

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE NEW DEAL

#### Reforestation—Marginal Lands

President Roosevelt has suggested a plan for the reforestation of what he calls marginal lands. The details of this plan do not yet appear. In a general way the employment of men in the beginning of reforestation anywhere has a double advantage in giving employment to those unemployed, and particularly as the beginning of the great task of reforestation in this country. Nothing more wicked and contrary to the universal public interest of the country has taken place in two generations than the way the lumber companies have been permitted to strip huge areas of trees under no supervision or regulation. The interests of our people for generations have been ruthlessly sacrificed to the greed of these great companies which have piled up huge fortunes by getting possession of vast tracts of forest lands at nominal prices.

The German practice of permitting no tree in the Empire to be cut down except provision is made for the planting of another tree is the ideal which every civilized state should keep in mind.

If President Roosevelt makes even a beginning at

the solution of this immense problem he will render a great service.

The President has also announced an extensive program for national development of water power, power and light service particularly to farms, reclamation of swamp lands, flood control, and waterways. If this program is carried out in accordance with the principles herein set forth, it will accomplish its maximum results; but if developed according to the usual practice it will be marked by a gigantic land speculation, such as has already characterized the Boulder Dam development, and much of its benefits will go to land owners and speculators, who will hold much of the reclaimed land out of use, waiting for a higher price, and the actual users of reclaimed land will gain little if anything, unless they were the original owners, and their gain will be in increased land values to which morally they are not entitled.

It is expected that these new lands will take care of two hundred thousand unemployed. This plan ignores the fact that there is now no scarcity of usable land but, all over the country, such lands are now held idle by speculators for a higher price. It is more important to force open to use usable idle land, than to spend millions reclaiming waste lands. This point will be developed further in considering the land question.

It will take many years to develop this plan, and because it involves the development of power and light service to cities and farms, in competition with the power trust, it will encounter the determined opposition of this powerful group. The legislation will be filled with jokers, and the actual administration of the

power part of the project will fall into the hands of appointees dictated by the trust, as has resulted in the water power legislation sponsored by Governor Gifford Pinchot.