

Journal - Feb. 18, 1940

Mt. Hood-Forest or Park?

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The great national forest areas of the Cascade mountains in Washington and Oregon seem destined to become the next battleground of conflicting theories as between the department of agriculture and the department of the interior. It all turns on a definition of the word "conservation," and the future economic welfare of the Pacific Northwest is at stake.

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IT IS reported that the Mount Hood area is being discussed as the next national forest region to be set aside as a national park and thus transferred from the jurisdiction of Secretary Wallace's United States forest service to the "conservation" empire of Secretary Ickes. If such a move should actually eventuate—it could be accomplished in two ways. Either congress could pass a bill creating a Cascade Mountains national park, or the president of the United States probably could simply proclaim the area as a "national monument" and thus automatically transfer it to the jurisdiction of the department of the interior, as has been done within the last few years with a number of recreational and semi-historical areas in the Southwest. Graduation of national monuments to become national parks is simply a further step which would naturally follow whenever the area was adjudged to be of sufficient size and recreational importance to approximate national park status.

We are all supporters of our national park system and of the benefits that it has conferred upon the American people. We can quite readily understand that the administration of exclusively scenic, scientific and recreational areas naturally belongs under the jurisdiction of the park service in the department of the interior whose business is to conserve and to set a reasonable limit upon recreational development for the public use. The important factor, however, is to consider whether more and more forest areas should be dedicated exclusively to that kind of "conservation" which strictly limits use to scenic and recreational values and locks up the timber and wild-life forever from supplying certain practical needs of mankind.

We lovers of nature have been holding the torch for protection of forests and wild life against commercial despoilation, against the greed of lumbermen and the short sightedness of sportsmen who often

tend to kill the goose that lays for them the golden egg, and thus deprive not only nature lovers but themselves of future "game." But, had we the power to do so, would we go so far as to decree that no more logs should be brought to the mill or that the sport of hunting—even within reasonable control—should be completely abolished? Were we to do so, what answer could we give to the hundreds of thousands of men and women who now derive their livelihood from logging, lumbering and paper making and who would be forced upon the list of unemployed? What of the seasonal business dependent upon the sportsmen?

All of this must be considered from the standpoint of any large region which may be in line for transfer to national park status, such as the Cascade mountains of our Pacific Northwest. The talk about making a park of Mount Hood is said to be part of an even larger scheme—an attempt to create a great chain of parks from the Canadian border to Northern California where Mount Rainier and Crater Lake parks already form entering wedges.

West Coast newspapers already have entered the fight. Interests closely allied with the parks see in such a move an opportunity for expansion, envisioning skyline roads and trails—much money to be spent for recreational development. Lumbering interests, looking toward the logical inclusion of much national forest timber for the permanent maintenance of the wood and paper industries on the sustained yield

basis which they all know must eventually come, bitterly oppose the locking up of resources in national park status. And, curiously enough, the recreational interests are divided in their allegiance. Some of the ski clubs and winter sports groups fear lest administration by the park service might preclude the cutting of timber for construction of ski jumps—as is now the policy at Crater lake. Others point to the encouragement given to winter sports by the authorities at Mount Rainier. Owners of private cabins and lodges in the national forests tremble lest their fate be that of similar owners in the Olympic park who were given only a short time to evacuate after transfer from the forest service to the park service took place. Sportsmen, for whom the forests of the Cascades have long been a hunters' paradise, hold up their hands in horror at the prospect of more national parks from which their guns are excluded.

Departmental 'War' Looms in Background

Behind it all stalks the spectre of the old bitter war between two federal government departments. "Reorganization" gave to Secretary Ickes almost all his heart's desire—but not quite. It did not give him the forest service. On March 21, 1939, the president wrote to Senator Pittman: "In regard to the forestry bureau, I have no hesitation in telling you that I have no thought of transferring it to the interior department." Then in transmitting to congress last May reorganization order No. 2, he said:

"In so far as crops, including tree crops, are involved, there is something to be said for their retention in the department of agriculture. But where lands are to be kept for the primary purpose of recreation and permanent public use and conservation, they fall more logically into the department of the interior." There lies the rub and quite possibly the root of this new agitation for a great system of parks for the Cascades. All that Mr. Ickes and his friends have to do is to set up a reasonable claim to the predominant recreational value of any national forest areas, and right then they may be taken from under Mr. Wallace's forest empire and added to the domain of the interior department. Mr. Ickes was thwarted in his ambition to take over the forest service as a whole, but the door was left wide open for him to swallow as much of the forests as he could claim to digest. Forestry leaders like Gifford Pinchot are still importuning the president to stick by his March statement to Senator Pittman, but actually these leaders now appear to be adding locks to the barn front door while the horses are one by one spirited out the back door.

It is regrettable that means have not been found to attack the issue of "wood versus woods" on a sane practical basis. Instead of constant small territorial bickerings between the two federal departments, there should be set up a fair joint commission made up of respected leaders in conservation and appointed by the president or by congress. This commission should be given authority and funds to make an impartial survey of the whole public lands problem—national forests, national parks and certain other classes of federal lands—to determine, subject to periodical reconsideration, the best use and classification of these lands for public good. The commission should hold impartial hearings to recognize local and regional economic problems involved such as lumbering and employment, and act



The grandeur and the story that is Mount Hood—where flowers bloom beneath the trees that are snowline.

as judge between the forces of selfish interest and the greatest good to the greatest number of American citizens. Recommendations by the commission should be submitted to congress and should include the right to recommend the creation of new designations of public lands which might be partly or wholly limited as to use and development. For example, certain areas might be designated as restricted against lumbering but not against hunting. Other areas might be designated as permanent wilderness exempt from roads and all recreational develop-

ment except limited trails and hikers' shelters. We need an honest study of our whole problem of wilderness on the one hand as opposed to every degree of exploitation—whether that exploitation be lumbering, water and power development, or merely roads, hotels and ski jumps.

This problem must not be left to be decided by the piece-meal jealous bickerings of two federal departments. The time to set up such a commission is now, before the agitation in the Cascades reaches the unfortunate proportions of another "battle of the Olympics."