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Recreational Land Problems and Policies

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RECREATION IS "OFF THE JOB" LIVING, IN-SO-FAR AS it is designed to give pleasure, relaxation and satisfaction to the individual.

Horace Albright, the former Director of the National Park Service, tells the story of a conversation he once had with an engineer who was visiting Yosemite. The engineer waxed eloquent on the proposition that the national interest would best be served if those who valued the beauty and recreational opportunities of Yosemite would take thousands of photographs for preservation for posterity, and then allow the engineers to build a dam at the entrance of the valley so as to turn to economic ends the potential resources in power and irrigation which the valley contained. The suggestion was advanced in all seriousness and illustrates the gulf of misunder-

standing which those who believe in recreational values must somehow bridge in order to gain in certain quarters even a tolerance for their views. It is the age-long gulf between fact and value, between the tangible and the imponderable, between things material and things of the spirit.

It is not that a strong case cannot be made out that there are tangible economic values in recreational programs. This holds true for those under governmental agencies as well as for recreation which is privately sponsored. The exploitation of natural phenomena, for example, the Luray Caverns and the Natural Bridge of Virginia, has made more than one millionaire. Recreation as sheer industry, especially if the recreational aspects of other industries are included, counts its annual balance sheet in the billions. Though even an approximate measurement of the economic implications is difficult, the fact remains that under any method of calculation, states such as New Hampshire or Wyoming¹ must rate their recreational attractiveness as one of their top three or four economic assets.

The National Park Service has recently attempted the precise measurement of recreational facilities in monetary terms.² In general, the conclusion is that such measurement presents almost unsurmountable difficulties, but that to say there are difficulties in the way of measurement must never be allowed to obscure the fact that the economic and monetary values exist. The increased income of merchants and of hotel proprietors and concessioners, in or near recreational centers, is substantial and obvious. The substantial increase in land values and hence in taxable capacity in communities bordering our National Parks is likewise apparent, although the percentage of this increase attributable to recreational facilities may be the subject of controversy in particular cases. Moreover, one must never overlook the increase in productivity and earning capacity of millions and millions of Americans, both management and workers, as the result of the energizing influence of wholesome recreation.

All these statements would be generally accepted. Yet just because a firm monetary figure of the values concerned cannot be demonstrated, they are far too often overlooked. If, in what follows, reference to those values in monetary terms is not made, it must not be thought that this aspect is overlooked or its importance under-

¹ The figure for Wyoming for 1949 is estimated over \$85,000,000. Cervi's *Rocky Mountain Journal*, p. 3, Nov. 17, 1949.

² This report entitled "The Economics of Public Recreation" is not yet complete. The portions thus far finished are yet only in preliminary form, and are not generally available.

rated. On economic grounds alone, the case for increased provision of wholesome recreational facilities, under both private and governmental auspices, is extremely strong.

THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF RECREATION

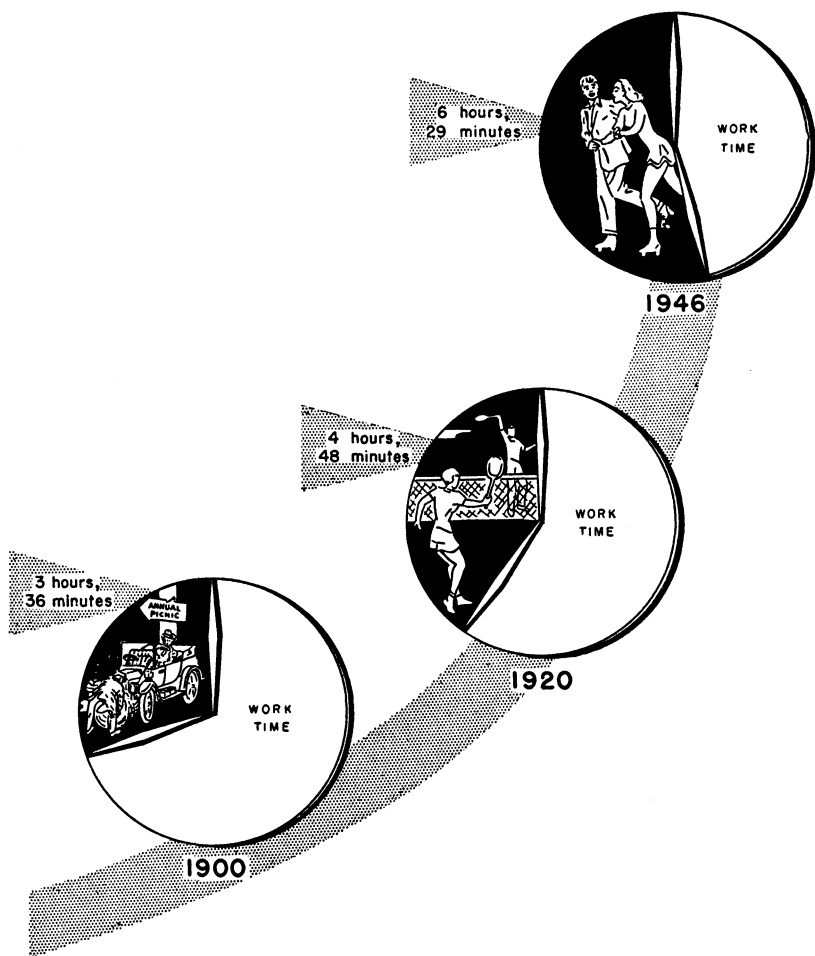
Yet, we must never lose sight of the fact that back of the economic order and its statistical and monetary expression lie those basic human needs for which the economic order itself exists. To the satisfaction of these needs, our natural resources should be ultimately dedicated, not only for those of us now living but even more for generations yet to come.

Consider, if you will, a few simple facts involving the relationships between these basic needs and our resources. For food and clothing we look to our soils, for shelter we look to our forests, for our national security, for our power, for our transportation, and for the heat of our houses we look to our minerals and water resources. This is not the end of the story, for man has other needs just as fundamental extending beyond his food, his clothing, his shelter, and even his security. Back of monetary income, back of income of goods and services lies man's psychic income, his ultimate enjoyment of his food, his clothing, his shelter, his security. This is ultimately the only real income of which we know. In this same psycho-physical sense that man needs food, man's nature calls for activity and self-expression. Man is born curious. Man's personality requires the esthetic expression of the beautiful.

To a very remarkable degree the satisfaction of these other needs belongs, not to the sphere of his economic activity, but to the use he makes of his leisure time. A satisfying expression of these other inner drives of man is largely dependent upon the use we make of our natural resources, more especially upon the program of recreation that rests upon these resources.

The extent and the consequent opportunity of leisure time is capable of statistical demonstration. In the Prewitt report are brought together some tremendously important data bearing on this point. It is recognized that under modern conditions as well as of old, about twelve hours of every twenty-four of a man's time are necessarily taken up by eating, sleeping, personal hygiene, dressing and other minor items for which the title "personal maintenance" will serve as an inclusive term. It is only the other fifty per cent of a man's time which in practice is distributable. In 1900, 70 per cent of the remaining twelve hours of his average day were taken up by

GROWTH OF OUR LEISURE TIME*



* Chart based upon 12 hours. The remaining 12 hours of each day are taken up by eating, sleeping, personal hygiene, dressing, etc.

FIG. 10.1.—Growth of our leisure time. Chart is based upon 12 hours. The remaining 12 hours of each day are taken up by eating, sleeping, personal hygiene, dressing, etc.

man's work at earning a living. By 1920, this had fallen to 60 per cent; in 1946 it had dropped to 46 per cent. Expressed in reverse—in 1900, 30 per cent of man's time was available for leisure. In 1920, 40 per cent; in 1946, 54 per cent (Fig. 10.1). So great has been the shift in this apportionment of man's time between his work and his leisure that we are now in an era in which for the first time in history, the latter exceeds the former. If this were the only measurement of the need for growth in recreational facilities nationally, the case would be exceedingly strong. But this is by no means the whole picture. During the same period, our population has grown from 76 million to 141 million. Thus, even were the number of hours available for recreation in the average man's life the same as in 1900, we would still presumably need approximately double the recreational facilities. However, if we put together the increase in the number of hours available and the increase in the number of people and then assign the index number of 100 to the year 1900, the presumed need for recreation in 1946 is appropriately represented by an index number of 333. In other words, on the basis of even this superficial indication of social trends the recreational needs and opportunities have more than trebled so far this century (Fig. 10.1).

This is by no means the whole picture. Craftsmanship has always been regarded as a satisfying element, psychologically speaking, in a man's work. With the coming of mass production, craftsmanship is lessening, and the values associated with it must more and more be found in leisure time. Moreover, physical activity—if not excessive—has also been regarded as having its compensations, especially when associated with farm life. Here again, increasing urbanization and increasing specialization have forced man more and more to look for the opportunity for physical activity in his leisure time rather than in his work. Urban life itself multiplies tension and decreases relaxation; and we are paying the penalty in the increased population in our mental institutions, the increased instability in our homes, and the increased friction in life generally.

Yet the same power revolution that has produced the problem has increased the opportunity of making a wholesome and imaginative recreational program practicable. Per capita real income has more than doubled in this century. The five-day week, more vacations and longer vacations, later entry into industry, longer life after retirement—all these represent on the one hand a greater demand for recreation and, on the other, a greater opportunity to enjoy it.

Every sign points to all of these major social trends continuing. They represent one of the major factors to be taken into account in any thinking about the nature and welfare of the society of the future.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE RECREATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The respective roles of private enterprise and of government are questions which haunt most branches of man's activities, and recreation is no exception. Even within the field of government the respective recreational roles of the locality, of the state, of the nation, and even of international organization are likewise to be found among the most perplexing problems. Without being at all dogmatic as to what ought to be, it may be of interest to outline the present trend.

The sphere of private enterprise and activity can rightly claim most of man's recreation in which he is more or less passive. Movies, watching sports, resorts, are cases in point. Certain luxury sports, such as golf and horse racing, normally also fall within the sphere of private enterprise. When one considers that this vast range of private recreation extends from the weekend bender to listening to the blare of the radio, it is perhaps clear that in terms of the national interest it is doubtful as to whether private recreation as now constituted actually lies on the credit or the debit side of the picture in terms of human betterment.

The provision of recreation by our municipalities and local government units becomes, not so much a problem of the alternative use of our resources, as of urban values. As such it is almost entirely outside the scope of this chapter. The needs and nature of a balanced urban recreational system are theoretically well established, but require translation into action. The bulk of public provision for recreation for children and youth, after hours recreation for adults, and some weekend recreation are obviously the primary responsibility of local governments.

Increasingly the states are playing a role in the recreation field. In part this is "promotional." Out-of-state visitors are to be attracted and state residents are to be kept within the state borders, presumably with the beneficial by-product of their spare cash entering or remaining within the state. State parks, state recreational facilities along highways, state parkways, are illustrative of this trend. Beaches and other water front developments under state auspices are increasing. In general, the state caters to weekends of its own residents, to short vacations and to tourists from other states. Substantial natural

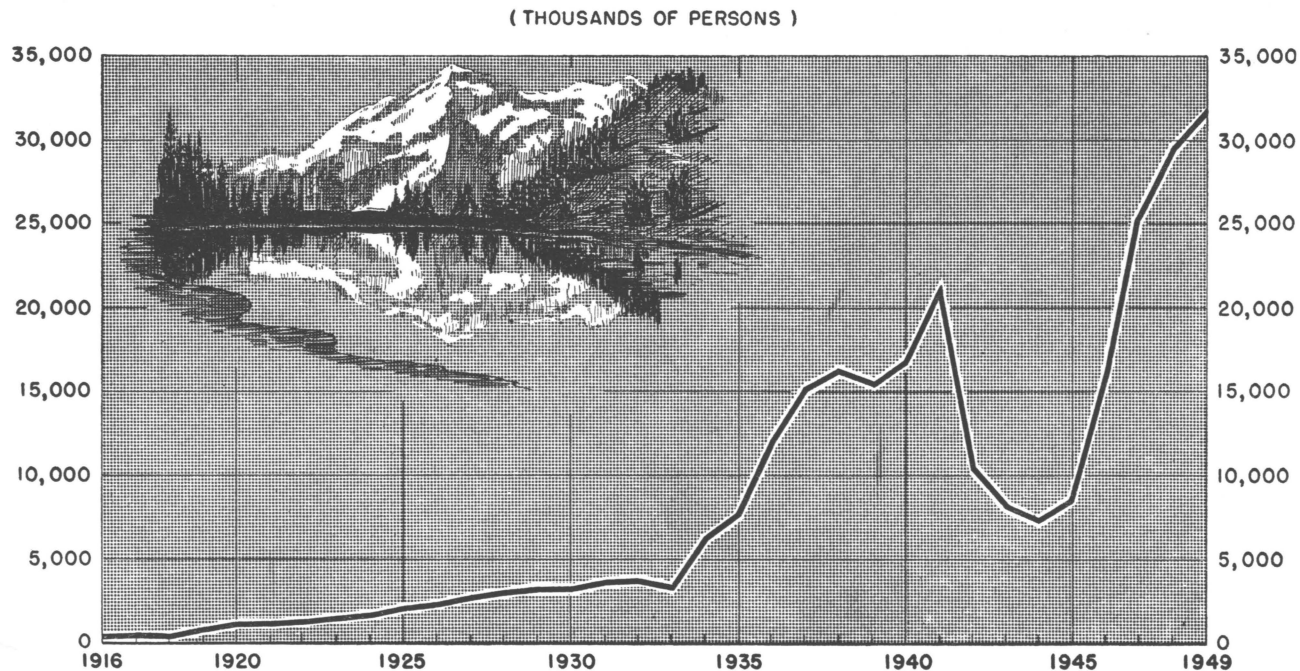
resources are to be found in many state park systems, especially those of states such as New York and California that have led in this development.

However, the real concern of most persons lies in the program of the federal government. It is unnecessary to enter the controversial field of federal aid to state and local recreational programs to indicate the tremendous importance of Federal recreational responsibility, especially in connection with our public lands. Here surely is a field ample enough to engage the interest of our government for many decades to come. Many of the considerations advanced will apply also to the states. Before outlining the issues and suggestions for an ideal program, let us examine what we now have.

Paramount responsibility in the federal recreation field is shared by two agencies: The National Park Service of the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture. This is not to underrate the incidental and occasionally important recreational aspects of the work of other agencies, such as Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Indian Service. To list these agencies is itself to further underscore the fact that, as far as the federal government is presently concerned, the problem is almost exclusively one of land management or the alternative uses of our public domain.

Let us first take a brief look at the National Park Service. By 1947, there were 28 national parks comprising over 11 million acres. In addition, there were more than double this number of national monuments—many of them of considerable acreage. The total number of visitors in 1948 in the National Park System has been estimated at over 25 million, of whom over 11 million were to the national parks (Fig. 10.2). The National Park Service also administers several important recreational areas for the Bureau of Reclamation and the Army Engineers, areas which have been developed in connection with certain flood control and irrigation projects of these two agencies. A complete catalog of the National Park Service activities would also include a number of minor classifications, notably the National Parkways and the National Capital Parks. Of historic interest, although not affecting the resources picture materially, are the national memorials and national cemeteries, also under National Park Service jurisdiction.

The National Parks themselves are the most spectacular and the most important of the activities of this agency. The scenic resources of our country are by no means evenly distributed, nor



NOTE 1916-18, exclusive of visitors to National Monuments
1916-42 and 1947-49, figures based on travel year ending September 30
1943-46, visitors for fiscal year ending June 30

FIG. 10.2.—Visitors to national park service areas, 1916-49. Note: 1916-18, exclusive of visitors to National Monuments. 1916-42 and 1947-49, figures based on travel year ending September 30, 1943-46, visitors for fiscal year ending June 30. (United States Department of Interior.)

can their preservation safely be left to private enterprise. The Park Service policy has been clear and consistent: at least one example, and if possible the best example, of each type of our outstanding scenic resources should for all time be preserved—as nearly as possible in its natural state. To call the roster of the National Parks is to indicate how splendidly this ideal has been sustained. The majesty of the Grand Canyon, the luxuriant rain forests of the Olympics, the natural curiosities of the Yellowstone, the scenic grandeur of the Tetons, the tangled beauty of the swamps of the Everglades, the rock-bound sea coast of Acadia, the natural volcanic wonders of Crater Lake and of Hawaii—these, and the other national parks thus far established, constitute a priceless heritage that we dare not threaten by commercialism on the one side or by public development on the other. To add to such a system, as well as to preserve inviolate what we now have, is surely a not-unworthy objective in the management of our public domain. Moreover, in certain of the national parks such as Mesa Verde; and in many, if not most of the national monuments, there are also historical and archeological values which are second only to those scenic values which determined the establishment of most of the parks.

The very success of the national park system has itself created the major day-to-day problems which face the Park Service. The enclaves of private land within the park borders soar in value through the growth in use of the parks themselves and hamper the purchase program which is our declared national policy. The very popularity and the resultant overuse of the parks threaten at least some of their value as exhibits of nature at her finest, and at the same time create serious problems of inadequacy of staff as the crowds come. These crowds, sometimes bringing with them a hankering for some type of amusement to which they are accustomed in the city, continuously exert pressure for a whittling down of standards to the lowest common denominator.

It is not ordinarily appreciated that the Forest Service ranks along with the National Park Service as of equal magnitude in the recreational horizon. Statistics indicate that about 21 million people annually visit the national forests for recreational purposes (Fig. 10.3). This does not include those who necessarily passed through the forests in transit from one place to another. Over 6,000 public camps, picnicking grounds and other recreational facilities have been provided by the Forest Service for public use. The scenic resources of the national forests likewise do not suffer by comparison

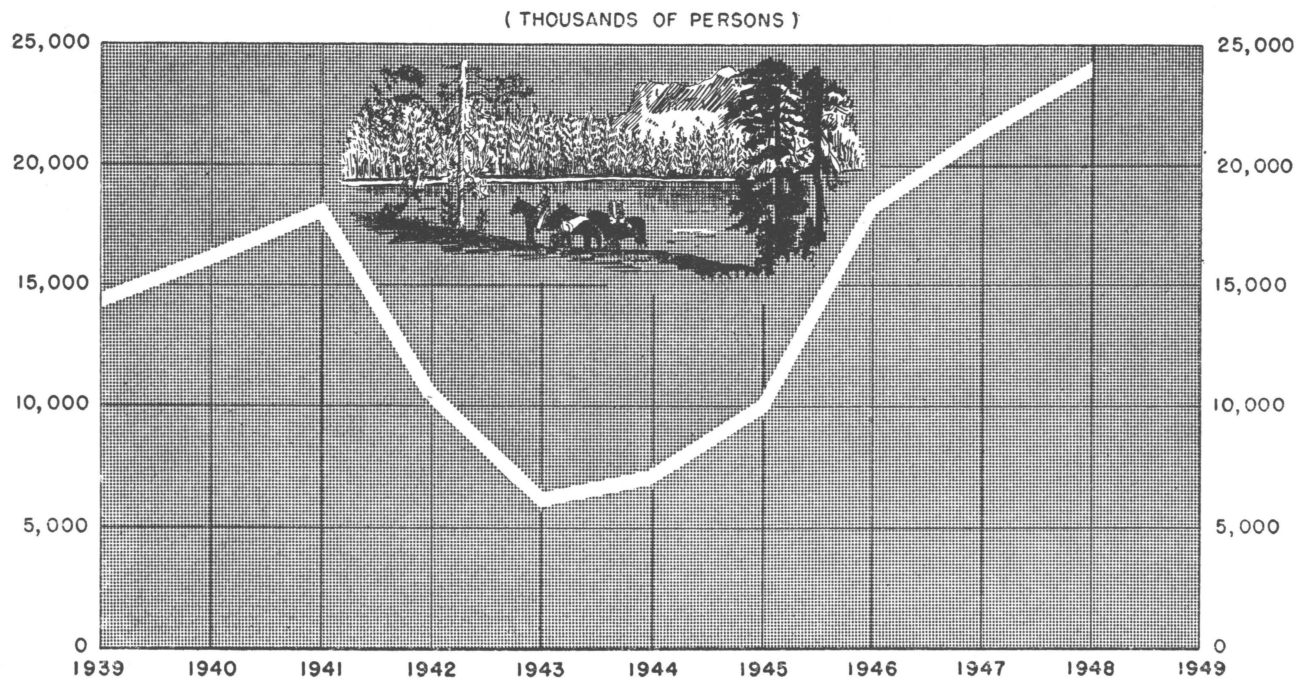


FIG. 10.3.—Visitors to National Forests for recreational purposes, calendar years, 1939–48. (Forest Service, USDA.)

with those of the National Park Service. Moreover, there are more and greater wilderness and wild areas preserved in their primitive state in the lands under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service even than in the national park system. Seventy-seven such wilderness and wild areas comprising 14 million acres have been so designated under the powers given to the Secretary of Agriculture and the Forest Service. Trails, scenic highways, skiing and winter sport facilities, hunting and fishing governed by state laws, boating, trails and facilities for trail riding also play their part in the recreational program of the Forest Service. The problem of the Forest Service, however, is different in kind from that of the Park Service. In the latter, recreation is by statute the dominant objective in land use. Artificialization of lakes and streams is forbidden, the grazing that remains is to be eliminated, timber cutting permitted under the terms of the original acquisition of land is eventually to be stopped and the national parks are not ordinarily subject to mineral entry. On the other hand, the part of the domain under the control of the Forest Service is for the most part meant to be utilized on a sustained yield basis in the national interest—broadly considered. Timber cutting, flood prevention, grazing, storage and use of water for irrigation purposes as well as recreation are important, and often more important uses from the standpoint of national policy. Furthermore, safeguards of recreational interests in the Forest Service lands are administrative rather than statutory. Under these circumstances, recreation must take its place as one of many competing uses.

Time does not permit discussion of the status of recreation in connection with lands under the jurisdiction of the Fish and Wildlife Service but the problems are essentially not dissimilar from those of the two agencies already discussed.

ISSUES IN RECREATIONAL USE OF THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

With this over-all picture in mind, we are ready to consider in somewhat greater detail the major issues in connection with recreation and the public domain.

Within recreation itself there is the ever present issue of balance rising out of competing recreational needs and demands. In the famous study made in 1941 by the National Park Service entitled, "A Study of the Park and Recreational Problems of the United States,"³ there is rich material indicating the relative interest of

³ *A Study of the Park and Recreational Problem of the United States*. U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, U. S. Govt. Print. Off. Washington, 1941.

people in various forms of recreation. By a somewhat arbitrary grouping these forms may be divided into four categories. In the first category—that of greatest popularity—come sight-seeing and touring, picnicking, swimming, and fishing. Group two comprises activities popular with large numbers of people, but nevertheless caters to a considerably smaller group than does group one. These include camping, hiking, boating, and nature study. There is a further group of minor interests such as trail riding. Winter sports belong in a somewhat different category, in the light of their very rapid increase in popularity.

Unfortunately some of these types of recreation are in conflict, and there is some danger of mass demand seriously hurting the concept of balance between the various uses. We must beware of putting Blue Ridge Parkways on every range or demonstrating spectacular engineering skill by making possible the ascent of every mountain in the plush recesses of a late model car. Each type of demand obviously ought to be supplied within limits. Planning on a national scale could minimize the conflicts, and cater to all groups.

It is doubtful whether the commercial type of recreation belongs in our national forests, and certainly it has no place at all in our national parks. Plenty of opportunity exists on privately owned land for any and all types of commercial development, and such development seriously impairs the superior value to the nation of the noncommercial forms of recreation.

On the assumption that the concept of balance has been successfully worked out as between competing forms of recreation, we next face the far more difficult problems of multiple use and of conflict of interest in our public domain policy generally. This conflict is most noticeable in the constant struggle between the recreation groups and the lumber, the grazing, and the mining interests. The present threat of the lumber interests to the superb and irreplaceable virgin timber stands in the Olympic National Park will serve by way of illustration, as will the constant efforts of livestock men to obtain permission to graze in the park lands. At times, such conflict of interest originates, not with any private group, but rather with one of the other agencies of the Federal Government. This is especially true in connection with irrigation, power, and flood control projects. Without yielding to the temptation to pass judgment on particular situations, we may illustrate by indicating that the program of the Army Engineers threatens the present boundaries of Glacier National

Park; and that the preservation of the wilderness status of Lake Solitude in the Cloud Peak Primitive Area in the Big Horn National Forest falls athwart the plans of the Bureau of Reclamation.

But all is not conflict. Broadly speaking, there is a parallelism of interest between the use of the public domain for recreation, the conservation of the forests, and the preservation for future generations of at least some of our mineral resources. The parallelism of interest of recreation and of watershed protection with the tremendously important secondary consequences of the latter to the programs of siltation prevention in our dams and of flood control is a parallelism only commencing to be appreciated. The conflicts between recreational values and the activities of the Fish and Wildlife Service are easily resolvable. Hunting is probably an exception. Scientific research in land use, botany, mineralogy, geology, zoology, and a large number of subsidiary sciences is obviously, in general, aided by preservation of land in its native state. Moreover, the depression-born program of the Civilian Conservation Corps left as one of its ultimate products, not only a fine record of disease and pest control, but the opening up through trails, camps, and other suitable recreational facilities of larger areas of our parks and forests hitherto for practicable purposes completely inaccessible to all but a very few of our people.

VALUE JUDGMENTS IN RECREATION

Is there then some basis for an answer to this most perplexing of all problems involving alternative land uses? Can there be for recreation a program, imaginative and adequate, and yet at the same time reasonable—one which will bring balanced use within its own sphere, and the development as well as the conservation of our resources in other spheres?

Some forms of value judgments in the choice of various forms of recreation can be given a plus rating and others a minus rating in their effect on the individual. Surely government in its concept of the public interest has a responsibility to weight the scales on the side of the plus forms. This holds true, whatever may be one's theory as to the role of government in discouraging or prohibiting the minus. This generalization of aiding the plus is extremely attractive, but it does lead straight into fundamental considerations of philosophy and ethics. The term, "public interest," has never been defined precisely to the satisfaction of everyone, nor have criteria been evolved sufficiently precise on which to base judgment in

particular cases. We have preferred too often to remain in the convenient ambiguity of broad generalizations. Nevertheless, the advocate or opponent of a particular program owes it to his audience to define his value system in these matters. To measure the public interest is to judge a matter in terms of its contribution to the fulfillment of individual personalities in such fashion as to enhance and not frustrate the personality fulfillment of others. This has been said thousands of times before and better said. Adopting personality fulfillment as the criterion, a recreational program should promote seven objectives, each one of which seems to be part and parcel of such personality fulfillment when this fulfillment is spelled out in detail.

The first of these is physical fitness. A recreational program should be a participating program, maximizing the opportunity for hiking, swimming and other health-giving activities. This is so obvious as not to require any lengthy explanation.

A second objective, the enhancement of mental hygiene, is less well appreciated. The din of city life, the tension of the intricate economic and social relations and conflicts, the ever present rush and hurry—these lie at the root, not merely of the tremendous increase in nervous and mental breakdowns, but also of a high percentage of those halfway stations on the decline from complete sanity and poise to actual breakdown which are characteristic of most of us. Feelings of resentment, irritability, anxiety, are by-products in many, if not most, instances of the type of life to which an urban society at top tempo condemns the great majority of our people. Psychiatrists and psychologists through intricate analysis attempt to patch up or adjust personalities to these situations, but these practitioners of the mental art would be the first to agree that rest, the practice of contemplation, the complete absence of any distraction have therapeutic values to troubled minds, and form an integral part of any sane and normal personality. If this rest, this contemplation, this solitude can be in scenes of great beauty, of grandeur, of majesty, how much more will the experience mean.

In the third place, there is no reason for not placing equal emphasis upon the spiritual strength that recreation in close communion with nature at her finest and best can give. It is not an accident that the great faiths of the world have been hewn in the deserts and mountains, and not in the cities. The solid core of spiritual strength which democracy seems to need to give it its necessary dedication to the public good can of course come through

many channels. Yet one of these channels historically has been forest and stream, mountain and sea, and all the sights and sounds which cleanse man's thoughts from the clutter and irrelevancies and pettinesses of so much of our hectic society.

In the fourth place, surely man in all ages has held the growth of his esthetic appreciation as among his ultimate values. The beauty of the Gothic cathedrals traces to the forests of Western Europe. The sounds of nature have brought some of music's greatest symphonies; and whether or not the individual has the talent or the chance to translate his esthetic experience into the media of painting, or poetry, or music, or architecture, the thing that beauty of nature can do to his personality in increasing its significance is beyond price.

In the fifth place, it is to the credit of our National Park System, that along with the preservation of the great achievements of nature, there is also an honoring of our history and thereby an urge toward love of country in its purest and finest sense among our people. The birthplace of Lincoln, the site of the Gettysburg Battlefield, the Alamo, the Oregon Trail—these too are America.

In the sixth place, surely the growth of scientific interest, of curiosity about man and things is part of the development of a full personality. A study of nature as well as its appreciation; the preservation of primitive areas as they were before they were touched by man so that the balance of nature, her conflicts and her ways can be observed; swamp and primeval forests, the erosion of a canyon, the sanctuaries of wildlife, the sand dunes from the ceaseless activity of sea and wind—these all have a scientific importance, little, if any, inferior to their contribution to the growth of the esthetic and spiritual.

Finally, of course, in looking toward the fulfillment of personality we must enhance man's chances to develop his social nature along lines that will promote cooperative ventures for the common good. It would be tempting to elaborate at this point on the particular contribution in this regard of boy's and girl's camps, but space does not permit. Suffice it to say that some, at least, of our national recreational program should and does recognize this particular value. That man himself recognizes and craves this type of development is at the root of why, for the most part, recreation of this type has proved commercially profitable as well as personally valuable.

The foregoing is the briefest of sketches of a philosophy of constructive recreation that lies close to the heart of our national interest.

A NATIONAL RECREATIONAL PROGRAM

How much and what then do we need for an adequate national program of recreation? If you agree that these values are the paramount ones, what in practice should be the component elements of such a national program? Have we here a measure of recreation's stake in our natural resources? Here are three guiding principles.

The first principle is the inviolability in their primitive form of those areas which alone can give some of the foregoing values in full measure. Mental hygiene, spiritual strength, esthetic growth, scientific interest seem to be at their maximum only when nature is essentially left as she is. To commercialize our national parks, to invade our wilderness areas with the sights and sounds of civilization, to replace primeval forest by scrub growth and tangle, to dam a Yosemite Valley is to impair the very essence of what makes these areas the finest and best way of making their virtually unique contribution to the development of personality. To hold this is not selfishness on the part of those, even though they are as yet few in number, who value the primeval or who look toward areas of solitude or who do not want billboards placarded over a place of beauty or who resist the entrance of an airplane into the habitat of moose. For those who value these things have an incorrigible belief—a belief that somehow or other in this mad world those elements of poise and perspective and spiritual insight which we associate with nature have a contribution to make with which the nation can ill dispense. It is hoped that the demand and use of parks and wilderness areas will increase, but with the increase that the number of these areas will likewise be increased, so that the very education of the public as to their value may not so crowd them as to lose much of what they are meant to be and do.

As a practicable matter, such areas, though increasingly accessible through modern transportation, will still leave the great majority of the people without the opportunity to enjoy them. Consequently, the continual multiplying under Forest Service and state and local responsibility of a network of areas so developed as to make at least a modest contribution to the seven values indicated will be necessary. Small wild areas, parkways, roadside facilities, noncommercial development of at least some of the seashore, lakeshore, and river banks should bring some such opportunities within reach of millions.

Finally, foresight in planning recreation on a national scale is needed. We seem to be moving toward a period of multiple purpose

river basin development on a scale and with an imagination which dwarfs anything hitherto accomplished. Surely recreation has now reached a stature of parity with those other uses and purposes of the public domain, with irrigation, flood control, power and the like, which are more frequently associated in the public mind with such development. The doctrine that public welfare has many alternative expressions should be recognized, and irrigation, flood control, and power development, however important, must not be allowed completely free reign. They can constitute as great a menace as any commercial or private interest to the development of a recreational program. It is balanced planning that is essential. In order to make this suggestion concrete, attention should be called to a recommendation contained in the report of the Natural Resources Task Force of the Commission on Organization (Hoover Commission). This is the establishment in the Office of the President of a Board of Review on which a representative of recreation would sit along with representatives of agriculture, power, forestry, mineral resources, and all the other elements that go to make up river basin planning. To such a board should be submitted any and all projects for review, with a view to assuring that all these multiple interests have been integrated and preserved in the planning.

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