

## POVERTY OR CONSERVATION

(By Jay N. "Ding" Darling.)

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*"To conserve does not mean to refrain from human use and enjoyment but rather to use understandingly and with respect for nature."*—Frank A. Kittredge, in "Recreation."

WE have, as a nation, specialised on exploitation. We have exploited our forests, exploited our rivers and lakes, exploited our soils and exploited our wildlife. The question is, how long can we continue to live by exploitation alone? It was Benjamin Franklin who wrote "Forever taking out and never putting anything in soon exposes the bottom of the meal barrel."

Conservation is the reverse of exploitation, and unless we begin soon to counteract exploitation by the practice of conservation, how soon shall we find ourselves at the bottom of an empty barrel, looking out through the bung hole at our departed standards of living.

The term conservation has too often been accepted as though it applied *only* to forests, fish and game, and the beauties of nature. Quite universally conservationists are looked upon as close relatives of "Ferdinand the Bull," whose sole ambition was "just to smell the flowers."

Within the ranks of conservationists we discover group self-interests whose motives are only slightly removed from those of the exploiters. The landman thinks only of land conservation; the birdman thinks in terms of saving the birds; the fisherman thinks conservation means more and bigger fish. Each is, of course, an integral part of conservation, but we can no more succeed by thinking of conservation in terms of a single pet resource by itself, than we can think of the legs of a man functioning without a body.

Land, water and vegetation are just that dependent on one another. Without these three primary elements in natural balance, we can have neither fish nor game, wild flowers nor trees, labour nor capital, nor sustaining habitat for humans.

To attempt to remedy the lack of fish in our streams or game on our uplands without attacking the ailments of our land, water and vegetation, would be like trying to cure consumption with Smith Brothers cough drops. Building ten thousand new fish hatcheries will not restore

the fish unless we first restore the condition of the waters in our lakes and streams so that fish can live in them.

When water goes, vegetation departs with it. When vegetation departs, soil goes. When soil is gone man can no longer remain. Neither man nor beast can live without vegetation and vegetation cannot exist without water and soil.

If I read aright the signs in the skies, these more *fundamental aspects* of conservation have been, and are still, a blind spot in our social, economic and political vision. If we continue to ignore them we shall have not only no fishing or hunting, but we shall be heading our nation into social, economic and political bankruptcy.

Savants of culture have traced man's progress from his lowly beginning with a stone axe in his hand and little on his mind, up to and including air-conditioned homes, luxurious transportation and universal education—but these same experts have consistently failed to note that where natural resources failed, *culture, progress and civilisation* died.

Scientists have deciphered the secret formulae of chemistry and physics to transmute sawlogs into silk, to deaden pain and lengthen the span of man's existence with products distilled from nature's organic laboratory, but have they given thought to perpetuation of the *source* of organic materials with which they perform their magic? That problem remains practically unapproached.

Political scientists and economists have devised formulae for wealth, and labour has claimed to be its sole creator, but none has paused long enough to observe that without natural organic resources there would have been *no* labour, *no* political scientists, *no* wealth and *no* human life.

Can it be that all our planning and hope of prosperity is based on the false assumption that nature's resources are inexhaustible? Crumbling ruins where ancient civilisations once prospered would indicate that other races and other nations before us have miscalculated their