

CONSERVATION A DUTY, DECLARES PRESIDENT TAFT

Members of National Congress at St. Paul Find Him Thoroughly in Accord with Their Ideas—His Speech.

St. Paul, Sept. 5.—The National Conservation Congress listened with deep interest to President Taft's address today. The chief executive spoke substantially as follows:

Gentlemen of the National Conservation Congress: Conservation as an economic and political term has come to mean the preservation of our natural resources for economic use, so as to secure the greatest good to the greatest number. The danger to the state and to the people at large from the waste and dissipation of our natural wealth is not one which quickly impresses itself on the people of the older communities, because its most obvious instances do not occur in their neighborhood, while in the newer part of the country the sympathy with expansion and development is so strong that the danger is scoffed at or ignored. Among scientific men and thoughtful observers, however, the danger has always been present; but it needed some one to bring home the crying need for a remedy to the public mind and lead to the formation of public opinion and action by the representatives of the people. Theodore Roosevelt took up the cause of conservation in the years of his second administration, and well did he perform it.

As president of the United States I have inherited the same high opportunity to do all that an executive can do to help a great people realize a great ideal. Conservation is not a question of politics, or of factions, or of persons. It is a question that affects the vital interests of our children and our children's children. I urge that no good can come from meetings of this sort unless we ascribe to those who take part in them the same high and noble motives, and unless we judiciously consider every measure or method proposed with the same effectiveness in achieving our common purpose, and wholly without regard to who proposes it or who will claim the credit for its adoption. The problems are of very great difficulty and call for the utmost consideration and clearest foresight. Many of the questions presented are new to this country, and in their solution we may have to attempt first one way and then another. What I wish to suggest, however, is that our common conclusion can only be reached promptly if we avoid acrimony, imputations of bad faith, and political controversy.

The public domain of the government of the United States, including all the resources from those of the thirteen states made common to the United States and including Alaska, amounted in 1909 to about 1,000,000,000 acres. Of this there is left as purely government property outside of Alaska something like 700,000,000 acres. Of this the national forest reserves in the United States proper embrace 144,000,000 acres.

I shall divide my discussion under the heads of (1) agricultural lands; (2) mineral lands; (3) lands containing metallic minerals; (4) forest lands; (5) coal lands; (6) oil and gas lands; and (7) phosphate lands.

Agricultural Lands. Our land laws for the entry of agricultural lands are now as follows: The original homestead law, which requires residence and cultivation for five years, much more strictly enforced than ever before. The enlarged homestead act, applying to nonirrigable lands, which requires five years' residence and continuous cultivation of one-fourth of the area. The desert-land act, which requires on the part of the settler the payment of a water right and thorough reclamation of the land by irrigation, and the payment of \$1.25 per acre.

The donation or grant act, under which the state selects the land and provides for its reclamation, and the title vests in the settler who resides upon the land and cultivates it and pays the cost of the reclamation.

The national reclamation homestead law, requiring five years' residence and cultivation by the government, and payment by him to the government of the cost of the reclamation.

The present congress passed a bill of great importance which provides for the disposal of coal by the government in the ground from the surface and permitting homestead entries upon the surface of the land, which when the title vests in the settler the coal beneath the surface is retained in ownership by the government and may be disposed of by it under other laws.

There is no crying need for radical reform in the methods of disposing of what are really agricultural lands. The present laws have worked well. The enlarged homestead law has encouraged the successful farming of lands in the semiarid regions.

Reclamation. By the reclamation act a fund has been created of the proceeds of the public lands of the United States with which to carry out the reclamation of bodies of water at proper altitudes, to provide by a suitable system of canals and ditches, the water is to be distributed over the land and suitable for the purposes to be sold to settlers at a price sufficient to pay for the improvements. Primarily, the projects are and must be for the irrigation of arid lands, and also within reach of the water supply, the furnishing at cost or profit of this water to private enterprise, where no maximum limit is fixed, and the maximum was \$75. Under the new regulations, adopted in 1908, the maximum price was increased to \$30, except in regions where there are large mines, where no maximum limit is fixed and the price is determined by the estimated tons of coal to the acre. The highest price fixed for any land under the regulation has been \$200. The appraisal value of the lands classified as coal lands and valued under the new and old regulations is shown to be as follows: \$30,221 acres are classed under old regulations at \$7,544,329, an average of \$18 an acre, and 5,847,702 acres are classed and valued under the new regulation at \$24,362,241, an average of \$41.67 an acre. For the year ending March 31, 1909, 27 entries were made, embracing an area of 2,139 acres, which sold for \$282,030.30. For the year ending March 31, 1910, there were 178 entries, embracing an

area of 23,413 acres, which sold for \$283,832; and during August, 1910, there were 17 entries, with an area of 1,720 acres, which sold for \$210,000. The government has separated the surface of coal lands, either classified or withdrawn for classification, from the coal beneath, so as to permit at the same time the disposal upon the surface of lands useful for agriculture and to reserve the ownership in the coal to the government. The question which remains to be considered is whether the existing law for the sale of the coal in the ground should continue in force or be repealed and a new method of disposition adopted. Under the present law the absolute title to the coal beneath the surface passes to the grantee of the government. The price fixed is upon an estimate of the total of coal of coal per acre beneath the surface, and the prices are fixed so that the earnings will only be a reasonable profit upon the amount paid and the investment necessary. But, of course, this is more or less guesswork, and the government parts with the ownership of the coal in the ground, and the coal is sold to the geological survey estimate that in the United States today there is a supply of about three thousand billions of tons of coal, and that the investment necessary in the public domain. Of course, the other two thousand billions are within private ownership and under no more control as to the use of the investment as the coal may be sold than any other private property. If the government leases the coal lands and acts as any landlord would, and imposes conditions in its leases like those which are now imposed by the owners in fee of coal mines in the various coal regions of the east, then it could retain the disposal of the coal deposits a choice as to the assignee of the lease, or of resuming possession at the end of the term of the lease, which would be easily done by the government to exercise a limited but effective control in the disposition and sale of the coal to the public. It has been urged that the leasing system is not free from the same danger, and that its adoption would largely interfere with the investment of capital and the proper development and opening up of the resources. The question as to how great an area ought to be included in a lease to one individual or a group of individuals is a difficult one; but in view of the fact that the government retains control as owner, I think there might be some liberality in the amount of land to be included in a lease, so that it would not be too great a maximum.

By the opportunity to readjust the terms upon which the coal shall be held by the tenant, and the price to be paid for the lease or at periods during the term, the government may secure the benefit of sharing in the increased price of coal and the additional profit in the coal mines. By imposing conditions in respect to the character of work to be done in the mines, the government may control the character of the work, and may control the treatment of employees with reference to safety. By denying the right to transfer the lease except by the written permission of the government authorities, it may withhold the needed consent when it is proposed to transfer the leasehold to persons interested in establishing a monopoly of the coal in any state or neighborhood. The change from the absolute grant to the leasing system will involve a good deal of trouble in the matter of making proper leases; but the change will be a good one and can be made. The change is in the interest of conservation, and I am glad to report it.

Alaska Coal Lands. The investigation of the geological survey shows that the coal fields in Alaska cover about 1,500 square miles, and that there are known to be available about 15,000,000,000 tons. This is, however, an unduly low estimate, because further developments will probably increase this amount many times; but we can say with considerable certainty that the estimated coal in the Pacific slope which can be reached by railways at a reasonable cost from deep water—in one case about fifty miles and in another about 100 miles—amounts to about 6,000,000,000 tons of coal, more than half of which is of a very high grade of bituminous and is suitable for the production of steam. In the ground, one-half a cent a ton, which makes its value per acre from \$9 to \$50. The coaling-plant of Pennsylvania, which produces 16 million tons a year, while other Appalachian fields are worth from \$10 to \$38 an acre, and the fields in the central states from \$10 to \$20 an acre, the estimated coal in the Pacific slope is for about 4,000,000 tons a year. It would encounter the competition of the coal fields in the equivalent of 12,000,000 tons of coal a year is used there. It is estimated that the coal could be laid down at Seattle or San Francisco at a cost of \$35 or \$40 a ton. The price of coal on the Pacific slope varies greatly from time to time in the year, and from year to year, from \$1 to \$12 a ton. With a regular coal supply established, the expert of the geological survey, Mr. Brooks, who has made a report on the subject, thinks there would be an excessive profit in the Alaska coal mining because the price at which the coal could be sold would be considerably higher than the price from these fields and by the production of crude fuel oil. The history of the coal fields in the United States, and the coal lands shows them to need reclamation.

On November 12, 1906, President Roosevelt issued an executive order withdrawing all coal lands in the United States for purposes of classification. In 1907, 87,000 acres. Since that time there have been withdrawn by my order from entry for classification 17,080,000 acres, making a total withdrawal of 105,080,000 acres. Meantime, of the acres thus withdrawn, 12,571,000 have been classified and found not to contain coal, and have been restored to agricultural entry, and 4,285,000 acres have been classified as coal lands; while 7,283,000 acres remain withdrawn from entry for classification. In addition 28,000 acres have been classified as coal lands without prior withdrawal, thus increasing the classified coal lands to 112,800,000 acres.

Under the laws providing for the disposition of coal lands, the minimum price at which lands are permitted to be sold is \$10 an acre; but the secretary of the interior has the power to fix a maximum price and sell at that price. By the first regulations governing appraisal, appraisal value of the minimum was \$10, and the highest price actually placed upon any land sold was \$75. Under the new regulations, adopted in 1908, the maximum price was increased to \$30, except in regions where there are large mines, where no maximum limit is fixed and the price is determined by the estimated tons of coal to the acre. The highest price fixed for any land under the regulation has been \$200. The appraisal value of the lands classified as coal lands and valued under the new and old regulations is shown to be as follows: \$30,221 acres are classed under old regulations at \$7,544,329, an average of \$18 an acre, and 5,847,702 acres are classed and valued under the new regulation at \$24,362,241, an average of \$41.67 an acre. For the year ending March 31, 1909, 27 entries were made, embracing an

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By the opportunity to readjust the terms upon which the coal shall be held by the tenant, and the price to be paid for the lease or at periods during the term, the government may secure the benefit of sharing in the increased price of coal and the additional profit in the coal mines. By imposing conditions in respect to the character of work to be done in the mines, the government may control the character of the work, and may control the treatment of employees with reference to safety. By denying the right to transfer the lease except by the written permission of the government authorities, it may withhold the needed consent when it is proposed to transfer the leasehold to persons interested in establishing a monopoly of the coal in any state or neighborhood. The change from the absolute grant to the leasing system will involve a good deal of trouble in the matter of making proper leases; but the change will be a good one and can be made. The change is in the interest of conservation, and I am glad to report it.

Mineral Lands. By mineral lands I mean those lands bearing metallic minerals, or called metallic minerals. The rules of ownership and disposition of these lands were first fixed by custom in the west, and the government has since then followed the same rule. I do not think it is wise to attempt to change or better them.

Forest Lands. Nothing can be more important in the matter of forest land than the treatment of our forest lands. It was probably the ruthless destruction of forests in the older states that first called attention to a part in the waste of our resources. This was recognized by congress by an act authorizing the executive to reserve from entry and set aside public timber lands in the national forest system. Speaking generally there has been reserved of the existing forests about seventy per cent. of all the timber lands of the government, 27,000,000 acres (including 2,500,000 acres in two forests in Alaska are 192,000,000 acres, of which 165,000,000 acres are in the United States proper and 27,000,000 acres are in Alaska), and about 1,000,000,000 acres of land that belong to the state or to private individuals. We have then, excluding Alaska forests, a total of 27,000,000 acres of forest land belonging to the government which is being treated in accord with the principles of scientific forestry.

The conservation of forests in this country amounts to only one-fourth of all the timber, the rest being in private ownership. Only three per cent. of that which is in private ownership is looked after properly and treated according to modern rules of forestry. The usual destructive waste and neglect continues in the case of the vast majority of the private persons and corporations. It is estimated that fire alone destroys \$9,000,000 worth of timber a year.

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There is no crying need for radical reform in the methods of disposing of what are really agricultural lands. The present laws have worked well. The enlarged homestead law has encouraged the successful farming of lands in the semiarid regions.

Reclamation. By the reclamation act a fund has been created of the proceeds of the public lands of the United States with which to carry out the reclamation of bodies of water at proper altitudes, to provide by a suitable system of canals and ditches, the water is to be distributed over the land and suitable for the purposes to be sold to settlers at a price sufficient to pay for the improvements. Primarily, the projects are and must be for the irrigation of arid lands, and also within reach of the water supply, the furnishing at cost or profit of this water to private enterprise, where no maximum limit is fixed, and the maximum was \$75. Under the new regulations, adopted in 1908, the maximum price was increased to \$30, except in regions where there are large mines, where no maximum limit is fixed and the price is determined by the estimated tons of coal to the acre. The highest price fixed for any land under the regulation has been \$200. The appraisal value of the lands classified as coal lands and valued under the new and old regulations is shown to be as follows: \$30,221 acres are classed under old regulations at \$7,544,329, an average of \$18 an acre, and 5,847,702 acres are classed and valued under the new regulation at \$24,362,241, an average of \$41.67 an acre. For the year ending March 31, 1909, 27 entries were made, embracing an

area of 23,413 acres, which sold for \$283,832; and during August, 1910, there were 17 entries, with an area of 1,720 acres, which sold for \$210,000. The government has separated the surface of coal lands, either classified or withdrawn for classification, from the coal beneath, so as to permit at the same time the disposal upon the surface of lands useful for agriculture and to reserve the ownership in the coal to the government. The question which remains to be considered is whether the existing law for the sale of the coal in the ground should continue in force or be repealed and a new method of disposition adopted. Under the present law the absolute title to the coal beneath the surface passes to the grantee of the government. The price fixed is upon an estimate of the total of coal of coal per acre beneath the surface, and the prices are fixed so that the earnings will only be a reasonable profit upon the amount paid and the investment necessary. But, of course, this is more or less guesswork, and the government parts with the ownership of the coal in the ground, and the coal is sold to the geological survey estimate that in the United States today there is a supply of about three thousand billions of tons of coal, and that the investment necessary in the public domain. Of course, the other two thousand billions are within private ownership and under no more control as to the use of the investment as the coal may be sold than any other private property. If the government leases the coal lands and acts as any landlord would, and imposes conditions in its leases like those which are now imposed by the owners in fee of coal mines in the various coal regions of the east, then it could retain the disposal of the coal deposits a choice as to the assignee of the lease, or of resuming possession at the end of the term of the lease, which would be easily done by the government to exercise a limited but effective control in the disposition and sale of the coal to the public. It has been urged that the leasing system is not free from the same danger, and that its adoption would largely interfere with the investment of capital and the proper development and opening up of the resources. The question as to how great an area ought to be included in a lease to one individual or a group of individuals is a difficult one; but in view of the fact that the government retains control as owner, I think there might be some liberality in the amount of land to be included in a lease, so that it would not be too great a maximum.

By the opportunity to readjust the terms upon which the coal shall be held by the tenant, and the price to be paid for the lease or at periods during the term, the government may secure the benefit of sharing in the increased price of coal and the additional profit in the coal mines. By imposing conditions in respect to the character of work to be done in the mines, the government may control the character of the work, and may control the treatment of employees with reference to safety. By denying the right to transfer the lease except by the written permission of the government authorities, it may withhold the needed consent when it is proposed to transfer the leasehold to persons interested in establishing a monopoly of the coal in any state or neighborhood. The change from the absolute grant to the leasing system will involve a good deal of trouble in the matter of making proper leases; but the change will be a good one and can be made. The change is in the interest of conservation, and I am glad to report it.

Alaska Coal Lands. The investigation of the geological survey shows that the coal fields in Alaska cover about 1,500 square miles, and that there are known to be available about 15,000,000,000 tons. This is, however, an unduly low estimate, because further developments will probably increase this amount many times; but we can say with considerable certainty that the estimated coal in the Pacific slope which can be reached by railways at a reasonable cost from deep water—in one case about fifty miles and in another about 100 miles—amounts to about 6,000,000,000 tons of coal, more than half of which is of a very high grade of bituminous and is suitable for the production of steam. In the ground, one-half a cent a ton, which makes its value per acre from \$9 to \$50. The coaling-plant of Pennsylvania, which produces 16 million tons a year, while other Appalachian fields are worth from \$10 to \$38 an acre, and the fields in the central states from \$10 to \$20 an acre, the estimated coal in the Pacific slope is for about 4,000,000 tons a year. It would encounter the competition of the coal fields in the equivalent of 12,000,000 tons of coal a year is used there. It is estimated that the coal could be laid down at Seattle or San Francisco at a cost of \$35 or \$40 a ton. The price of coal on the Pacific slope varies greatly from time to time in the year, and from year to year, from \$1 to \$12 a ton. With a regular coal supply established, the expert of the geological survey, Mr. Brooks, who has made a report on the subject, thinks there would be an excessive profit in the Alaska coal mining because the price at which the coal could be sold would be considerably higher than the price from these fields and by the production of crude fuel oil. The history of the coal fields in the United States, and the coal lands shows them to need reclamation.

On November 12, 1906, President Roosevelt issued an executive order withdrawing all coal lands in the United States for purposes of classification. In 1907, 87,000 acres. Since that time there have been withdrawn by my order from entry for classification 17,080,000 acres, making a total withdrawal of 105,080,000 acres. Meantime, of the acres thus withdrawn, 12,571,000 have been classified and found not to contain coal, and have been restored to agricultural entry, and 4,285,000 acres have been classified as coal lands; while 7,283,000 acres remain withdrawn from entry for classification. In addition 28,000 acres have been classified as coal lands without prior withdrawal, thus increasing the classified coal lands to 112,800,000 acres.

Under the laws providing for the disposition of coal lands, the minimum price at which lands are permitted to be sold is \$10 an acre; but the secretary of the interior has the power to fix a maximum price and sell at that price. By the first regulations governing appraisal, appraisal value of the minimum was \$10, and the highest price actually placed upon any land sold was \$75. Under the new regulations, adopted in 1908, the maximum price was increased to \$30, except in regions where there are large mines, where no maximum limit is fixed and the price is determined by the estimated tons of coal to the acre. The highest price fixed for any land under the regulation has been \$200. The appraisal value of the lands classified as coal lands and valued under the new and old regulations is shown to be as follows: \$30,221 acres are classed under old regulations at \$7,544,329, an average of \$18 an acre, and 5,847,702 acres are classed and valued under the new regulation at \$24,362,241, an average of \$41.67 an acre. For the year ending March 31, 1909, 27 entries were made, embracing an

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