

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.

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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

all the best lands in the Territory, that rarely has there been more than one bidder, and princely domains and thousands of acres of the best sugar lands in the Territory have gone at one dollar above the upset price, a price notoriously, in most instances, below the real value. In a few cases where there has been real competition the prices realized, either for the sale of the land or for the sale of the leases, have been great advances on the upset price. Practically, the only classes of cases where the ostensible competitive feature of the law really works out in practice, is where small areas for homesteads are put up for sale.

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It seems also that the Territorial officials have the power to make secret exchanges of land, and that in doing this they have grossly disregarded the public interests. The "Lanai deal" is cited as an instance. By this deal—

nearly fifty thousand acres of public lands on the island of Lanai—the best lands on the island and the lands containing the best water resources of that island—were secretly exchanged for a few pieces of property in Honolulu; and more than a hundred native Hawaiians were evicted from the soil on which most of them were born, and all of them had lived for years, as ruthlessly as the crofters of Scotland or any peasants of Russia were ever evicted from their ancestral lands. The result of this deal is that there are now two islands in this group—Nihoa and Lanai—upon which no person, not even an officer of the Territory or of the United States, may set foot without the owner's permission.

Nominally this was not a secret deal, for the Territorial Governor called a public meeting to consider its advisability; but he confessed that the deal had been already negotiated and so far completed before any intimation of it came to the public, that nothing remained to do but exchange the deeds.

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As a typical case that of the Waianae sale is described in the pamphlet. This land, about 900 acres, was sold by the Territorial Government to the Waianae Company, a sugar-planting concern. The circumstances are significant:

The land sold was described by the Land Commissioner as "remnants," though as a matter of fact, while it consisted of a number of pieces of land having separate legal descriptions, these were all practically contiguous, forming in effect one aggregate of land. A considerable portion of it consisted of sugar cane lands that had been under lease to and in cultivation by the Waianae sugar plantation. Other portions consisted of pasture and wooded lands used in connection with the plantation. And another part was the site of the village of Walanae, so occupied almost from time immemorial, the land being occupied by the villagers as public land without title in themselves, though in some cases title to house lots and gardens had been secured. The land was eminently suitable for division into small holdings. It is so situated as to be readily adapted

for small holdings at very small cost by the application of the principles of the reclamation service to it. If conditions were not ripe for its division into small holdings, it could have been leased to the Waianae Company for a short term of years without detriment to its highest usefulness as productive land. Sold as it was in one piece it could not possibly be made use of in that form by any interest except the Waianae Company, and as a matter of fact there was no other bidder. The Waianae Company (in effect Senator J. M. Dowsett), which had applied for its sale, bought it at one dollar more than the upset price, and at a price approximately of seventy dollars an acre; though as before stated, the larger portion of it is fine cane land, there are valuable water resources on it, and it contains the site of a village of several hundred people.

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The committee from which this illuminative pamphlet proceeds is appealing to Congress to amend the land laws of the Territory so as—

1. To abolish the power of the Territorial authorities to exchange public for private lands.
2. To abolish the power to sell lands (except town lots) for a pecuniary consideration only, or otherwise than by way of homestead for actual settlement—lands not yet in demand for homesteading to be leased for short terms.
3. To establish a homestead system.
4. To attach to the alienation of all public lands a condition running with the land that "they shall be occupied and tilled only by American citizens or those who have declared their intention to become such."

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Suffrage in Prussia.

The demand for universal suffrage is again to the fore in Prussia (vol. x, p. 996). The socialists held numerous public meetings throughout Berlin on the 24th to press the question, an interpellation upon which was scheduled to come up in the Diet on the 25th. They also attempted to form processions to make a demonstration before the Emperor, but the police interfered. On the following day they gathered in crowds, many women among them, before the Diet house, but were again dispersed by the police. Replying to the interpellation in the Diet, the Minister of the Interior, Mr. von Moltke, said the Government declines to discuss the matter because it is at present engaged in making a thorough examination of the question.

NEWS NOTES

—The fifth annual conference of the National Child Labor Committee began its sessions at Chicago on the 21st.

—While taking dead bodies from the earthquake ruins at Messina (p. 81) on the 20th, a man was found who was still alive and breathing faintly,