

[Feb 16, 1960]

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LET'S BALANCE OUR CONSERVATION BUDGET!

by

Senator Hubert H. Humphrey

One of the issues which must be brought out in the forthcoming Presidential campaign is too often glossed over in favor of problems of more apparent and immediate urgency. Yet this issue is of greatest concern to generations of Americans yet unborn -- and whose votes will not be counted until our times have passed into history.

What we do today to conserve our forests, waters, wildlife, soils, parks and wilderness areas will prove the most important single insurance policy which our generation can leave for our children's grandchildren. Here is the real test of our foresight -- of our professed idealism.

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During the first fifty years of the Century,
this nation showed a remarkable concern for the
proper care of our God-given natural resources.
Despite the fact that for nearly 300 years we exhibited
little concern over denuded forests, soil exploitation
and destruction of wildlife, a sudden and dramatic
soul-searching at the turn of the century developed
widespread and unchecked forest fires, soil erosion,
wasteful lumbering, river pollution and loss of our
abundant wildlife. Men who grew up on pioneer Mid-
western farms saw the virgin soils, magnificent timber
stands and large numbers of wild game of their early
youth decimated, impoverished and destroyed in a few
short years by the time they reached manhood.

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I am certain that this shocking experience drove intelligent men into action. Such men as Carl Shurz, W. J. McGee, John Wesley Powell and Van Hise, and many others from the mid-west joined forces with Teddy Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot, Frederick Olmsted and Steven Mather and others from the East to galvanize into action a broad national legislative program of conservation. National Forests, National Parks, wildlife legislation and the establishment of administrative programs to improve resource management all flowed out of this major reversal of our previous national resource policies -- and lack of them. The Conservation Movement was born and, I am proud to say, nurtured along by the strong support of midwest Agrarian reform movement headed by old Bob LaFollette, George Norris, and many other fighters for the public's interest.

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Again after World War I the United States witnessed the development of a strong grass-roots conservation movement. Concern over water pollution affecting nearly every burgeoning community was dramatized during the 1920's by the great political cartoonist-conservationist, "Ding" Darling. Worried sportsmen in the Middle West who saw fishing decline and public health threatened as a result of industrial and municipal pollution banded together in 1922 to form the Izaak Walton League of America. Chapters sprang up in the East, Middle West, South and Far West under the leadership of such crusading conservationists as Will Dilg of Minnesota and Haskell Noyes and Curley Radke of Wisconsin. Water pollution control laws were enacted under League pressure in many states. The great Horicon Marsh was restored and Kettle Moraine State Forest in Wisconsin was established: by the leadership of Waltonians.

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Here was a movement which attracted the concerned citizens in hundreds of communities -- large and small.

The magnificent record of conservation progress in the 1930's is still so fresh as to make unnecessary a detailed review of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's significant leadership in this field. The Civilian Conservation Corps, the Soil Conservation Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, major additions to our National Parks, literally dozens of new National Wildlife Refuges -- these are but a few of the major accomplishments during the New Deal left to us by this great conservation leader.

Less ~~Dramatic~~ but of equally lasting importance was the organization of thousands of independent sportsmen's and conservation clubs of the National Wildlife Federation,

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the Wildlife Management Institute. And the older organizations such as the American Forestry Association, the Audubon Society and National Parks Association all took on fresh vigor under these action programs.

Unfortunately these programs had to be curtailed with our entry into World War II, and recent years have seen little progress in the conservation field. In fact, conservationists have had to fight a continuous battle -- fortunately successful, in the main -- simply to hold the line against powerful pressure-groups seeking to undo 50 years of painfully constructed programs to curb forest fires and improve forest management on public and private land, to regulate overgrazing, to clean up polluted waters, to establish soil conservation practices, to expand our

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wildlife refuges and meet our needs for recreational programs.

The fact that these special interest groups were given aid and indeed, sponsorship by the present Republican Administration is one which no conservationist will soon forget.

Only because nearly two dozen of the nationally known conservation organizations were able to summon up their political power were we able to resist this war of attrition carried on by the Republicans against conservation. It is a tribute to the solid grass roots base upon which conservation stands today.

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But we have fought only a holding action.

Meanwhile, we have allowed our natural resources budget to become seriously unbalanced. Barely successful in holding back those who would tear down our conservation programs, we have not moved forward in the vast area needing direct public attention. We continue to drain our wetlands at alarming rates. Pollution of our rivers and streams is taking place faster than the construction of new treatment facilities. Despite the goals set up by the Timber Resource Review of the Forest Service, we are not replanting our denuded forest lands at rates sufficient to care for expanding populations -- and trees take time to grow.

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Only those minimum soil conservation measures required to save cropland are installed; we are doing nothing to prevent streambank erosion and river siltation. We are doing nothing to prevent the increasingly serious pollution of our city air. And so on down the list.

This then is what we mean when we say we are permitting the imbalance of our resource budget!

Matches up against the shortsighted fiscal budget submitted to Congress again this year by the Administration, the long-term resource imbalance becomes even more alarming.

It is not enough merely to resist those who would tear down what has been built up -- not in the face of an expanding population that will need new houses, more food,

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more water and more recreational opportunities each year. Our conservation programs must be accelerated to meet the problems pressing upon us. We cannot waste more time -- and more resources. We can no longer draw upon nature's bounty -- unbalancing our natural resources budget -- as we have in the past.

Two years ago I presented to the Congress and the Administration an estimate of the basic requirements of a natural resources restoration and development program, which was put together by the best informed men in the conservation movement. This estimate, which defines our national conservation goal, is summarized as follows:

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Forestry -- Reforestation of 28 million acres; timber

stand improvement 140 million acres; expansion

of fire protection especially in Alaska

200 million acres; purchase of 10 million

acres of National Forest in-holdings.

Soil and Watersheds -- Establishment of soil and

watershed conservation programs on

300 million acres of farm lands; similar

to those at Coon Valley, Wisconsin;

purchase and retirement from crop

production of 13 million acres of dust

bowl lands; revegetation of strip mine

areas.

Western Rangelands -- Brush clearing, water spreading

devices and revegetation over large parts

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of 200 million acres of Federal Grazing

Districts and Forest Service lands.

Parks and Recreation Lands -- Establishment and

refurbishing of recreational facilities

on National and State Parks, National

Forests and other public lands; purchase

of additional strategic recreational

tracts and access to water areas --

3 million acres.

Fish and Wildlife -- Establishment of wildlife

habitat and structural improvements on

wildlife refuges; expansion of wildlife cover

development on private lands; and expansion

of wildlife research programs; purchase of

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seven and one-half million acres of
wetlands, similar to the Horicon Marsh
in Wisconsin.

Pollution Control -- Construction of waste treatment
facilities for all present industrial and
municipal pollution, and new construction
as rapidly as needed.

The total cost of all programs which is about
one-half of one year's budget for defense alone, would
include also the purchase of 7.5 million acres of
wetlands for migratory waterfowl, acquisition of
3 million acres for recreational areas, retirement
to grazing of 13 million acres of chronic dustbowl
lands, addition of 10 million acres of National Forest

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in-holdings. It includes pollution control facilities needed to treat untreated present industrial and municipal waste.

These goals -- which could be accomplished readily over a ten-year period -- are not visionary, nor are they impossible. They are very realistic. During the 1930's Franklin D. Roosevelt showed that this work can and should be done, and that it was prudent economics to do so. Today we are harvesting the timber trees planted by the Civilian Conservation Corps. We are camping in the Park campgrounds on which campsites, fireplaces and sanitation facilities were constructed. We are catching more fish in streams and lakes where fish conservation measures were installed. Our soils are

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yielding tremendous crops as a result of soil conservation practices started during the New Deal. These, then, are a few of the dividends which are paid by investments in conservation.

These are not unemployment relief measures, but basic capital expenditures in the maintenance of the productivity of our basic natural resources.

I say to those men of little vision who would have us draw upon inherited natural bounty to show this year's bookkeeping profit, that if we pass on to our children's children wasted resources incapable of supporting future Americans, we shall deserve nothing but their scorn. But I say also, that if we take the bull by the horns we can soon put our natural resources into a condition which will pay dividends for all time.

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We can have adequate recreational areas such as those envisioned in Wisconsin's proposed Ice Age National Park; we can extend soil conservation measures such as those found at Coon Valley, Wisconsin, to include all untreated farm and range lands and eroding stream-banks. We can again have waterfowl in clouds circling about as at Horicon Marsh. Our fisheries resource can be made much more abundant and available to all. We can preserve a few large tracts of wilderness, like that on the Minnesota border, as living museums of our pioneer frontier; we can manage our forests to produce timber crops as abundantly as our future requires, and we can have pure water for drinking, industrial needs and recreation.

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And we can put a lot of young men into clean healthy jobs through a Youth Conservation Corps!

But to do this, as well as to undertake all of the other major programs in defense, foreign affairs, disarmament, agriculture, and education, we must have leadership capable of doing the job.

We must have the leadership of men who understand and have a feel for conservation needs and programs -- men who have demonstrated in their record that their interest in conservation is not mere campaign oratory -- men who have the same close feeling for the soil -- an ecological conscience as it were -- as those early Midwesterners who gave the leadership to the conservation movement in the beginning.

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America will continue to be America the Beautiful
only if we are determined to roll up our sleeves and
go to work to preserve and conserve what earlier
generations have left in our care.

February 16, 1960



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