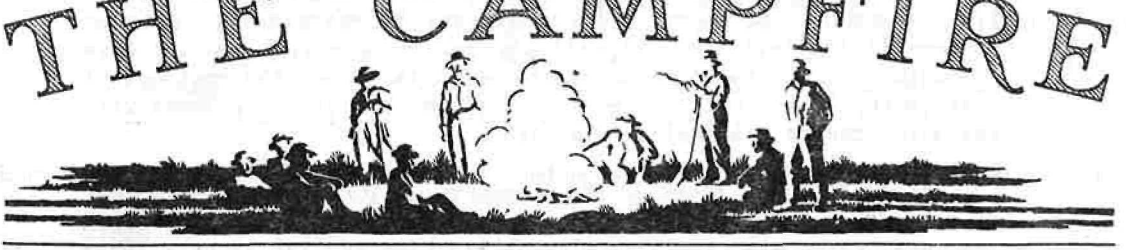
THE CAMPFIRE



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The campfire is interwoven into the fabric of America. Around it gathered the early explorers, the trappers, the fur traders and the soldiers. Today it connotes companionship, relaxation, and recreation in the out-of-doors. This bimonthly bulletin provides a figurative campfire about which we may exchange ideas that seem to us worth expressing and sharing.

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THE INTANGIBLE VALUES OF CONSERVATION

By Dr. Paul B. Sears
Professor of Conservation, Yale University

There are, as we know, many avenues of approach to conservation, though in the end they converge. One of the most fruitful and most neglected is that of accounting, or business analysis. Our whole situation with respect to natural resources can, in fact, be summarized by saying that we have, as a nation, rather consistently made entries in the Income column when they should have been reckoned as Depreciation.

Some years ago an unusually dry season created a serious fire hazard in the forests of southeastern Ohio, but it proved impossible by ordinary means to secure the release of sufficient state funds for the necessary patrol and other protection measures. As a routine matter I was approached along with other citizens interested in forestry to use whatever political influence I might have--it is negligible--in this worthy cause.

Instead, I suggested that we sit down and prepare a conservative analysis of the values which were at stake, the cost of protection, and a comparison of this cost with the allocations which a prudent business would make under similar circumstances. As you may guess, the cost was absurdly small when matched against routine expenditures made by business. As soon as these figures were presented to authorities at the state capitol, an adequate sum was released.

I am convinced that if this method were more generally employed by conservationists, many obstacles would become less formidable than they now seem. However, there are still many difficulties. This is

particularly true in the case of forestry where long term capitalization is almost necessary. It is not easy to approach the average land-owner and tell him, "It will pay you to establish and conserve a woodlot." In view of the pressure he feels to get the most out of every acre, it may not even be honest if we consider only those values which can be translated into cash.

Among the many forms in which wealth exists, none is more real or more important than those which are intangible. And yet, since they are intangible, they are elusive and keep the tax experts awake at nights. Some, like the good-will of a doctor's practice, are considered to be negotiable although more than one buyer has found that they evaporate with the genial personality which built them up.

A good way to get at the intangibles is to focus our attention on quality, rather than quantity. There is plenty of beefsteak in the Argentine, plenty of jewels and domestic servants in India, but we do not use them as the basis of our choice in deciding whether we would prefer those countries to our own.

The present revolt of Asia and Africa against the West is, as Edgar Ansel Mowrer points out, neither due to hunger nor Communist plotting, but to the wish of men to be looked on as men, and not colonial vassals. We are inclined to forget that the idea behind the American Revolution has been and still is, the great explosive force in the modern world. Mowrer goes on to show that the Iranian oil troubles are not primarily economic but social, due to Jim Crow treatment of Iranian workers by the Europeans.

British Communists walked out--and stayed out--of a meeting in Moscow of the brotherhood in which they were asked to support propaganda which was obviously false. When they objected, "But that would be lying" and were laughed at for their scruples, British labor support of the Russian regime was lost, I am told. Better lose a fair fight than win a crooked one was the sturdy idea.

Dignity and self-respect are certainly intangibles, but so precious are they that when a man lets them go cheap, we all think he never had them to sell in the first place.

Or take intangibles of another sort. Why do men amass wealth and how, generally, do they use it when they have it? The miser is rare, the man who loves power over others, unfortunately, not so rare. Both are despised. But the ends to which men generally use their wealth, and certainly those by which they wish to be remembered, are largely intangible, if you look behind the material evidence. American philanthropy--galleries, libraries, aid to the blind, endowments of learning--all antedate the problem of income tax exemption and estate taxes.

The conservation movement in our country has involved both kinds of values from the beginning. The aesthetic appreciation of forests had as much to do with early attempts at conservation as did practical concern for the future lumber supply. I suspect the same is true with

other resources. Men will fight harder and more doggedly for something they think they or their grandchildren might someday need. This is truer today than ever, for voices--even those of eminent scientists--soothingly assure us that no matter how badly we use our resources some bright lad will show us a way around the difficulty.

Because we are a practical and business-like people, there is a tendency in some quarters to rely too strongly on narrowly practical arguments for conservation. Thus the Army Engineers and Reclamation Services are required, very properly, to prepare budgets of cost and expected benefits. There is growing dissatisfaction with both entries, partly because of the difficulties of prophecy. But one of the greatest causes of mistrust lies in the fact that the operations of both groups involve hazards which lie outside the strict field of engineering and bring about changes in the landscape which affect its quality.

Every forester is aware of similar tensions within his own field of interest. Most foresters I know have chosen to work with trees because they like trees. Their original motive is an aesthetic, artistic impulse rather than an economic one. So unless they are callous indeed, they are sensitive to the problem of trees for harvesting versus trees for enjoyment. They have done very well at resolving this conflict.

Without for a moment playing down the urgent need of conserving woods, waters, soils, and wildlife for use, it is my belief that we shall do irreparable damage to our country unless we conceive of use within a proper framework of intangible values. No man in his senses is content with a house that provides only an adequate and convenient shelter. He wants it to be in the kind of neighborhood he likes, adorned and beautified according to his standard of taste.

More and more he insists on the same values in the factories and business structures where he spends his working life. Most of our striving is for something beyond bare physical necessities. When a man is interested in nothing more, he is dead though he continues to breathe. The same is true of civilization.

So I suggest it is high time for a new emphasis in conservation. It is not enough to plan the most efficient ways of conserving for future and continuous consumption. We must give thought to the kind of a national landscape within which we will conserve and consume. Do we want it to follow the pattern of those indoor, overbred leghorns and dairy cattle, streamlined for phenomenal production of eggs and milk until nothing is left at the end but an exhausted carcass? I doubt if that is even good economics.

Or do we want to meet our material needs within a continent where generous provision has been made to insure that it is the kind of setting we like to live in? Do we want to depend for the intangible qualities of our living only on those reserves for which no competing "practical" use can be found? Or will we insist on the

same philosophy in our national home-making that any intelligent man follows in establishing a place for his family to live?

The question is urgent. There is unremitting pressure from those who would turn a nimble dollar by picking the landscape to its bare bones. Only by hard fighting has it been possible to keep back invasion of national monuments and parks set aside in perpetuity for the use and enjoyment of the people.

It is time to recognize that conservation goes far deeper than the matter of bread and butter. It involves the whole conception of freedom, dignity, and the American spirit.

(From speech at the 1951 Annual Meeting of the American Forestry Association)

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THE NEED FOR WILD THINGS

There are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot .... Wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them. Now we face the question whether a still higher "standard of living" is worth its cost in things natural, wild and free. For us of the minority, the opportunity to see geese is more important than television, and the chance to find a pasqueflower is a right as inalienable as free speech.

These wild things, I admit, had little human value until mechanization assured us a good breakfast, and until science disclosed the drama of where they came from and how they lived. The whole conflict thus boils down to a question of degree. We of the minority see a law of diminishing returns in progress; our opponents do not.

(Aldo Leopold in *A Sand County Almanac*)

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HON. SHERMAN ADAMS, GOVERNOR OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, ON CONSERVATION

The practice of conservation is an act of patriotism, and the understanding of it, the preaching of it and the contribution to it, are parts of the fundamental duties of a citizen in a free society. The work of your council is therefore a commendable effort. It should be effective work and the measure of your effectiveness will be how much each one of you as individuals is willing to offer of yourselves, of your time, energy and sometimes money.

(From speech before the Second Conservation Conference, Natural Resources Council of Connecticut, 1951)

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