge, and in 1937 he recalled further: "The idea was so new that it did not even have a name. Of course it had to have a name. Our little inside group discussed it a great deal. Finally Overton Price suggested that we should call it 'conservation' and the President said 'O. K.' So we called it the conservation movement." [11]

Allowing for exaggeration on the part of Pinchot and his friends, it is doubtless true that he and Roosevelt inspired this movement.[12] Gifford Pinchot, the son of a Pennsylvania landowner, businessman, philanthropist, and patron of the arts, was stimulated to an early interest in forestry. His father, James W. Pinchot, recommended forestry as a profession, having seen it practiced in Europe but not in this country. The young Pinchot was captivated by the idea. Finding no genuine forestry course in the United States after his graduation from Yale in 1889, he went to Europe to study. On returning, he became forester at George Vanderbilt's Biltmore Estate, near Asheville, North Carolina.[13] In 1896 he was appointed to the National Forest Commission and assigned the task of surveying United States forest resources. His reputation now established, in 1898 he became "forester" of the Forest Division (later the Forest Service) in the Agriculture Department, the position he held while in government service. Pinchot had boundless energy and enthusiasm; "tree mad" some had called him at Yale. Although not a systematic thinker, and sometimes annoyingly platitudinous, he possessed unusual qualities of intellect, character, and leadership. He was cultured and receptive to ideas. He was an aristocrat devoting himself to public service, passionately concerned about economic injustice — a fighter, a likable fellow, a good companion. Former Congressman William Kent of California referred in 1923

[11] Pinchot to Beveridge, September 8, 1921, *ibid.*, and Pinchot, "How Conservation Began," *Agricultural History*, XI (October, 1937), 262-63.

[12] In opening the White House Conference of Governors (May 13, 1908), Theodore Roosevelt declared: "Especial credit is due to the initiative, the energy, the devotion to duty, and the farsightedness of Gifford Pinchot, to whom we owe so much of the progress we have already made in handling this matter of the coordination and conservation of natural resources. If it had not been for him this convention neither would nor could have been called." Newton C. Blanchard *et al.* (eds.), *Proceedings of a Conference of Governors in the White House* (2 vols., Washington, 1909), I, 10.

[13] Pinchot, "How Conservation Began," *Agricultural History*, XI (October, 1937), 261. For a good sketch of James W. Pinchot see Joseph A. Arnold, "James Wallace Pinchot," *Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture, 1907* (Washington, 1908), 495-97.

to one of Pinchot's best qualities, his "inherent modesty" and "desire to work in harmony with others." [14]

Pinchot owed much to older men who pioneered in the scientific study of resources, and whose influence was personal and forceful; notably John Wesley Powell (1834-1902) and W J McGee (1853-1912). Powell is well remembered as a naturalist, explorer of the Grand Canyon, director of the United States Bureau of Ethnology, and director of the Geological Survey. McGee, a remarkably versatile and influential man, had a fascinating career as anthropologist, geologist, ethnologist, hydrologist, inventor, philosopher, author, and public servant. He was in the Geological Survey while Powell was its head, later headed the Bureau of Ethnology (1893-1903), and then went on to hold numerous posts of importance. While director of the St. Louis Public Museum, he was among those in 1907 who instigated a study of inland waterways and thereby called attention to the physiology of natural resources — water, land, plants, and their interrelationships.[15] Roosevelt promptly appointed him to the Inland Waterways Commission. While at Memphis, during a tour of the Mississippi River, McGee, Pinchot, and others made up their minds that the President ought to call a conference; in this way they could dramatize their ideas and objectives. Thus the famous White House Conference; and, as Pinchot said, "the fight was on." [16]

Prior to this conference Pinchot's Forest Service already had been fighting effectively for some of the principles of unified resource management: for a sustained yield in the national forest lands; for grazing within the forest areas on payment of a fee; for leasing of water power sites, rather than giving them up permanently to private control. In other ways as well the activities of the Forest Service were expanded; not the least influential was a skillful, vigorously conducted publicity campaign.[17]

[14] William Kent to Pinchot, March 19, 1923, Pinchot Papers, Box 249. See also Roy M. Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage* (Princeton, 1942), 337.

[15] Whitney R. Cross, "W J McGee and the Idea of Conservation," *Historian* (Bloomington, Ind.), XV (Spring, 1953), 148-62; Charles R. Van Hise, *The Conservation of Natural Resources in the United States* (New York, 1913), 5; William C. Darrah, *Powell of the Colorado* (Princeton, 1951), 398-400 and *passim*.

[16] Pinchot, "How Conservation Began," *Agricultural History*, XI (October, 1937), 263. See also Theodore Roosevelt, *Autobiography* (New York, 1926), 408-409 and *passim*.

[17] Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, 399-407; Gifford Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground* (New York, 1947), 304-305.

It was not accidental that many of the leaders associated with Pinchot after 1908 were lawyers. There were for instance James R. Garfield, son of the former president, and Walter L. Fisher of Chicago. Garfield served the Roosevelt administration first in the Department of Commerce and Labor and in 1907 became secretary of the interior, doing much to establish the conservation system. Fisher succeeded Richard A. Ballinger as secretary of the interior during the Taft administration and moved within the inner circle of conservationists.[18] Other lawyers of importance were Philip P. Wells, George W. Woodruff, and Harry A. Slattery. These three in particular were experts in their understanding of knotty legal problems that arose from land withdrawals and impending legislation. Conservation was entering a phase by 1910 in which legal minds grappled over words and phrases or over decisions of almost appalling magnitude. Its opponents had been able to retain the finest advice; but with expert legal talent now arrayed in its support, no longer, as in the past, would the public wealth go by default.[19]

Philip Wells and George Woodruff, like Pinchot, were graduated in the Yale class of 1889. Wells was a man of unusual attainments. After taking the bachelor's degree he went ahead to do graduate work at Yale in economics and history, and in 1900 he received his Ph.D. Not satisfied with this, he had begun the study of law at Yale and continued at Columbian (later George Washington) University in Washington, D. C. His career for a time was centered at Yale as instructor in and librarian of the Law School, as well as a lecturer in history. In 1906 Pinchot brought him to Washington where he served first as chief law officer with the Forest Service and later in the same capacity with the Reclamation Service. Both in and out of government he acted as a special adviser to Pinchot. Woodruff was a former Yale football great and a genial and able friend whom Pinchot brought into the Forest Service as his first law officer. He was soon called, however, on a special assignment to the Interior Department as an assistant attorney general. For a few months in 1907 he functioned as acting secretary of the interior. Slattery came later into the Pinchot circle.

[18] "Jim" and Helen Garfield were intimate friends of the Pinchots. See, for example, Pinchot to Garfield, November 9, 1921, Pinchot Papers, Box 238. On Fisher's appointment, see Mowry, *Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 86.

[19] See Pinchot, *Fight for Conservation*, 25, 90.

Good friends and brilliant lawyers, these men worked effectively for the principles of the conservation program.[20]

After 1909 the rallying point for conservationists became the National Conservation Association, with headquarters in Washington, D. C. This organization grew out of the struggle between the President and Congress over executive authority in appointing commissions. Specifically, a Commission on National Conservation appointed by Roosevelt as a result of the White House Conference undertook an inventory of all resources. Its work was comprehensive and its findings significant; but the Sixtieth Congress consented to publish only a few copies of the report and declared that such executive commissions were unconstitutional. Roosevelt denounced this view, and when President Taft, as his successor, decided in 1909 that Congress perhaps was right and that the Commission should do its work indirectly the forces of Pinchot and Roosevelt decided that action was demanded.[21] They formed the National Conservation Association, a private body, with Charles W. Eliot, former president of Harvard, serving briefly as president before being succeeded by Pinchot, with Harry Slattery as secretary,[22] and with Philip Wells as one of its counsel. Typical directors in the period 1916-1917 were Jane Addams, Carrie Chapman Catt, Samuel Gompers, Judge Ben Lindsey of Denver, and Irvine L. Lenroot of the House of Representatives.[23]

The National Conservation Association's effectiveness stemmed in large part from the great abilities of Harry Slattery as executive secretary, with headquarters near the Capitol. According to Roosevelt, the Association had first to prevent bad legislation in order to protect public resources from monopoly control, and second to guide through Congress the best of conservation measures. According to McGee, it had become the "legitimate repository and exponent of conservation doctrine, and the accepted leader of the Conservation

[20] See especially Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground*, 302-304.

[21] W J McGee, "The Conservation of Natural Resources," Mississippi Valley Historical Association, *Proceedings for the Year 1909-1910* (Cedar Rapids, 1911), 374-75; Roosevelt, *Autobiography*, 368-69, 416-17; Pinchot to Howard B. Gill, September 19, 1921, Pinchot Papers, Box 1846; Van Hise, *Conservation of Natural Resources*, 11-12; *Presidential Addresses and State Papers of William Howard Taft, March 4, 1909, to March 4, 1910* (New York, 1910), *passim*.

[22] Slattery was preceded by Thomas R. Shipp. Pinchot referred to Overton Price, his associate forester, as the mainstay of the National Conservation Association until Price died in 1913. *Breaking New Ground*, 302.

[23] Pinchot Papers, Box 1838.

Movement, more especially in its moral aspect," and Charles R. Van Hise saw it as the propaganda agent of the movement.[24] With understandable prejudice, Pinchot reviewed its work in 1921 and concluded that "no other Association has exerted anything like so large an influence in proportion to its membership and expenditures. It has overcome, not once, but many times, the efforts of the greatest lobbies ever assembled in Washington." [25] Each of these evaluations was essentially true. Slattery in some respects was better qualified than Pinchot to fight the lobbies, to make the rounds of Congress, to grind out publicity and propaganda, and when necessary to work night and day poring over legislation looking for ambiguities and loopholes, drawing up legislation as he and Wells, or Lenroot, or Senator Robert M. La Follette, or others thought it ought to be.[26]

A native of South Carolina, Slattery completed his education at Georgetown University and George Washington University and remained in the Washington area. In 1909, still in his early twenties, he became secretary to Pinchot. A short time later he took over the job with the National Conservation Association. Slattery was an informal, amiable sort of person, folksy in his speech but sharp of mind. People liked him and relied upon him. He was informed on history, law, and economics, but most especially on politics and personalities — the Washington scene. Liberal if not radical, he conceived of himself and the Association as the "watchdog" of conservation.[27] When Slattery resigned as secretary in 1921 (to remain with the Association as counsel) Pinchot remarked on his "intimate knowledge" of and close contact with Congress. In this, he thought, Slattery stood "alone among the secretaries of associations with headquarters in Washington." And the result had been Slattery's "controlling part" in writing conservation principles of

[24] Pinchot to Howard B. Gill (quoting Roosevelt), September 19, 1921, Pinchot Papers, Box 1846; McGee, "Conservation of Natural Resources," Mississippi Valley Historical Association, *Proceedings, 1909-1910*, p. 375; Van Hise, *Conservation of Natural Resources*, 12.

[25] Pinchot to Gill, September 19, 1921, Pinchot Papers, Box 1846.

[26] Admiration of Slattery and his work was well-nigh universal among the progressives and conservationists. See Raphael Zon, of the Forest Service, to Pinchot, June 14, 1919, Pinchot Papers, Box 1843, and William Kent to Pinchot, May 18, 1922, *ibid.*, Box 457; also Robert M. La Follette, quoted in Belle C. and Fola La Follette, *Robert M. La Follette* (2 vols., New York, 1953), II, 942-43.

[27] Slattery to Pinchot, February 28, 1921, Pinchot Papers, Box 1846.

"immense value" into the laws of the land.[28] It was a generous tribute to the kind of man who so often serves the public, with little publicity and no public recognition.

The developing rationale of the conservationists is of the utmost importance in explaining their conduct and influence. By no means were they all alike, but people such as Roosevelt, Pinchot, and La Follette believed that a larger amount of governmental interference and regulation in the public interest was required. They were especially concerned about the remaining public lands, which, according to principles grounded in the Homestead and other acts, belonged to all. Millions of acres had been given away or sold to corporate interests for a trifling price or had been actually stolen. This record of carelessness and exploitation could not be expunged. However, to conserve and use wisely that which remained, to show that civilized man could profit from mistakes of the past, to democratize the handling of a common heritage, would be a genuine consolation. A crisis, they felt, existed. Such an attitude was a compound of idealism, passion, and sober analysis. These men realized that American society in the twentieth century must be increasingly one of co-operative and collective gains.

As progressives they agreed passionately on the need for honesty and a social conscience in the administration of resources. Declared Pinchot in 1910: "There is no hunger like land hunger, and no object for which men are more ready to use unfair and desperate means than the acquisition of land." Americans had to make up their minds whether their political system was to be devoted to "unclean money or free men." [29] It was fortunate, he believed, that special interests were afflicted with a "blindness" because of their "wholly commercialized point of view." [30] Conservationists were convinced that hostility toward materialism and toward money men and special interests usually was warranted, that history afforded ample justification for suspicion. If nothing else united the conservationists, there was this hatred of the boodler, the rank materialist, the exploiter.

[28] Pinchot to Slattery, April 6, 1921, *ibid.*, Box 242. See also Wells to Slattery, October 31, 1919, *ibid.*, Box 1843. In the early 1920's Slattery played an important part in the oil leasing investigation; in 1933 he joined Harold Ickes as a special assistant; and later he headed the Rural Electrification Administration.

[29] Pinchot, *Fight for Conservation*, 92-93.

[30] *Ibid.*, 69.

Intellectually there was much that drew these men together. McGee, whom Pinchot called "the scientific brains" of the conservation movement, provided a rationale for action. "Every revolution," said McGee, "whatever its material manifestations . . . is first and foremost a revolution in thought and spirit." [31] Believing that Americans had largely lost their rights in the land, McGee felt that knowledge of how this had occurred might yet insure the "perpetuity" of the people.

From the early beginnings of the United States there had been confusion and carelessness in the administration of "land," a word identified with resources generally: "When Independence was declared and the Constitution was framed, no resources were reckoned except the Men who made the nation and the Land on which they lived." [32] Trees were considered an obstacle to be burned or girdled; little attention was paid to natural growth above or minerals below. The "Fathers," filled with their dreams of a freehold citizenry rooted in the soil, proceeded to dissipate values other than the land itself. The results were both good and evil. So far as certain farsighted or favored individuals were concerned, the way was opened to wealth, power, and monopoly. McGee wrote: "the resources passed under monopolistic control with a rapidity never before seen in all the world's history; and it is hardly too much to say that the Nation has become one of the Captains of Industry first, and one of the People and their chosen representatives only second." Moreover, "the free gift" of resources "under the title of land" defeated the original purpose of creating a free independent citizenry. The people had become "industrial dependents." [33] Incidental to this process of resource appropriation was waste.

"Ample resources" remained, it was true, but what was to be done with them? Should the "People," whose work and travail had created this wealth, receive the benefits? Or should they go

[31] McGee, "Conservation of Natural Resources," Mississippi Valley Historical Association, *Proceedings, 1909-1910*, p. 378. See also Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground*, 359-60.

[32] McGee, "Conservation of Natural Resources," Mississippi Valley Historical Association, *Proceedings, 1909-1910*, p. 364.

[33] *Ibid.*, 367. Pinchot observed (1910) that the average family income was only $600, and he showed a deep concern over the "tragedies" resulting from "the lack of a little money." *Fight for Conservation*, 110-13 and *passim*. Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*, Chap. I; Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, 1950), 258-60.

"into the hands of the self-chosen and self-annointed [*sic*] few, largely to forge new shackles for the wrists and ankles of the many?" Deliberately and thoughtfully, McGee argued, American freemen must proceed "to reclaim their own." [34] Theodore Roosevelt's opening address at the White House Conference expounded on the same theme — the right of the people to public wealth and, moreover, their right to control *private* property for the common weal. He quoted the high authority of Justice Holmes, speaking for the Supreme Court with respect to state protection of water, forests, and the atmosphere: "This public interest is omnipresent wherever there is a State, and grows more pressing as population grows." And Roosevelt added emphatically that the dictum was to be carried farther than the forests and the streams.[35]

McGee's indebtedness to Henry George is obvious. As a product of the exciting generation in which Social Darwinism was elaborated and then repudiated, as an associate of such men as John Wesley Powell and Lester Ward, it was not strange that McGee emphasized economic justice. The Bill of Rights must be purified, he said, through equal opportunities and equal rights in the common resources. He stressed the "trinity" of liberty, equality, and fraternity. The keynote was fraternity. There remained to be established "full brotherhood among men and generations." [36] Pinchot, advancing similar arguments, thought that the answer lay in the conservation movement, the most democratic that the country had known in a generation.

Philip Wells became more explicit about the ideas and hopes which had driven him and his associates "in the conservation fight." They had been concerned with economic justice and incidentally with waste because if the resources were destroyed nothing remained upon which the principle of justice could operate. In the light of

[34] McGee, "Conservation of Natural Resources," Mississippi Valley Historical Association, *Proceedings, 1909-1910*, pp. 369-70.

[35] Blanchard *et al.* (eds.), *Proceedings of Conference of Governors*, I, 10-12.

[36] McGee, "Conservation of Natural Resources," Mississippi Valley Historical Association, *Proceedings, 1909-1910*, pp. 377-79. See also Pinchot, *Fight for Conservation*, 81 and *passim*. Cross, "McGee and the Idea of Conservation," *Historian*, XV (Spring, 1953), 162, concluded that "McGee was largely responsible for conveying the theoretical, positive, social Darwinism of the late nineteenth century into the realm of practical political action in the conservation movement of the twentieth century." It is noteworthy, however, that McGee's own ideas had changed appreciably since 1899. See W J McGee, "National Growth and National Character," *National Geographic Magazine* (Washington), X (June, 1899), 185-206.

the American system, he said, they conceived of economic justice as meaning that "so far as possible within the general limitations fixed by popular opinion as to fundamentals, and within the specific limitations fixed by constitutional provisions, the 'economic rent,' present and future ('unearned increment') in natural resources should be retained by the public which should also see that the resources are not wasted in order that the benefits of the new policy may be prolonged as far into the future as possible." While at Yale, Wells had studied under William Graham Sumner, who once remarked that every man was either a socialist or an anarchist. Actually, Wells believed, most people were somewhere between these two poles. "Now the conservationists as to specific natural resources (water power, forests, the mineral fuels and mineral fertilizers) inclined to the socializing pole; that is, they sought to enlarge the public control of these resources . . . both for the prevention of waste and, more essential, for the socializing of the raw resource value including unearned increment." [37]

Wells went ahead to discuss Henry George, "a constructive economist of very high order" rather than a crank, as some maintained, and to compare his philosophy with that of the conservationists. They differed in that George was essentially an individualist, of the "Neo-Manchester School." They had agreed in "trying to socialize raw resource value," George attempting to do this through his single tax on unearned increments and with slight regard for constitutional problems. The conservationists, on the other hand, were interested primarily in "selected resources exhaustible or subject to great waste, suitable for development only or chiefly by large aggregations of capital and peculiarly open to monopolistic abuse." They differed further as to ideas of management, Wells continued. "The conservationists want to socialize to a certain extent the management of their selected resources (as the Forest Service does in selling standing timber in a National Forest by restrictions imposed on logging methods to secure a new timber crop); whereas George would anarchize the management of all natural resources by turning them over to unrestricted private ownership." [38]

[37] Wells to Mark Sullivan, September 22, 1926, Pinchot Papers, Box 1676.

[38] *Ibid.* At the top of this copy of the letter is a notation: "GP read and approved this — Sept 23/26."

Pinchot and his group therefore believed in using the authority of federal and state government to compel conservation practices ("socialization of management"), even aiming to do this on *private* forest lands.[39] With respect to the alternatives of federal or state action Pinchot once remarked: "I have very little interest in the abstract question whether the nation is encroaching upon the rights of the states or the states upon the nation. Power falls naturally to that person or agency which can and does use it, and . . . the nation acts . . . [while] the states do not." [40]

The influence of these ideas and the impact of the Pinchot organization cannot be minimized. Nevertheless, Pinchot and his friends did not constitute the entire conservation movement. There were issues which inevitably divided the conservationists as a whole: the clashing of personalities and ambitions, disagreement over methods if not over goals, disputes between Democrats and Republicans, and economic sectionalism especially as it arose between the West and the East. Any issue or event could impinge upon conservation with divisive results or with diverse and complicating effects — for example World War I. In general, one accepting the designation of "conservationist" was a progressive, believing in the necessity of strong executive leadership and federal action. He might be a radical or an outright socialist. Frequently, on the other hand, he emphasized as heavily as did President Taft the authority of Congress, the statutory system that must be erected, the quieting of any doubts as to constitutionality.[41] And it was not strange for a conservationist to consider himself a conservative; one who believed in honest government and orderly processes, who hated boodling, who watched vigilantly for the sly steals that special interests might perpetrate. Representative James R. Mann of Illinois, for example, might be linked politically with "Uncle Joe" Cannon's Old Guard, but the Pinchot forces treasured him as one of their most dependable allies.[42] Regionally speaking, the southerner who

[39] Wells to Sullivan, October 26, 1926, *ibid.* Wells concluded: "I could write a volume to prove and explain Pinchot's policy." As to control of forest lands, see Pinchot to Liberty H. Bailey, June 6, 1921, *ibid.*, Box 236, and Gifford Pinchot, "What About Forestry?" *Saturday Evening Post* (Philadelphia), June 4, 1921, p. 73.

[40] Statement of August 11, 1924, Pinchot Papers, Box 255.

[41] See, for example, Taft to William Kent, June 29, 1909, quoted in Henry F. Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft* (2 vols., New York, 1939), I, 480.

[42] Slattery to Pinchot, August 21, 1919, Pinchot Papers, Box 1842. See the sketch of Mann in *Dictionary of American Biography* (21 vols., New York, 1928-1944), XII,

favored conservation differed from the northerner or from the westerner. Southerners were much influenced by traditions of agrarianism and anti-monopoly action as well as by the fact (acidly noted by Pinchot) that the lands to be conserved and "saved" were mostly outside their region.[43]

There was one charge endlessly repeated against the conservationists with the effect of creating cleavages in the ranks. Time and again their foes, or those who called themselves moderate and reasonable conservationists, asserted that the Pinchot policy resolved itself into keeping resources in cold storage, or under lock and key, or hermetically sealed up. They implied or even declared that Pinchot and his adherents had no interest in jobs and opportunities for the people of the West; that they cared nothing for necessary development. Senator Charles S. Thomas (Democrat) of Colorado expressed this point of view in 1919:

> The average conservationist — I will not say it applies to all of them — is very much concerned about conserving other people, but when it comes to a personal application of the doctrine he is not so enthusiastic. I believe the gentleman who claims to be the great progenitor, the father of conservation is the Hon. Gifford Pinchot, at one time chief adviser to President Roosevelt, forester of the United States, and one of the founders and leaders of the late lamented Progressive Party. He it was who discovered that the way to conserve was to reserve, and that the way to develop was to keep everything petrified and stagnant. To him, so far as his actions are concerned, the American Indian . . . was the ideal conservationist.[44]

Pinchot, Slattery, and others denied or sought to make light of such accusations and in turn directed much of their criticism against such conservationist ideas and practices as those of Hoover while food administrator and secretary of commerce.[45] In their own defense

244. As a legislator of intellectual force and courage but also of curious contradictions, Mann deserves a careful study.

[43] Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground*, 89.

[44] *Cong. Record*, 66 Cong., 1 Sess., 4255-56 (August 23, 1919). See also Representative Sylvester C. Smith of California in *Cong. Record*, 61 Cong., 2 Sess., 5062 (April 20, 1910); Senator Thomas J. Walsh of Montana to R. S. Hamilton, October 19, 1918, Thomas J. Walsh Papers (Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress); Hoover, Address of October 13, 1923, *Economic World*, XXVI (October 20, 1923), 544-46.

[45] See, for example, Pinchot to Los Angeles *Herald*, April 13, 1920, Pinchot Papers, Box 1941; Pinchot to Mark Sullivan, February 24, 1921, *ibid.*, Box 242; Pinchot to Hoover, November 22, 1923, *ibid.*, Box 1701; and Wells to Sullivan, October 26, 1926, *ibid.*, Box 1676.

they could point to the fact that Pinchot in heading the Forest Service as well as in later years advocated and practiced conservation through use. Nevertheless, it was true that the Roosevelt-Pinchot-Taft withdrawals of land, the study for purposes of classification, and the shaping of new laws meant some delay. How much of this delay was to be charged to them and how much was to be charged to their enemies among state righters and special interests remained an open question.

From 1910 to 1912 two dramatic events had the effect of both quickening the conservation movement and causing its reorientation; and World War I, following shortly, added complications. First, there was the famous Ballinger-Pinchot controversy, in which Pinchot, becoming a critic of the Secretary of the Interior, was fired from his job as chief United States forester. Pinchot and the progressives convinced themselves that President Taft had been a traitor to their cause; that the Secretary of the Interior, Richard A. Ballinger of Seattle, had yielded to the big interests; and that the majority report, after a congressional investigation, was a "whitewash." [46] Democrats were delighted to echo these charges. It was indeed true that Ballinger had served as private adviser to the same interests that he favored as a government official, and that from 1910 to 1912 he and his counsel seemingly put themselves on record as sworn enemies of conservation. He seems also to have been weak or changeable in the formulation and execution of departmental policies, and in retaining him the President strengthened the suspicions and resentment of the Pinchot group.[47] Whatever the exact meaning of this affair, many progressives never forgave Taft; nor doubted that Ballinger was in league with the Guggenheims; nor forgot that such a man as Edwin Denby (later secretary of the navy under Harding) had been among the "whitewashers" in Con-

[46] See George W. Norris to Pinchot, March 11, 1921, *ibid.*, Box 240; Pinchot to Harold J. Howland, October 3, 1921, *ibid.*, Box 238; Mowry, *Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 73-87.

[47] For discussions of some of the reactions to the controversy see Alpheus T. Mason, *Bureaucracy Convicts Itself: The Ballinger-Pinchot Controversy of 1910* (New York, 1941), 178-80 and *passim*, and Mowry, *Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement*, 80 ff. An examination of Ballinger's departmental correspondence as compared with that of Walter L. Fisher, who succeeded him, reveals the weakness of Ballinger's administration. Compare, for example, George Otis Smith (director of the Geological Survey) to Ballinger, December 22, 1910, and Ballinger to Attorney General George W. Wickersham, December 24, 1910, with Charles Hilles to Fisher, March 1, 1913, and Fisher to President Taft, March 1, 1913, Files of the Secretary of the Interior, General Land Office, Oil Lands (National Archives).

gress.[48] And on the other side, Taft was reported as believing that Pinchot was "a socialist and a spiritualist . . . capable of any extreme act." [49]

All of this helped to precipitate the second event, the revolt of Republican progressives, and the formation of the Roosevelt "Bull Moose" party in 1912. As a result of this schism Woodrow Wilson came to the White House, and for the first time a Democratic administration had to cope with twentieth-century problems, including conservation. The relations between Republicans who had inaugurated this policy and the polyglot Democrats who tried more or less to carry it out were well-nigh predictable. Prospects of mutual satisfaction were scant.

In the meantime the Republicans remained seriously divided; and the career of Robert M. La Follette affords an illustration of their confusion during these years. La Follette had led the progressive forces in 1910-1911, had aspired to the Republican nomination for the presidency, and had been dropped by the progressive members of his party because they believed Roosevelt to have a greater dramatic appeal and thus a better chance to win. He felt that he had been betrayed by a number of men such as Pinchot, who initially had promised their support, and as a result he and the Roosevelt men were never to become fully reconciled. In Wisconsin the struggle among Republicans stemming from the split of 1912 brought a break between La Follette and Irvine L. Lenroot. These two had worked closely and cordially from 1900 to 1912, with Lenroot supporting "Fighting Bob's" progressive policies and coming to Washington himself in 1909 as a representative. By 1911 La Follette depended upon Lenroot's support in seeking the presidential nomination; but Lenroot, like most progressives, went over to Roosevelt. The La Follettes were stricken by this defection. Mrs. La Follette wrote to a friend: "Nothing that has happened has been so hard for me. We have managed to keep the personal relation but I realize that Bob and Irvine can never be the same to each other as before." [50]

[48] Amos Pinchot to Gifford Pinchot, February 26, 1921, Pinchot Papers, Box 241. See also Gifford Pinchot to Samuel M. Lindsay, March 6, 1921, *ibid.*, Box 239; Norris to Pinchot, March 11, 1921, *ibid.*, Box 240; Gustavus Pope to Pinchot, March 6, 1924, *ibid.* For an expression of La Follette's contempt for Taft, see *Cong. Record*, 66 Cong., 1 Sess., 4747 (September 3, 1919).

[49] Archie Butt to Clara Butt, April 12, 1910, in *Taft and Roosevelt: The Intimate Letters of Archie Butt, Military Aide* (2 vols., New York, 1930), I, 327-28.

[50] La Follette, *Robert M. La Follette*, I, 420-24.

Each of the two Wisconsinites had a strong record on conservation. But after 1912, increasingly, they went their separate ways, Lenroot becoming an "internationalist," while La Follette was exceedingly critical of Wilsonian diplomacy.[51] It was Lenroot who worked closely with the National Conservation Association. As a member of the House Committee on Public Lands he was the more likely to sponsor bills for these organized conservationists; and after transferring to the Senate in 1918 he continued as one of their contact men.[52] Pinchot and Lenroot on one side and La Follette on the other had not forgotten their differences when Lenroot campaigned in 1920 for re-election to the Senate. Pinchot came to Wisconsin to help. He assailed La Follette as an autocrat who had selfishly refused to follow Roosevelt in the Bull Moose campaign and who now in the same selfish way was doing all he could to block Lenroot's ambitions.[53]

At the same time, however, the forces of La Follette and Pinchot could work together in February-March, 1919, to defeat the so-called Pittman mineral leasing bill, an anti-conservationist measure which they considered peculiarly obnoxious. On matters of principle, they could unite; but Slattery, Wells, and company of the National Conservation Association took pains not to "get the wires crossed" between La Follette and Lenroot when needing so keenly the help of both.[54] It was La Follette finally, not Lenroot, who saved them in the petroleum fight, La Follette who argued and filibustered successfully against the mineral leasing bill with materials supplied by the Association.[55] And two years later it was

[51] "Lenroot and La Follette: A Contrast," *Outlook* (New York), CXV (April 18, 1917), 691; Irvine L. Lenroot, "The War Loyalty of Wisconsin," *Forum* (New York), LIX (June, 1918), 699.

[52] Slattery regretted Lenroot's departure from the House, where his "influence for good" had been so powerful. Slattery to Mrs. Pinchot, September 11, 1919, Pinchot Papers, Box 1841. See also a eulogistic statement in "Suggestions for Sec. of Interior," December 11, 1920, probably written by Slattery, *ibid.*, Box 1941; Wells to Lenroot, May 21, 1919, and Wells to George W. Woodruff, May 22, 1919, *ibid.*, Box 1700; and Slattery to Pinchot, December 4, 1918, *ibid.*, Box 1838. Senator Paul O. Husting (a Democrat), who died in 1917 and was replaced by Lenroot, had also worked closely with the Pinchot group.

[53] Address by Pinchot at Racine, Wisconsin, October 25, 1920, *ibid.*, Box 1948.

[54] Wells to Woodruff, May 22, 1919, and Wells to John J. Hannan (La Follette's assistant), August 20, 1919, *ibid.*, Box 1700.

[55] See especially National Conservation Association "News Letter on Conservation," March, 1919 (written by Slattery for approval by Pinchot and release to newspapers), *ibid.*, Box 1842, and Wells, "Analysis of Pittman Conference Bill, 1919," *ibid.*, Box 1859. La Follette's speech is in *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 3 Sess., 4713-16 (March 1, 1919) and *passim*.

La Follette, again assisted by Slattery and Wells, who instigated the Teapot Dome investigation.[56]

La Follette and Pinchot operated differently, and this was no discredit to either. The Wisconsinite had neither the disposition nor the opportunity for bartering favors with Wilson (after 1916), nor with Harding, Coolidge, and others of the Republican Old Guard. His forte was to attack, to filibuster, to block "giveaways," to tack on remedial amendments, to force concessions, to rally the left wing. With Pinchot it was a different story. In each Congress, in each administration, Pinchot as president of the National Conservation Association would try to place his men, would distribute his propaganda, would try to win support. Just as the special interests lobbied to control or influence policy, so would he. As an additional moderating influence there were without doubt Pinchot's political ambitions. He was available, for instance, for a place in Harding's cabinet, and a conciliatory course was sometimes prudent.[57] He would agitate from within if possible, or he would attack from without if necessary.

In their proposals for control of public lands, the two men differed only slightly. In La Follette's opinion there had been only one great issue in all of history: a struggle "between labor and those who would control, through slavery in one form or another, the laborers." [58] Uppermost in his consideration, therefore, was justice for the exploited. With respect to public resources in general, he argued that there must be a policy of continuing public ownership, of leasing where possible, of price controls, and a degree of govern-

[56] See speeches by Robert M. La Follette, Jr., George W. Norris, Basil Manly, and others, at a dinner in honor of Harry Slattery, Cosmos Club, Washington, D. C., June 25, 1932, quoted in *Cong. Record*, 72 Cong., 1 Sess., 15456-62 (July 15, 1932). Senator Norris said: "Without such a man [Slattery] to back us up, without such a man to furnish evidence and information and documents, lots of times it would have been physically impossible for us to get results. Without such a man, those who have tried to fight the peoples' causes in the last ten years . . . would nearly always have failed." See also E. C. Finney (first assistant secretary of the interior) to Wells, June 7, 1921, and copy of draft of resolution prepared by Wells for Senator La Follette via Slattery, March 11, 1922, Pinchot Papers, Box 1700; and Slattery to Pinchot, June 21, 1921, *ibid.*, Box 242.

[57] See extensive correspondence between Pinchot and Slattery, 1920-1921, in Pinchot Papers, Boxes 1841 and 1846. Slattery and Pinchot had genuine hopes of converting Harding to the conservationist faith. When Pinchot grew discouraged Slattery urged him on. Otherwise, he wrote, "you would not be able to work with Harding at all, and would undo everything you have done." Slattery to Pinchot, February 16, 1921, *ibid.*, Box 1846.

[58] *Cong. Record*, 66 Cong., 1 Sess., 4755-56 (September 3, 1919).

ment operation depending upon the monopoly situation. Basic raw materials, even though privately owned, must sell at a reasonable price and if they did not he advocated government appropriation. Quite early he had called for leasing rather than selling government properties, and in the conservation fight of the late Wilson years he stressed a leasing system for coal and oil and other nonmetalliferous minerals but not without adequate safeguards for democratic development and prevention of waste. He believed, for example, that evidence of collusive bargaining and fixing of prices among the lessees should warrant government cancellation of the lease.[59] There were some who charged that La Follette hoped actually to destroy the leasing bills and in time to substitute his own "socialistic" schemes.[60]

The coming of a Democratic administration in 1913 produced a reorientation affecting everyone in the fight for conservation. This was due partly to the status of the withdrawal question; nonmetallic mineral lands and water power sites no longer were being sold or given away and had to be made available under some scheme for development. Prior to 1913, Republicans had argued mostly among themselves; they could now sit back and watch the Democrats undertake the direction of policy, and could wait for an appropriate occasion to assail and expose them. Wilson believed in conservation, and the policy of his administration was directed toward formulation of a leasing system.[61] But on the question of how this should be done his own advisers were often in sharp disagreement,[62] thereby giving the Republicans their opportunity for

[59] *Ibid.*, 65 Cong., 3 Sess., 4715 (March 1, 1919), and 66 Cong., 1 Sess., 4754-58 (September 3, 1919).

[60] "Interview" given out by Senator Walsh, March 12, 1919, and Walsh to Hattie Grace, March 26, 1919, Walsh Papers. See also Walsh in *Cong. Record*, 66 Cong., 1 Sess., 4112 (August 21, 1919), and La Follette's explanation that his purpose was constructive; that to improve rather than destroy the leasing bill was his aim. *Ibid.*, 4251-52 (August 23, 1919).

[61] For Wilson's views on conservation see his statement of October 7, 1912, quoted in *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 2 Sess., 14948 (September 10, 1914), and his Inaugural Address, March 4, 1913, Ray S. Baker and William E. Dodd (eds.), *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (6 vols., New York, 1925-1927), III, 1-6. See also Scott Ferris to Wilson, May 27, 1918, and Wilson to Ferris, May 28, 1918, Woodrow Wilson Papers (Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress), Box 505.

[62] Pinchot, "Open Letter to the Honorable Franklin K. Lane . . . Concerning the Navy's Oil Lands," August 12, 1916, Pinchot Papers; Wilson to Thomas W. Gregory, February 19, 1917, Gregory to Wilson, February 26, 1917, Josephus Daniels to Gregory, February 26, 1917, Gregory to Claude A. Swanson, February 26, 1917, Wilson Papers, Box 505.

criticism. In the beginning, La Follette, Pinchot, and many Republicans of a progressive mind were sympathetic to Wilson's program. A few turned against him by 1916;[63] many others by 1918; and by 1920 their abandonment was almost complete.

World War I and industrial mobilization were largely responsible for this time of trouble. Of deepest concern to the organized conservationists was this question: How disinterested, how patriotic, were the businessmen who came streaming into Wilson's government for the purpose of preparing the nation for war? In the attitude of conservationists toward dollar-a-year men one finds new evidence that their aims went far beyond the mere prevention of waste. They were concerned with problems of men against money, with profiteering, with economic justice, with maintaining democracy. By these standards Wilson qualified, at the least, as a moderate conservationist. He believed that leasing laws opening western lands to development must be passed; that the war (creating new demands for petroleum and other resources) made a solution most urgent; and that a compromise doing justice to all parties could be effected. Wilson was cautious and showed a wariness about the possibility of profiteering and corruption under cloak of war.[64]

Wilson's secretary of the navy, Josephus Daniels, going beyond wariness, was absolutely convinced that the special interests were using the war emergency for purposes of grabbing resources belonging to all the people.[65] La Follette, Pinchot, and most of the progressive Republicans agreed. Slattery, writing from Washington, expressed the attitude of the National Conservation Association when he referred to that "National Council of Defense outfit." "We have been surrounded with them . . . and I have from the start had my strong suspicions about the whole bunch." Slattery and Gifford Pinchot feared that Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane was "going to give away every thing in sight" before the war

[63] See Pinchot, "Open Letter to 5,000 Editors," September 7, 1916, and replies, Pinchot Papers, Box 1943.

[64] Memorandum of Norman Hapgood letter to Wilson, July 31, 1916, Wilson to Gregory, August 2, 1916, and Wilson to Hapgood, August 2, 1916, Wilson Papers, Box 505; Thomas J. Walsh to Wilson, June 22, 1917, and Wilson to Walsh, June 29, 1917, *ibid.*, Box 371.

[65] See for example Daniels to Wilson, June 20, 1917, Wilson Papers, Box 505; Daniels to Franklin D. Roosevelt, July 7, 1943, and January 28, 1944, Josephus Daniels Papers (Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress), Box 17.

had ended, unless they stopped him.[66] Slattery picturesquely summed up the whole situation: It looked as though "these bush-whacking gentlemen," while good people had their faces turned to the war, were going to "raid the 'smokehouse and hen-roost' as of border-war days." [67] Slattery and his associates had in mind particular bushwhackers, such as John D. Ryan and C. F. Kelley of the Anaconda Copper Company and Edward L. Doheny of the Pan-American Petroleum Company.[68]

One effect of the southern leadership in the Wilson administration was to stimulate sectional rivalries, with some important effects upon conservation. The western states resisted at first a federal program for the public lands while eastern and southern leaders were forcing the issue. But the native South of Woodrow Wilson differed somewhat from the East of Gifford Pinchot. In brief, the East-West division over conservation was accompanied in the Wilson years by a flare-up of North-South animosities. There had been nothing like it since the 1890's, perhaps since Reconstruction. Some applied the term of Reconstruction days, "waving the bloody shirt," to the divisive strategy of Republican politicians, who urged their constituents to vote for Republicans since only in that way could the power of southern Democrats be broken.[69] To measure the importance of these sectional feelings is difficult, but that they

[66] Slattery to Amos Pinchot, September 22, 1917, Slattery to Gifford Pinchot, August 16, 1917 (enclosing "Memorandum for the Press," from Department of Interior, July 26, 1917), and Pinchot to Slattery, undated, Pinchot Papers, Box 1838. Slattery had marked portions of Lane's Memorandum to emphasize "giveaways": the rapid classification of lands and restoration to private entry.

[67] Slattery to Wells, August 3, 1917, *ibid.*

[68] Slattery to Pinchot, February 28, 1918, Pinchot Papers, Box 1838; Wells to Pinchot, December 6, 1919, *ibid.*, Box 1700; Amos Pinchot to Conference Committee of Senate and House of Representatives, September 18, 1917 (copy), *ibid.*, Box 1859. Some of the official correspondence seemed to indicate a growing cordiality between leaders of government and business. See for example George Otis Smith (director of the Geological Survey) to Ballinger, December 22, 1910, and Smith to Lane, September 4, 1917, Files of the Secretary of the Interior, General Land Office, Oil Lands; statement by Mark Requa of the Fuel Division, September 30, 1918, on the world struggle for oil, and Van H. Manning (director of the Bureau of Mines) to Newton D. Baker (copy, undated, but early 1920), Files of the Secretary of the Interior, Administration General, Oil Situation (National Archives).

[69] For some of the reactions to southern leadership see A. Maurice Low, "The South in the Saddle," *Harper's Weekly* (New York), February 8, 1913, p. 20; T. J. Hocking in Helena *Montana Record-Herald*, October 16, 1918; Slattery to Pinchot, June 21, 1921, Pinchot Papers, Box 242; Walsh to W. M. Johnston, November 12, 1918, Walsh Papers; and Seward W. Livermore, "The Sectional Issue in the 1918 Congressional Elections," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXXV (June, 1948), 29-60.

existed and exerted an influence of subtle though powerful proportions is certain.

The organized conservationists from the start had resisted as best they could the regional prejudices that might reduce their influence on policy or disrupt their plans in Congress. Nevertheless, as advocates of a withdrawal policy they had to face intrenched hostility from many western interests. The conservationists were of course convinced that their policies benefited the western people, as distinguished from the big interests. They were correct in asserting, as Pinchot did, that "monopolistic control was infinitely more potent in the West . . . than in the East." [70] It was in this region of the enterprising pioneer and the free individual that the special interests attained their most ruthless power. The Southern Pacific Railroad, the Standard Oil Company of California, Colorado's corporate interests or "the Beast" (as described by Judge Ben Lindsey), the Phelps Dodge corporation in Arizona, and the Anaconda Copper Company of Montana (Standard Oil) were notorious examples. Edward L. Doheny's Pan-American Petroleum Company and Harry Sinclair's Mammoth Oil Company were worthy inheritors of at least a portion of this tradition — that the United States government was fair game.

The West, however, was always divided. Men like Representative William Kent and Governor George C. Pardee of California, Judge Ben Lindsey of Colorado, Senator John B. Kendrick of Wyoming, and Governor Joseph M. Dixon of Montana were in the conservationist camp. The trend in the Progressive Era was conservationist. Roosevelt's dramatic flair was combined with Pinchot's incessant labors for the cause. It was formidable propaganda for the justice, wisdom, and democracy of the federal government's program. Western senators and representatives, who had been almost unanimous against the land withdrawals, who favored the old policy of gift and sale, slowly had to recognize the handwriting on the wall. Public sentiment had come to favor the forest reserves, the government retention of mineral areas and water power sites, and an active federal policy. As Senator Walsh of Montana saw the situation in 1919, it was "useless" to declaim against leasing. "Almost every western Senator has protested loud and long and

[70] Pinchot, "How Conservation Began," *Agricultural History*, XI (October, 1937), 264-65.

often. It is a condition and not a theory that confronts us." If these lands were to be developed, he concluded, Congressmen had better compromise on a leasing bill.[71] One incentive to compromise was the probability that western states would share handsomely in royalties accruing from federal lands within their borders. To some, compromise seemed in the air; sectionalism seemed on the decline.

Though the West and the South have often been allied in politics, they seldom were allied on conservation policy. Slattery suggested that the South's residue of state-rights feeling accounted for its apparent lack of interest in the support of federal measures to regulate resources,[72] but as a matter of fact the anti-conservationists got little comfort from below the Mason and Dixon line. Edward T. Taylor, a Democratic representative from Colorado and one of the die-hards opposing conservation, took note of this fact in 1914. Referring to the southern failure to help the West by resisting "carpetbag control" from Washington, Taylor said: "I want to say to my genial friends from the sunny South that during my six years of service in this House I never yet have been able to understand why the members from the Southern states, that had such a long and serious experience in being governed by appointive officials from Washington, controlled by nonresident officers, can not only complacently vote for but work for propositions controlling our western states . . . from Washington." [73]

Among the Democrats who contributed importantly to the promotion of the Roosevelt-Pinchot program or its continuation under Wilson were such southerners or border-state men as Representatives William B. Craig (Alabama), Scott Ferris (Oklahoma), and Asbury F. Lever (South Carolina), Attorneys General James C. McReynolds (Tennessee) and Thomas W. Gregory (Texas), Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels (North Carolina), and Senator Claude A. Swanson (Virginia).[74] Some co-operated with the

[71] Walsh to Senator Charles B. Henderson (Nevada), September 2, 1919, Walsh Papers. See also Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage*, 394-95.

[72] Slattery to Pinchot, enclosing "News Letter on Conservation," March 19, 1919, Pinchot Papers, Box 1842.

[73] *Cong. Record*, 63 Cong., 2 Sess., 15053 (September 12, 1914). A year later Taylor observed that the "conservation sentiment of the North and of the South" was almost "unanimously" in favor of a federal leasing program. Address at Conference of the Mining Society of America, December 16, 1915, printed in *Senate Docs.*, 64 Cong., 1 Sess. (1916), No. 233, p. 21.

[74] For comments by Ferris and Craig on early phases of the program, see *Cong.*

National Conservation Association, dominated by Pinchot; and Ferris, chairman of the House Committee on Public Lands from 1913 to 1919, enjoyed the confidence of both President Wilson and the Association. In 1918, however, Slattery wrote: "Ferris has recently been made Chairman of the Democratic Congressional Committee, which is certainly an unfortunate thing for us. Politics will begin undoubtedly to have quite a sweep with him, and we will certainly have to watch him from now on." [75] Secretary Daniels and Attorney General Gregory enjoyed good relations with the Pinchot group as well as with La Follette. Their principles were much the same,[76] and all contributed toward forcing a compromise on leasing, in which the special claimants to public lands, some of them fraudulent, would be granted a minimum of their demands.

The Northeast and the Southeast, in effect, were able at last to force a leasing system upon the West. The passage of the Water Power Act and the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 inaugurated a new policy of continuing public ownership and federal trusteeship in which conservation and the national interest seemed to be the winners. These laws, said Senator Walsh, would be regarded in the future as a landmark no less important to western people than the Homestead Act of 1862 or the Mining Act of 1872.[77] Pinchot declared that the major portion of the Roosevelt program had now been achieved. Slattery, Wells, La Follette, and Daniels were among those who in spite of a few doubts indicated general satisfaction with the compromise.[78] Undoubtedly they had won something of a victory and the way had been prepared for a larger federal role in

Record, 61 Cong., 2 Sess., 5062, 5081-82 (April 20, 1910); for Lever's defense of Pinchot, *ibid.*, 63 Cong., 2 Sess., 15068 (September 12, 1914). See also Pinchot, "Open Letter to the Honorable Franklin K. Lane," August 12, 1916, Pinchot Papers.

[75] Slattery to Wells, March 16, 1918, Pinchot Papers, Box 1838.

[76] La Follette in *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 3 Sess., 4715-16 (March 1, 1919); *ibid.*, 66 Cong., 1 Sess., 4750 (September 3, 1919).

[77] Helena (Mont.) *Independent*, August 3, 1924. See also Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage*, 394-97.

[78] Pinchot to Slattery, February 24, 1920, Pinchot Papers, Box 1841; Pinchot to Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., February 18, 1921, and Slattery to Pinchot, April 3, 1921, *ibid.*, Box 242; Wells to Slattery, February 19, 1920, *ibid.*, Box 1700; Daniels to T. Spellacy, April 12, 1920, Daniels Papers, Box 239. Former Attorney General Gregory expressed the most serious reservations. Gregory to Daniels (for transmittal to the President), February 23, 1920, Thomas W. Gregory Papers (Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress). In Wells's opinion, this compromise was "about the least harmful" that could be obtained. Wells "Memorandum," February 19, 1920, Pinchot Papers, Box 1700.

the future. The leasing laws of 1920 grew, however, from a long struggle, involving many people who remembered clearly the controversies of the recent past. To separate this and other conservation issues from the pall of suspicions and hatreds in 1918-1921 is impossible.

There was a special rancor after the passage of the leasing acts. Democrats claimed this legislation as an achievement for their party. The Republican conservationists retorted that they had originated this program; that without the vigilance of Pinchot and La Follette bad bills would have passed; and that the Sixty-sixth Congress, in which the compromise had been attained, was a Republican Congress elected in 1918.[79]

Progressive Republicans of the Pinchot variety developed a distrust for "southern reactionaries" and others in the Wilson administration.[80] They regarded as exceptions such men as Josephus Daniels or Thomas W. Gregory. Even President Wilson, they believed, had betrayed them at a critical point in the leasing fight by giving his support to the notorious Pittman bill in February, 1919.[81] Those for whom conservationists reserved a special contempt were Secretary Lane, A. Mitchell Palmer (who succeeded Gregory as attorney general in 1919), and Albert S. Burleson, the postmaster general. Certain Democratic senators were almost in the same class — the "western crowd" including Key Pittman of Nevada, James D. Phelan of California, Charles S. Thomas of Colorado,

[79] Slattery to Pinchot, June 5, 1920, Pinchot Papers, Box 1841; Pinchot to Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., February 18, 1921, *ibid.*, Box 242; Republican National Committee, "Questionaire [*sic*] on Conservation of National Resources," 1920, *ibid.*, Box 1860.

[80] Expressions of discontent and bitterness among progressive Republicans could be multiplied almost indefinitely. Pinchot, in announcing for Harding as the Republican nominee, declared that the country must be taken out of the hands of southern reactionaries. New York *Times*, August 30, 1920. See also Robert D. Carey (governor of Wyoming) to Harold Ickes, September 6, 1920, Harold Ickes Papers (Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress), and Wells to Stephen W. Phillips, March 7, 1919 (marked "not sent"), Pinchot Papers, Box 1676.

[81] It seems probable that Wilson, concerned with problems of the peace, had yielded temporarily to western pressure and sanctioned the passage of this bill. See *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 3 Sess., 4490 (February 27, 1919); Pinchot wireless to Wilson, aboard U. S. S. *George Washington* [copy, undated, but February, 1919], Pinchot Papers, Box 1859, and Pinchot to Slattery, February 26, 1919, *ibid.*, Box 1842; Gregory, quoted in *Cong. Record*, 65 Cong., 3 Sess., 4492 (February 27, 1919); Daniels, quoted, *ibid.*, 4396 (February 27, 1919); La Follette analysis, *ibid.*, 4713-16 (March 1, 1919); Wells to Phillips, March 7, 1919 (marked "not sent"), Pinchot Papers, Box 1676, and Slattery to Pinchot, with enclosure of "News Letter on Conservation," March 19, 1919, *ibid.*, Box 1842.

and Walsh of Montana (coupled with Republicans like Reed Smoot of Utah and Albert B. Fall of New Mexico).[82]

Lane and Palmer were favorite targets, regarded as being worse than Richard Ballinger. Lane's administration was, and will continue to be, controversial; for he was a complex personality, and his seven years in office were critical for the conservation movement and for the security of the nation itself. Conservationists were convinced quite early in the Wilson years that Lane had turned out to be a dissembler, coming to Washington as a progressive from California, talking the language of an idealist and a conservationist, but siding in fact with special business interests. It is clear, however, that Lane did change after 1913, becoming pro-business in outlook, and though he often played the role of conservationist his heart lay with "the American Pioneer."[83] Palmer became persona non grata to progressives of both parties because of his role in the "Red Scare"; but more than that, as attorney general he assumed authority over the disposition of many public land cases, including petroleum cases in California, and was regarded as having failed to protect the public interest.[84] The progressive Republicans who had initiated conservation came to feel, therefore, that the Wilson administration had badly deteriorated and was no longer to be trusted. They hoped that their own party, after winning the election of 1920, would do better.

Conservation had arrived at a crisis in 1920-1921 more serious than its adherents suspected. Their achievements were not quite so momentous nor so unshakeable as they liked to believe. Political partisanship had become intensified; co-operation between north-

[82] Slattery to Pinchot, August 19, 1919, Pinchot Papers, Box 1842. See also Slattery to Pinchot, August 2, 1917, *ibid.*, Box 1838; Pinchot to Samuel M. Lindsay, March 6, 1921, *ibid.*, Box 239; Slattery to Pinchot, January 16, 1917, and Pinchot reply, undated, *ibid.*, Box 1838.

[83] See for example Ernest Knaebel (assistant attorney general) to A. I. McCormick, June 18, 1913, and Lane to Knaebel, July 3, 1913, enclosing letter from M. V. McQuigg to Lane, May 27, 1913, Department of Justice, Record Group 60 (National Archives); Lane, *Reports of the Department of the Interior, 1915* (2 vols., Washington, 1916), I, 17-18; Lane, "The American Pioneer," address at San Francisco Exposition, February 20, 1915, in Pinchot Papers, Box 1856; Pinchot, "Open Letter to the Honorable Franklin K. Lane," August 12, 1916, *ibid.*

[84] Statement of William Kent in Los Angeles *Record*, March 2, 1920 (clipping in Daniels Papers, Box 235); Daniels to A. Mitchell Palmer, December 6, 1919, quoted in R. G. Tracie, "History of the Naval Petroleum Reserves," MS. in Daniels Papers, Box 264; Daniels to Senator Walsh, May 20, 1924, *ibid.*, Box 582; John Ise, *The United States Oil Policy* (New Haven, 1926), 291-94.

erners and southerners in behalf of conservation had been rendered more difficult. Albert B. Fall and others who shared his views were moving into positions of responsibility. Many honest men during the 1920's declared for a watered-down version of conservation almost synonymous with business efficiency or gave serious consideration to plans for turning public lands over to the states. Business organizations appropriated, with more or less sincerity, the word "conservation." If ever an opportunity afforded itself for the rejection of Pinchot's ideals concerning democracy in resource use, this was the time.

Conservation not only survived the 1920's; it emerged in some respects stronger than ever. William Kent had observed in 1919 that the conservation principles were gaining acceptance all over the West and that, moreover, many of the ideals growing out of this movement were affecting sentiment in all directions. His own work in conservation had been of all his efforts the most satisfying and constructive.[85] In 1923 Governor Joseph M. Dixon of Montana, the old "Bull Mooser" then engaged in a bitter struggle against the Anaconda Copper Company, remarked on the growing popularity of the conservation policy. Even its enemies in the West were being converted, he wrote to Pinchot. "It would surprise you to know with what unanimity the people of the West now acquiesce to your own far-sighted vision of thirty years ago. The old crowd that fought so viciously against any governmental regulations of the forest and range are now your most pronounced friends. On several occasions during public talks, I have taken some satisfaction in 'rubbing it in' by telling them that 'Gifford Pinchot saved us [Westerners] from ourselves'." [86] At the height of the Teapot Dome scandal in 1924 Pinchot declared: "So far the only clear thing about it all seems to be that the conservation policy has once more completely defeated its enemies, and is more strongly in-

[85] Slattery to Pinchot, August 14, 1919, Pinchot Papers, Box 1842. See also Senator John B. Kendrick to Wilson, June 19, 1918, in which Kendrick asserted his conviction that "public sentiment during the past decade has undergone a very great change and . . . the country is now practically unanimous in the belief that the great resources on the public domain should be held for the benefit of the many rather than sequested [*sic*] by a few for the benefit of a few." Records of the Department of Justice, Record Group 60 (National Archives).

[86] Joseph M. Dixon to Pinchot, August 17, 1923, Pinchot Papers, Box 245. See also J. Leonard Bates, "Senator Walsh of Montana, 1918-1924" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1952).

trenched in the public confidence and consideration than ever before." [87]

In spite of its complexity, in spite of its ambiguity, the conservation policy contained an inner vitality that could not be obscured or destroyed. Here was an effort to implement democracy for twentieth-century America, to stop the stealing and exploitation, to inspire high standards of government, to preserve the beauty of mountain and stream, to distribute more equitably the profits of this economy. From McGee, to Pinchot and La Follette, to George Norris and Harold Ickes, to Wayne Morse and Lister Hill — there has burned a democratic zeal, a social faith. The faith was genuine; the propaganda effective. Though a careful evaluation of the impact upon this country remains to be made, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that a fighting band of conservationists has made the United States much richer in material wealth and in the democratic spirit and faith of its people.

[87] Pinchot to Sir Horace Plunkett, February 27, 1924, Pinchot Papers, Box 252. See also J. Leonard Bates, "The Teapot Dome Scandal and the Election of 1924," *American Historical Review* (New York), LX (January, 1955), 303-22; Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage*, 401-402, 412-17; E. Louise Peffer, *The Closing of the Public Domain* (Stanford, 1951), 288-90.