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December 10, 1919

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. LEOPOLD, DISTRICT 3.

This memorandum is to supplement[✓] some conversation between myself and Mr. Leopold, which happened on December 6th.

There are no notes available in this office on this question, so it is thought best to incorporate[✓] in this form some observation relative to the problem discussed. The problem spoken of in this conversation was, how far shall the Forest Service carry or allow to be carried man made improvements in scenic territories, and whether there is not a definite point where all such developments, with the exception of perhaps lines of travel and necessary sign boards, shall stop. The Forest Service, it seems to me, is obligated to make the greatest return from the total forests to the people of the Nation that is possible. This, the Service has endeavored to do in the case of timber utilization, grazing, watershed protection and other activities. There is, however, a great wealth of recreational facilities and scenic values within the Forests, which have not been so utilized, and at the present time the Service is face to face with a question of big policies, big plans, and big utilization for these values and areas.

Returns from the Forests cannot be counted in total in terms of dollars and cents in the case of the aesthetic qualities within the Forests, and it is therefore rather difficult to judge just how this greater utilization can best be accomplished. It is comparatively easy to see the direct return to the individual and the Nation throughout utilization of Forest areas for summer homes, camping grounds, and picnic spots, but it is almost impossible to reduce to a money basis the value returned to a Forest visitor when viewing the country from an especially scenic auto road, scenic trail, or outlook. It is, therefore, a concrete cash argument for utilization of scenic areas for the purposes of picnic grounds, summer homes, etc., as opposed to a preservation of the grounds in a natural state because of scenic qualities.

There enters in here a feature which has been long recognized by landscape architects and city planners, which has not come to the attention of the general public or men of other professions. Landscape architects have continuously contended that there are scenic values and recreational areas of unusual beauty serving a great public need, which were never intended for private holdings. This has been recognized in some of the more congested areas of the country, and immense sums of money have been paid by municipalities, counties, and states, to secure shore lines on lakes or rivers, which had passed from under the control of the general public, and were held by individuals. There is a limit to the

✓ Bottom of original has been "explain" crossed out with "supplement" substituted
② "corporate" "incorporate"
③ "natural" "less marked"
✓ "for preservation" added.

number of lands of shore line on the lakes; there is a limit to the number of lakes in existence; there is a limit to the mountainous areas of the world, and in each one of these situations there are portions of natural scenic beauty which are God made, and the beauties of which of a right should be the property of all people.

There are in the Forests at the present time many such places in which the title is still vested in the Government of the United States, and in the Forest Service, representing this government and the people of the Nation. If these areas are allowed to go into the hands of private individuals, or if they are even built on for summer home purposes, the use is in the measure restricted to individuals or a group. The same conditions then follow, as is found in the cases cited where lands were bought back, that is the presence of the man made structures, the presence of a population, the monopolization of the scenery by those people living in those situations, react against the visitor in such a way that the fullest return of scenic and aesthetic values is not realized. It would be difficult to estimate just how much a group of dwellings in an especially scenic area would reduce the aesthetic value. There are several cases in Colorado where this can be measured to some extent by a comparative study, particularly the great canon of the Big Thompson represents the case where private holdings defeat the beauties of the canon. There are a number of other cases which can be outlined in comparison to represent the types where the scenic beauty is unspoiled. On this basis I would say that for me the aesthetic value of the Big Thompson Canon has been reduced not less than eighty percent.

There are great values of this type to be found in the several forests of the Nation, which in order to return the greatest total value to the people, not only of the Nation, but of the world should be preserved and protected from the marring features of man made constructions. These areas can never be restored to the original condition after man has invaded them, and the great value lying as it does in natural scenic beauty should be available, not for the small group, but for the greatest population. Time will come when these scenic spots, where nature has been allowed to remain unmarred, will be some of the most highly prized scenic features of the country, and unless the Forest Service has thoroughly exerted all influences possible to preserve these areas, severe criticism will some day be meted out by the collective owners of this territory, to the public. So on the one hand there is an obligation to fulfill, based on the reasoning that certain areas of so great value as to be rightfully always the property of the entire public, and on the other there is need of the Service taking a broad, farseeing attitude in order that it may be prepared to meet the demands in the future.

There are other areas which are not necessarily superlative, but which should be preserved on this same basis. There will ever be a demand on the part of the people of the United States to be able to get into a part of the country which is undeveloped. There is no place particularly suited for such territory than is in the possession of the National Forest.

It is probable that great areas of medium scenic countries shall be preserved without any intrusion of civilization in order that there shall always be some great areas to which the lover of the outdoors can turn without being confronted by a settlers cabin, country store, telephone pole, or other sign of frontier civilization. This loving of the outdoors in the untouched conditions is evidenced by the number of people who travel to out of the way places to spend their vacations. In some individuals this desire for undeveloped country is especially marked. This is true, for example, of the Arctic Explorers, who endure great hardships on these trips. Other travelers of note, as for example, our late ExPresident Roosevelt, Paul J. Rainey, and others, show this desire for living in undeveloped regions. It is probably true that a big percentage of people of the United States have this craving for outdoor life in untouched regions to a less marked extent. These traits of the Nation should be given consideration right along with the other traits, which at times demand telephone and telegraph lines, modern plumbing, and other conveniences.

I have jotted down four different types of areas, which should probably not contain summer homes, perhaps no camp sites, and other like developments. First of these is the superlative area; the second is the area unsuited for any camp and summer home development, such as the high ridge of a mountain range; third is the area which should be preserved for the group rather than the individual, such as lake shores, stream banks, or such a natural feature as medicinal springs; fourth group would include areas not in these three groups, but which represent those God made and of the greatest use for preservation of any owned by the Government. There is no question in my mind but what there is a definite point in different types of country where man made structures should be stopped. How best to arrive at a definition of this point, or how best to come to a decision on these areas to be preserved is a question with me.

The Forest Service could well take the whole responsibility and while there might be some criticism on the part of some individuals, who suffered slight disappointment for the good of the larger group, the majority of the total would approve of such action. Or the Forest Service might ask the State to appoint an Art Commission or some such body to cooperate in designating areas which shall be preserved and protected in untouched conditions.

Or the National Society, formed to study rural planning and landscape architecture, might assist by naming a committee to cooperate throughout the whole country with the Service. At present it is probable that the Service will have to take the entire initiative on this work, and I believe that immediately.

The question of how best to do this is perhaps the real question, rather than shall it be done.

(Signed) Arthur H. Carhart

Recreation Engineer