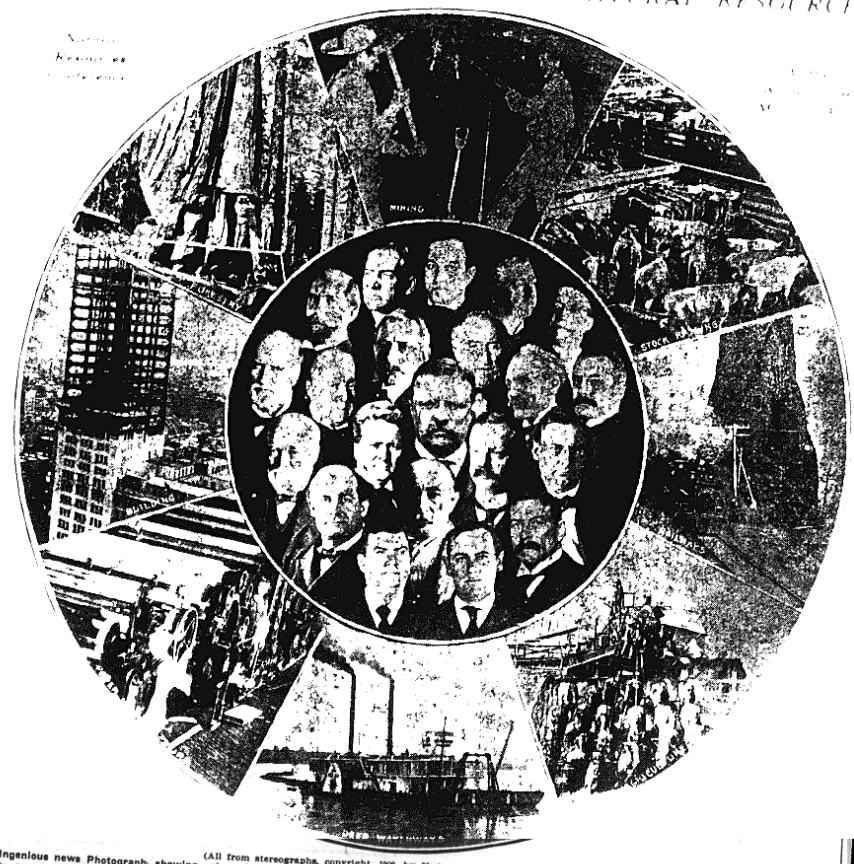
CHIEF TOPICS AND SPEAKERS AT CONFERENCE FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES



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Ingenious news Photograph, showing at a glance a most remarkable, epoch-making conference, the first of its kind in the history of civilization. In the center, Mr. Roosevelt. In the inner circle about him, beginning at the top and passing from left to right, are Speaker Cannon, Forestry Chief Pinchot, Postmaster General Meyer, John Hays Hammond, president of the American Institute of Mining Engineers, Senator La Follette, Senator Knox and Secretary Root. In the outer circle, beginning at the top, John Mitchell, Seth Low, Samuel Gompers, Secretary Garfield, Gov. Folk of Missouri, Justice Moody of the supreme court, Gov. Haskell of Oklahoma, Gov. Curry of New Mexico, William J. Bryan, Andrew Carnegie, James Wilson, secretary of agriculture; Gov. Hughes and Gov. Johnson of Minnesota. On the margin are pictured mining, cattle raising, railroading, farming, river transportation, manufacturing, building material and forestry.

When the conference of governors of states and men distinguished in political life of the nation met at the White House in Washington, May 13-14-15, in behalf of the preservation of the country's natural resources, the strangest, and, perhaps, the most important convention ever held in the capitol was inaugurated.

Among those invited to attend by President Roosevelt himself were members of the cabinet, judges of the supreme court of the United States, governors of all the states in the union, including the executives of Alaska and Hawaii, and Andrew Carnegie, William Jennings Bryan, James J. Hill, the railroad magnate; John Mitchell, the labor leader, and prominent scientists and business men from all over the country.

Political differences, opposing issues of national questions and business rivalry were laid aside to discuss the ways and means of conserving the natural resources of the country.

President Roosevelt opened the convention with an exposition of the why and wherefore of the conference and an outline of his views of the matter. While on his trip down the Mississippi river last fall, with the governors of 16 states, under the auspices of the Inland Waterways association, he is said to have obtained the nucleus of the idea which resulted in the present conference.

It will be remembered that President Roosevelt on that trip expressed the opinion that the question of the conservation of the natural resources of the country was of more importance than the regulation of the rate question.

A number of papers, prepared at the president's request, were read and discussed.

James J. Hill, the railroad king, spoke on "Relations Between Rail and water Transportation." His paper dealt with such subjects as the growth of rail transportation, its distribution and extent of systems, cost and present value, traffic and earning capacity, estimated cost of the cultivation of trees for railroad ties and their preservation, increasing railways to meet prospective requirements, etc. Regarding water transportation Mr. Hill dealt with its cost, present facilities, relation to rail transportation, pressing lines of development, regulation by business interests or by law, influence of cheapened transportation on production, etc.

Under the general head of land resources, Prof. T. C. Chamberlain of the University of Chicago, in a paper on "Soil," dealt with its origin, natural products, progressive enrichment, effects of cultivation, erosion, and general estimates of loss to the country through needlessly reduced fertility and decreased production.

The question of "Forests" was expounded by R. A. Long, president of the Long-Bell Lumber company of Kansas City, Mo., who explained their early use and destruction, present extent and value, rate of consumption, estimated duration, prospective prices of forest products, the influence of forests on soil, ground water and springs, rivers, floods and low water, waterway improvement and navigation, and the relation between forest control and crop production, commerce and population.

Dr. George W. Kober of Washington in a paper on "Sanitation" spoke of the development of systems of community water supply, relation between purity and clarity of water for community supply, mortality and disease due to impure water, and the action required in the interests of the public health.

"Reclamation," by Hon. George C. Pardee of Oakland, Cal., dealt with the extent of arid and semi-arid regions, development and extent of irrigation, growth of concepts concerning water-rights and water as a basis of property, influence of irrigation on production, commerce, population, consumption of water and other resources, reclamation and stream control by drainage, and extent of swamp and overflow lands and increased value available by drainage, protection and flood prevention.

Judge Joseph H. Carey of Cheyenne, Wyo., in a paper on "Land Laws," dealt with their early policy of disposal, transfer under state charters, especial grants, etc., development, effect of creation of national parks, forests and other reserves, advantages of making this a nation of homes and home owners, state and federal action required, etc.

Hon. H. A. Jastro, president of the National Live Stock association of Bakersfield, Cal., delivered a paper on "Grazing and Stock Raising." He treated on the development of the industries in the United States, their extent and value, grazing in the arid and semi-arid regions, methods and results, comparative cost and profit and relation between stock raising and commerce.

Under the general head of mineral resources, Dr. I. C. White, state geologist of West Virginia, in speaking of mineral fuels, dealt with the coal fields of the United States, methods of mining, losses in mining, estimated duration of present methods of mining and use, improvements in mining and use, connection with coal production and transportation, relation between coal and other resources, petroleum and rock gas and possible substitutes for fuel.

Andrew Carnegie spoke on "Ores and Related Minerals," their production in the United States, price, estimates of available quantity, duration of supply, processes of mining and quarrying and probable consequences of exhaustion of standard minerals.

On May 12 President Roosevelt entertained at dinner the cabinet, the members of the supreme court, the governors and the other more distinguished guests. Gifford Pinchot, chief of the forestry division, gave a reception to the governors and the Inland Waterways association on May 14. On the afternoon of May 15 Mrs. Roosevelt gave a garden party on the White House grounds for all the delegates to the convention. At the various hotels in Washington arrangements were made for smaller receptions and dinners.

All of the governors who accompanied President Roosevelt on his Mississippi river trip last fall were present. They are: Comer of Alabama, Broward of Florida, Deneen of Illinois, Cummins of Iowa, Hock of Kansas, Blanchard of Louisiana, Folk of Missouri, Shelton of Nebraska, Cuny of New Mexico, Burke of North Dakota, Frantz of Oklahoma, Chamberlain of Oregon, Davidson of Wisconsin and Brooks of Wyoming.

That the conference attracted worldwide interest was evidenced by the fact that many of the foreign diplomats at Washington followed the affairs of the convention closely.

Those who were in close touch with the conference arrangements declare they have never known another movement which has been greeted with such quick and enthusiastic popular approval.

An indication of public opinion was afforded by the great mass of correspondence which poured into the White House on this subject. Organizations of all sorts expressed realization of the greatness of the enterprise.

That conservation of national resources is nothing about which the political parties wish to raise an issue is indicated by the attitude of the Democratic leaders. Both William J. Bryan and Gov. John A. Johnson, leading candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination, wrote to President Roosevelt expressing their approval. Equally emphatic indorsement, it is understood, has been voiced by Grover Cleveland. Mr. Bryan's letter to the president read: "I greatly appreciate your kind invitation and shall take pleasure in attending the conference on the conservation of natural resources. I am, I beg to assure you, in hearty sympathy with the purpose of the conference, and I have no doubt that the discussion of the subject will be very helpful to us all."

Gov. Johnson's letter read: "To assure you that I heartily agree with your conclusion that the conservation of the natural resources of our country presents a problem demanding the best thought of our times is superfluous. We have been exploiting our resources with no thought of the morrow, and the claims of posterity upon us should certainly be taken into account."

In his letter of invitation to the conference President Roosevelt said:

"There is no other question now before the nation of equal gravity with the question of conservation of our natural resources, and it is the plain duty of us who, for the moment, are responsible, to take inventory of the natural resources which have been handed down to us, to forecast the needs of the future, and so handle the great sources of our prosperity as not to destroy in advance all hope of the prosperity of our descendants."

The need for such a conference is illustrated by a few facts vouched for by investigators. Government experts say that between 300,000,000 and 400,000,000 tons of coal were lost in 1906 by penny wise and pound foolish methods, and that the total so wasted since the beginning of the industry is 50,000,000,000 tons. Millions upon millions of horsepower are going to waste through failure properly to utilize and conserve the waterpower of the United States.

The construction of reservoirs at the sources of streams in which flood waters may be stored to be released at periods of low water is expected not only to keep the waters at a continuous level, but prevent the destruction of property by floods, maintain constant levels for navigation and to develop water power.

At the present rate of timber consumption it is estimated that the price of every kind of lumber will be about double the present price only one decade from to-day.

It is said that the total iron ore available in the world to-day is 25,000,000,000 tons, of which three-fifths is in the United States. Should the rate of consumption continue to increase in the United States in the same ratio that it has in the course of the last score of years, at the end of two centuries there would be no more ore to be mined.

In the United States there is an area of 175,000,000 acres of land susceptible to reclamation by irrigation, and 500,000,000 acres of western public range which may be made available for increased production of meat by restricting the grazing and reseeding portions which have been destroyed by unrestricted grazing. With this area made available once more, it is estimated that its meat producing capacity will be nearly doubled.

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