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Address by Gifford Pinchot in Ogden Tabernacle

1909?

This young nation cast aside all thoughts of the future and directed itself purely to the development of the next few years, or what would have been in the life of a man, the next few weeks, casting all the emphasis and making all plans for the immediate future. Neglecting all together in the splended vigor of its career across the continent any thought of what was coming hereafter. Then as the young nation grew, adding millions to the population in every decade, there came a time at last when it was forced to consider that what was good common sense for the man and his wife was good common sense also for all the men and all the wives taken together, and gradually the idea of a future, the idea of what coming generations were to do with this land, and of the responsibility which the people of today have for the people of tomorrow, began to make headway. Now, it is a curious thing that not until this young nation had grown to be the greatest in the world, and one of the most populous, did it start to give real thought to the future. It is only in the last few years that we have begun to think about what is going to happen when we are gone and to plan accordingly. Let me follow very briefly the Conservation movement from the beginning until now. The first movement is very old but has increased in detail in late years. Before the Declaration of Independence some of the states had begun to make laws about Forestry, and to look ahead. The reason for this was that the people came from countries of the old world where timber was scarce, into a new country where timber was plentiful. They turned their thoughts from their old education and grasped the idea that they needed, not Forest protection, but Forest clearing. They

wanted ground instead of trees. Any Forestry talk brings the idea of a long future to come. It takes a tree a long time to grow. Anybody who would talk with Mr. Leavitt, or any of the others here in Ogden, would find that every one of them is working with a time beyond his own life clearly in mind. They are thinking and planning far beyond the immediate future, for future generations. It is a part of a forester's training to think of the future. The idea of taking stock of the future, and looking ahead began to make some progress in minds of the American people. Everyone said something ought to be done but very few had any idea of what was to be done. It is nearly thirty years ago now that a great man, for whom one of the National Forests in this State is named, Major Powell, first got the idea of a wide extension of irrigation in this country. Other irrigation schemes had come before but his was the first, bearing on the idea of National irrigation. President Roosevelt supported it from the first. The first measure of practical statesmanship that President Roosevelt took up after the death of President McKinley, when he first came to Washington and before even moving into the White House, was the irrigation question. He made up his mind to advocate in his first message, the passage of the irrigation bill. It was a very great thing to do for a man just entering the tremendous responsibilities into which he was thrown in so terrible a way, but with a courage which marked him from the first and always has marked him and with an insight for which he is famous, he saw at once that it was a good thing, took it up, and advocated it very strongly in his first message to Congress.

Many of the gentlemen on this platform know how difficult the situation was in those days. In 1902 the National

Reclamation Act was brought into existence through the good work of F. F. Newell. This act was brought into existence without reference to Forestry. Two years ago President Roosevelt brought the policies together under one name. Conservation. In June 1907 he made an address in which, for the first time in public, Conservation was stated as a single problem. Conservation, from the start was seen to mean two things. In the first place the development of our resources and the use of everything we have for the benefit of those living here now and those coming in the hereafter and the prevention of unnecessary waste. Conservation means the application of good business common sense to the things upon which this nation must depend for its livelihood not only now but in the future. It needs the same kind of common sense as the young man and his wife used. It is good business principles applied to the great big questions which really determine things.

When President Roosevelt comes to have his story written up this fact will be clearly historical. Whatever else he did or whatever else he did not do he went straight to the foundation of every question with which he dealt, and never more so than in Conservation. However perfect the institutions, however good the schools, however perfect the whole machinery of the Government, it will do you very little good if you have not the fundamental things, the things that mean prosperity. Conservation is one of the fundamental things. It is only two years ago since the problem was first stated. Consider the progress that has been made, it has been great. President Roosevelt took a wonderful trip down the Mississippi River accompanied by the Governors of several of the nearby States. From what he saw he decided to call all the Governors together to consult on the question, of Conservation. This meeting took place in May 1908 and it was a

most wonderful meeting indeed. It brought together forty-six Governors of the States and Territories. They discussed the question for three days, and agreed upon a declaration of principles. “ - - - - - “. This meeting is going to mean more to the people of the United States than almost anything else that has been done for years and years. Every Governor of a State or Terr. was unanimous in upholding Conservation. This was surely a nation building meeting. And then they did another thing. They said that they wanted every State in the Union to appoint a State Conservation Commission to cooperate with the Government Conservation Commission. You in Utah, or the Governor, appointed a temporary Conservation Commission. This good news greeted me when I reached here this morning. You have now joined the great array of other States who have a definitely authorized body to handle this matter in cooperation with the larger commissions and associations. The Conservation Commission took to heart what the President had said, “that it was time we knew where we stood”. They made the first inventory of natural resources that has ever been made in the history of the world. None of the older Nations had thought to sum up what they had. The natural resources of this country was found to have been rapidly used up. This inventory was prepared by the National and State Governments and great National Associations with Congress in cooperation. It was submitted last December to a joint conference of great Associations and Commissions. This conference adopted the report and the whole thing was submitted to Congress. In President Roosevelt’s message he went into the fundamental object of Conservation in addition to what I have already spoken to you about. If the natural resources

are to be conserved, for whom are they to be conserved. The question of monopolies at once came up. Every monopoly must be based directly or indirectly upon the natural resources and if we are to preserve them for the benefit of a monopoly or monopolies they are going to be of less value than if preserved for the benefit of the people as a whole. President Roosevelt saw this “- - - - -”. (Quotes from message transmitting the report of the National Conservation Commission”). President Roosevelt had a habit of hewing the line and letting the chips fall where they may. He went straight forward. Now President Taft is a great and good man and is walking in the foot steps of President Roosevelt so far as these great policies are concerned. One of the best things ever said about Roosevelt is that he understands the common people about as well as Lincoln did, surely a great thing to say about any man. The benefits from the preservation of the natural resources is not to be thrown into the hands of monopolies but their benefits are to be equitably distributed throughout our country. Every man and every woman is to have their proper share. The great movement of Conservation has spread over the country rapidly. The press and the debating societies have readily taken it up. Natural resources are not bounded by imaginary lines or even by boundary lines between States or Nations. The Nations and States are both dependent upon it. President Roosevelt called a meeting, which was held last February, at which Delegates from Mexico, Canada and the United States were present, to consider what the Nations of the North American Continent had encountered in this problem and how they could assist each other in it. I was fortunate enough to be one of the American delegates and it was a great surprise to me because I had no idea and none of us in the U. S.

had clearly realized that this problem had made such great progress in other Nations. We found it out and the declaration of principles adopted by this Congress was straight and clear. The President took it up very strongly, and the conference decided that this was a mighty good thing and advisable for the nations of this continent to take action on, and that it would be an equally good thing for all the nations of the world. Immediately the President issued an invitation to all the nations of the world to meet at the Hague, at a time to be arranged later, and find out why a plan might not be made by which we might ascertain just exactly what resources the whole race of man has to depend upon for its future existence. This was one of the last great things done by the President before the close of his administration. It was a great idea, that the whole human race should join together, not for selfish purposes, not to prevent some harm, but for the first time, so far as I know, that the official representatives of the whole world should get together for a constructive policy that would be for the good of all nations and to the detriment of none. This will take a larger and larger place in the mind of the whole world. Cooperation along this line will turn out to be the best peacemaker ever devised by the mind of man. This shows that Conservation in two years has spread all over the world. In this inventory of resources, that I have spoken about, it was found that we are cutting the forests three and one-half time faster than they are growing. Every ton of coal taken out leaves more than half a ton wasted. We have spent \$350,000 on rivers and now have less traffic than when we began. The farms have lost from erosions probably more than five million tons of soil a year, worth probably a dollar a ton.

The cost of erosion has been five billion dollars to the farms; the heaviest cost we have had to pay. Fifty to Seventy million acres could be added by draining. Somewhat less by irrigation. There are 350 million acres of public lands left. It was found that we would have to feed within our boundaries probably 150 millions and by the end of the present century 250 millions. It was realized that our coal would last probably a century more. Iron probably the same. Oil and Natural Gas less than half a century more. Timber if cutting kept up at present rate would last only a quarter of a century more. Now this gave good reason to look ahead and to plan for the future of this great country. We are now coming too realize that the great problems which this people ought to really be interested in, are not those around which there can be drawn a line between the Democrats on one side and Republicans upon another. Every citizen should unite. We are reaching a truer and better conception of what public business of the nation is. "To apply common sense to the common problems for the common good". We are now trying to look out for the people who are coming after us. Our responsibility for them is as the responsibility of a father or mother to their children and grand children. We are coming to see as never before that those of us who live here now are the creators of the nation of the future. What we do now will control the kind of people that this nation is to be in fifty or 100 or 500 years. We have, in our hands, the decision as to whether our descendants shall be prosperous or not. People coming after us will be prosperous or miserable, just as we see fit. If miserable, they will despise us as the cause of their downfall. We must decide whether the people who come after us will be happy as we have been or unhappy, as we have no right to

to make them. We have learned certain things in the Forest Service about different parts of the West. We have learned about Utah. There is no State in this country in which cooperation plays so large a part as it does here and none in which the Forest Service has had such hearty and friendly cooperation as it has had from the people of Utah and from their Representatives in Congress. I should fail in my duty tonight if I did not tell you what perhaps some of you know. Of all the men who have stood by the Forest Service all the time there is none to whom we owe a larger debt of gratitude, none with whom we have cooperated more satisfactorily than with your own honored Senator Smoot. I am glad to say this because I feel that we of the Forest Service owe him a debt that we can never pay. Anything we can do to help the people of Utah is not only our plain duty but we are glad to do so, remembering how much in your turn you have helped us. I won't discuss the mistakes and complaints of the Forest Service further than to say that the more closely cooperation is made the less mistakes will be made. We want men to come to us and tell us frankly and freely where there has been an error of judgment or a mistake of any kind. I want to make this Service as perfect as possible. And I am going to try, and to that end I ask the heartiest cooperation the people can give us. We want your help, we need your help, and we will help you in turn in the development of your State. So far as we are concerned in working for the development of Utah I ask you to keep us in close touch with your ideas of how each part of our work can be best conducted. The best kind of a friend is the man who comes and tells us of anything gone wrong. Some men are afraid to tell their grievances because other men will have it in for them. Send this complaint direct

to me and I will protect the name and do my best to right any difficulty which has arisen and withhold the name of the man from anyone from whom he would like to keep it. This applies in the same way to all of the Service. We want to give no injustice to any man and will give respectful attention to every suggestion for the improvement of the Service. We have certain kind of complaints which are the best of all reasons for believing in the Forest Service. We are trying to see that so far as the Service is concerned every man gets everything he ought to have. There are certain times, very seldom in this State, when a man tries to get things he ought not to have. I propose to see while connected with the Service, that every man will get his rights and those who try to get more than their rights will not get them. There are times when the poor homesteader is badly overworked. I have known many a complaint come to the Service in the name of the poor homesteader that did not originate with the homesteader at all. The Service stands for the small man first of all, and have always acted accordingly so far as could be brought about. The Forest Service would rather help the small man make a living than to help the big man make a profit. It stands always for the settler, for the man who is trying to make a home, and will always try to promote the settlement of the country, trying to help the home maker get his feet under him and make a home for his family. In other words we are trying to increase the population of Utah, and the country at large, to multiply its homes and to see that the man who is struggling to get a footing is the man who gets the most help that we can give him. Of the things the Forest Service is attempting to do, the first object here in this State of Utah is to protect the streams used for municipal

water supply and irrigation. By proper protection against fire, by letting young trees come up and planting new ones that can, in the end, materially increase the supply of water in this State. If we can do that we think we shall have added to the resources of Utah as in no other way. When everything else is gone the sun will be receiving water out of the sea and lakes and pouring it on the hills. The one great resource that it is absolutely impossible for man to ruin altogether is the rain. We have come to see that water is the fundamental resource. When everything else is gone the rain will still fall. We are trying to make the territory in our charge produce the most water it possible can and to produce an increasing supply as years go on. We are giving the small man who lives near a National Forest the first chance in grazing. Endeavoring to fence the land, protect his stock against wild animals, improve the springs, and in many other ways use the money which comes from the stockmen in the form of fees, to improve the range in a way that will be of value to them. The Service has destroyed in the past few years enough predatory animals to make up to the stockmen of the Western country, on the whole, a value more than equal to all grazing fees paid. We are on the most friendly relations with most of the stockmen in the State and look forward to the continuance of them. The advisory boards and stock associations are bringing the people and the Service into closer relations, to the advantage of both. The Service is trying to do the same thing in the timber work. In mining we are trying to see that every man who wants to mine has timber in his neighborhood to develop his mine. Prospecting is absolutely free in the National Forests. We are trying to get at things which will help the people most and give our whole attention

to them. It is not Senator Smoot's fault that we did not have an extra half million dollars to serve the West with this year. If you have a good thing let it be known and push it along. Ogden is a good thing, you are letting it be known and pushing it along. With the Forest Service it is the same. One of the best advertisements yet discovered is to have certain Senators make a vigorous attack upon it in the United States Senate. It was a great help in Colorado to have attacks made on the Service as was done quite recently. When you attack a thing that is fundamentally right you may make some impression at first but you cannot fool all the people all the time and when they find out that the thing attacked is fundamentally right the influence of the men attacking it disappears and the thing which has been attacked grows in the knowledge and esteem of the men to who it has been misrepresented. I have never felt bad about the abuse which has been given me, except as I told you in cases, where actual injustice has been done some man. I speak for the whole Service in this matter. I really care so little for the abuse which I have had that I am ashamed some times to own up to it. For the praise which has come to the Service from the men who use it, from you here in Ogden and from you newspapers and from the people generally in Utah, I care tremendously. I want to tell you a fact that I am keenly proud of, that a man, Mr. Stookey, came all the way from Vernon, Utah because he said that there had been a great deal in the papers in opposition to the Service and that Vernon and all his neighbors were pleased with it. He came all this way to do this because he thought the opposition was not fair. I consider it a very fine thing for him to do this. An incident of this kind makes up for months of the other.

It is certainly worth more to me and will be long remembered. I now want to tell you why this local organization has been established; it makes us closer to our work, closer to the users of the Forests; Mr. Leavitt, who is making good, and whose men are making good; about all the men as a whole. I have had a great deal of praise for the work of the Forest Service, have had a great deal of it from the papers here in Ogden. I want it understood that the credit for this work belongs not with me but with the men who have done the work. I don't believe you will find anywhere in the United States a finer body of young men than we have got in the Forest Service or a lot of men who are more willing to spend themselves in the work. My greatest trouble is to make them take vacation enough to keep them in good health. I surely want you to remember that those are the men who are doing the work and that those are the men to whom the credit belongs. One thing I have got a right to be proud of and that is them. I am proud of them and I want to repeat again that these are the men upon whom the burden rests and those are the men who ought to have the credit.

I want to give my heartfelt thanks for the kindnesses shown me in town by the citizens, Weber Club and many of the prominent gentlemen. I shall go away pleased clear through with your kindness and I hope to have the pleasure of returning to your town sometime during the summer to make a more careful inspection of the work here than has been possible in a single day. If you will allow me to drop into German I will say not good bye but "auf Wiedersehen".