

Conservation Makes the Headlines

Scholastic.

Sept 26
1936

I HAVE been on a journey of husbandry," President Roosevelt reported to the radio hearers in his "fireside chat," September 7. He had traveled through nine drought states, inspecting hundreds of conservation projects, consulting with governors, technical experts, plain dirt farmers, and anyone else who had suggestions to make about drought projects.

The peak of the visit was the informal conference in Des Moines with Governors of Missouri, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. While delegates considered the recommendations of the Great Plains Drought Committee and offered a few ideas of their own, all were proudly conscious that many of their recommendations were already being put into practice.

Over 100,000 workers on a 3,500 mile front are fighting the battle of conservation with a fund of a billion dollars. In the field last month to see that this money was wisely spent were Henry A. Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture; Rexford G. Tugwell, Resettlement Administrator; Harry Hopkins, Works Progress Administrator; William I. Myers, Farm Credit Administrator, and Robert Fechner, Director of Emergency Conservation Work and the CCC.

Involved in the Drought Committee suggestions were:

- Planned use of soil and water.
- Government research, financing, and supervision.
- Retirement of sub-marginal lands; if necessary, by public purchase.
- Construction of small dams, lakes, reservoirs.
- Re-grassing, contour plowing, listing, terracing, strip-cropping, and tree-planting.
- Re-grouping of farm settlements, but not migration.
- Crop insurance.
- Honors to good farmers.
- Enabling legislation.
- Central regulation of grazing and cropping.
- Co-operative grazing associations.
- A Federal-State Conservation Board.

The possibility of a permanent grain reserve was advanced by Roosevelt in his radio address.

Meanwhile, housewives were warned that the drought would oblige them to pay \$12 for a basket of food which cost only \$10 last spring. To most middle-class families, this amounts to a tax of \$10 a month.

Washington reports said the damage was as bad as 1934. High prices were recorded for cotton, wheat, and corn, but they brought no joy to the farmers whose crops were ruined.

These turned for solace to the WPA, which expanded its drought-relief quota this month to 500,000; to the Resettlement Administration, which hopes to prevent mass migration by relocating 2,000,000 families; and to the Farm Credit Administration, which has promised leniency to all debtors.

Surveying their bleak lands, many were cheered by the announcement that in one year's time the Soil Conservation Service had recaptured 32,000 acres from the desert in Tooele Valley, Utah's own private dust bowl. The once barren land is again fit for controlled grazing and may sometime be reopened to agriculture.

Saving the Whale

One of the strangest strikes in history occurred last month when 10,000 Norwegian sailors refused to man the fleet of floating factories which Britain has built for the butchery of whales. The seamen struck not for hours nor for wages but for the defense of the brothers of Moby Dick.

Whales were saved from the prospect of extinction in 1859 when Drake brought in the first commercial oil well at Titusville, Pa. Competition from land-oil drove the sea-oil industry from Nantucket and New Bedford. Then fifty years later, Norwegians began to hunt whales with the Sven Foyn gun.

With modern hunting and curing equipment, the kill jumped from 1,000 whales in 1904 to 17,000 whales in 1926. The current dispute between the British and Norwegian governments concerns limiting whale-oil production to a figure which is double what it was in 1926. While both countries agree to limit the season to three months, Norway wants to hold oil production down to 2,265,000 barrels, or 264,000 barrels less than the British limit. Each whale makes on the average about 67 barrels.

British ship-owners are willing to gamble this year's profits and their investment against the extinction of the whale, but Norwegian sailors refuse to take the chance as long as the source of their living is endangered. They argue that Norwegians as well as whales may become extinct.

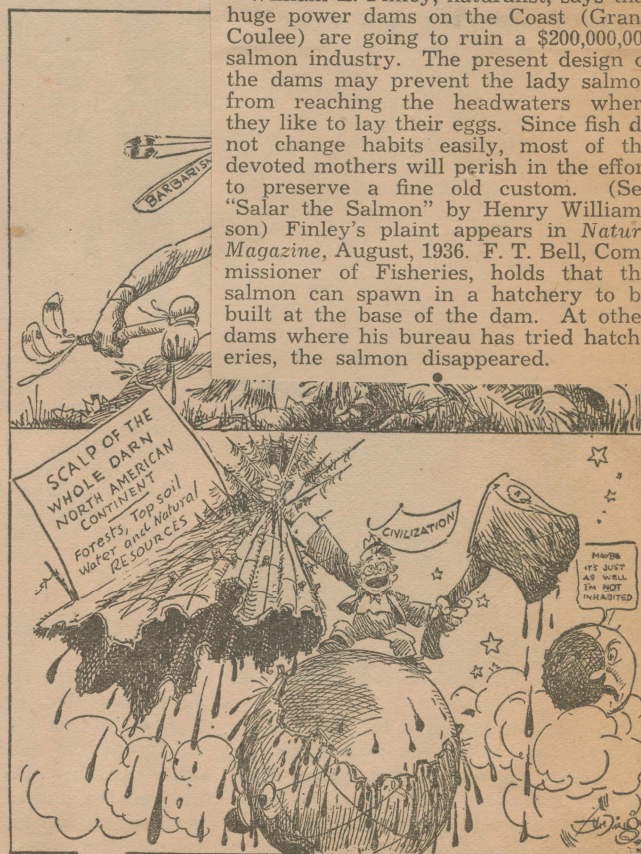
Conservation Movies

The Plow That Broke the Plains is a beautiful motion picture made by the

Resettlement Administration to explain the need of a land program. It gives the whole cycle of the west: First, the grass, an empty inexhaustible pasture waited for the coming of the herds of the earliest settlers. The railroads brought a rich market to the cattleman's door, but they also brought sheep and the dirt farmer. While the battle over ruinous sheep grazing was raging the homesteader began to plow up free government acres. He earned a meagre living from the sun-baked soil even in the good years. But with the last War, the West found the whole world turning to it for wheat. New land was plowed. Year after year, hardy Russian wheat was put into the ground. The prospect of profit dimmed as foreign markets declined and vanished entirely with three record breaking droughts in seven years. In the end, the farmer ceased to plant at all. The lands were left bare to the wind. Gently, the wind lifted the soil and carried it in clouds from farm to farm. The plain became a desert.

You may obtain this picture, *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, by writing to the Resettlement Administration. *Woods, Waters, and Wildlife* is the title of a conservation film owned by William L. Finley, naturalist, of R.D. 10, Portland, Oregon. The film is usually used to illustrate his lectures. An unusual film of bird life, made by William Zeller, Peoria, Ill., was shown at the last conference of Visual Education. A conservation film made by the Michigan State Department of Conservation gives some close-ups of beavers and dramatic episodes in the life of a game law violator.

William L. Finley, naturalist, says that huge power dams on the Coast (Grand Coulee) are going to ruin a \$200,000,000 salmon industry. The present design of the dams may prevent the lady salmon from reaching the headwaters where they like to lay their eggs. Since fish do not change habits easily, most of the devoted mothers will perish in the effort to preserve a fine old custom. (See "Salar the Salmon" by Henry Williamson) Finley's plaint appears in *Nature Magazine*, August, 1936. F. T. Bell, Commissioner of Fisheries, holds that the salmon can spawn in a hatchery to be built at the base of the dam. At other dams where his bureau has tried hatcheries, the salmon disappeared.



Darling in the *New York Herald-Tribune*
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