

Conservation of Natural Resources.

In a special message to Congress on the 21st, in which he transmitted the report of the National Conservation Commission (vol. xi, p. 579) President Roosevelt reviewed the report at length. The following are among his more notable observations:

The rights to life and liberty are fundamental, and, like other fundamental necessities, when once acquired, they are little dwelt upon. The right to the pursuit of happiness is the right whose presence or absence is most likely to be felt in daily life. In whatever it has accomplished, or failed to accomplish, the Administration which is just drawing to a close has at least seen clearly the fundamental need of freedom of opportunity for every citizen. We have realized that the right of every man to live his own life, provide for his family, and endeavor, according to his abilities, to secure for himself and for them a fair share of the good things of existence, should be subject to one limitation and to no other. The freedom of the individual should be limited only by the present and future rights, interests and needs of the other individuals who make up the community. We should do all in our power to develop and protect individual liberty, individual initiative, but subject always to the need of preserving and promoting the general good. When necessary, the private right must yield, under due process of law and with proper compensation, to the welfare of the commonwealth. The man who serves the community greatly should be greatly rewarded by the community; as there is great inequality of service so there must be great inequality of reward; but no man and no set of men should be allowed to play the game of competition with loaded dice. The policy of conservation is perhaps the most typical example of the general policies which this government has made peculiarly its own during the opening years of the present century. The function of our government is to insure to all its citizens, now and hereafter, their rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. If we of this generation destroy the resources from which our children would otherwise derive their livelihood, we reduce the capacity of our land to support a population, and so either degrade the standard of living or deprive the coming generations of their right to life on this continent. If we allow great industrial organizations to exercise unregulated control of the means of production and the necessities of life we deprive the Americans of to-day and of the future of industrial liberty, a right no less precious and vital than political freedom. Industrial liberty was a fruit of political liberty, and in turn has become one of its chief supports, and exactly as we stand for political democracy so we must stand for industrial democracy . . . We are trying to conserve what is good in our social system, and we are striving toward this end when we endeavor to do away with what is bad. Success may be made too hard for some if it is made too easy for others. The rewards of common industry and thrift may be too small if the rewards for other, and on the whole less valuable, qualities, are made too large, and especially if the rewards for qualities which

are really, from the public standpoint, undesirable, are permitted to become too large. Our aim is so far as possible to provide such conditions that there shall be equality of opportunity where there is equality of energy, fidelity and intelligence. When there is a reasonable equality of opportunity the distribution of rewards will take care of itself. The unchecked existence of monopoly is incompatible with equality of opportunity. The reason for the exercise of government control over great monopolies is to equalize opportunity. We are fighting against privilege. . . . Public intervention in the affairs of a public service corporation is neither to be resented as usurpation nor permitted as a privilege by the corporations, but, on the contrary, to be accepted as a duty and exercised as a right by the government in the interest of all the people. Our public land policy has for its aim the use of the public land so that it will promote local development by the settlement of homesteaders; the policy we champion is to serve all the people legitimately and openly, instead of permitting the lands to be converted, illegitimately and under cover, to the private benefit of a few. Our forest policy was established so that we might use the public forests for the permanent public good, instead of merely for temporary private gain. . . . I especially commend to the Congress the facts presented by the Commission as to the relation between forests and stream-flow in its bearing upon the importance of the forest lands in national ownership. Without an understanding of this intimate relation the conservation of both these natural resources must largely fail. The time has fully arrived for recognizing in the law the responsibility to the community, the State and the nation which rests upon the private owners of private lands. The ownership of forest land is a public trust. The man who would so handle his forest as to cause erosion and to injure stream-flow must be not only educated but controlled.

+ +

The Public Land Question in Hawaii.

A portentous agitation has arisen in Hawaii over the administration of the public lands. Its character may be ascertained through a pamphlet just issued by the Democratic central committee of the territory, of which Ed. Ingham is chairman and John Emmeluth secretary. From this pamphlet it appears that the controlling purpose of the existing public-land laws is to create enormous estates and to foster coolie labor. The pamphlet explains that—

the natural workings out of the law have eliminated competition as to the great bulk of the land sold or leased under it. The land has been sold or leased in such large areas as to reduce the number of persons or even corporations who could bid for it practically to the person or corporation which applied to the Commissioner of Public Lands for the land to be offered for sale or lease. As a matter of fact the history of these sales of land or of leases of land, has been that the land offered for sale or lease has been in such tracts, or so situated, that it was not available for any one else than the applicant. It is the history of the sales of land and of leases of