2002 Starker Lecture Transcripts

Which Way's Up? Working with Progressive Era Policies When the Definition of 'Progress' Is Up for Grabs.

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My thanks to Dean Salwasser, Bo Shelby, and all the members of the College of Forestry for their kind hospitality, and of course to the Starker Family for their support of this series. And I want to express my gratitude to foresters nationwide, both the membership of the Society of American Foresters and employees of the Forest Service, who have been remarkable in their willingness to take part in a conversation with historians, even historians who sometimes cook up theories of a disputable and speculative nature!

I have been forming theories about the history of forestry for quite a number of years. In a sense, I started working on these theories long before I knew a thing about Gifford Pinchot, Forest Reserves, or sustained yield. When I was a kid, I found most Western movies agonizing to watch. My agony spiked in the inevitable scene when the cowboys got into a fight and broke bottles and smashed tables and chairs and finally shattered the mirror over the bar. At this point the cowboys would usually get on their horses and ride out of town, but I would stay behind in the saloon, looking at all the broken wood and glass, and wondering, “Who on earth is going to get stuck cleaning this up?”

In no cowboy movie of my acquaintance did the cowboys ever ride out of town, then bring their horses to a sudden halt and say to each other, “Wait! We’re supposed to be the good guys, and yet we’ve left a terrible mess back there in town! We’ll have to head back in and clean that up before we ride on to our next adventure!”

If we go back a century in time, the rise of forestry as a profession represents one of those moments that never happened in the movies. The rise of forestry involved a segment of society saying, “Wait! We’re supposed to be the good guys; we can’t just keep wasting resources without a moment’s thought; we’ve got to settle down and clean up the messes we’ve made and prevent future messes from happening!” A century ago, foresters were the one of the groups that broke the pattern of riding off to the next adventure, and that settled down to figure out how we could deal productively with the dilemmas history had produced.

Thinking of forestry in these terms helps explain why today’s foresters respond with such prickliness and defensiveness to the criticisms that environmentalists make of them. To be accused of making environmental messes, when your profession originated as one of the prime components of an effort to find ways of rectifying previous messes: that is surely a historical turn of events that would

make the world seem treacherous and troubling.

Thanks to projects undertaken by our Center of the American West, I am more and more interested in the role of engineers and scientists in the history of this region. I confess that, having wandered into this territory a few years ago, the distinction between the categories “pure science” and “applied science” has not been entirely clear to me. Whether we look at naturalists assessing the farming and grazing potential of the West in the middle of the 19th century, or at hydrologists and geologists assessing the West’s resources in the late 19th century, the “appliedness” of their scientific inquiries seems unmistakable. If engineers do the applied work, and scientists do the pure inquiry, then there really were no “scientists” in the West until the universities were created as refuges and habitats for people who would ask questions out of pure and entirely impractical curiosity.

The example of foresters blurs the distinction between “pure” and “applied” science very usefully. In many ways, the professionalization of foresters a century ago was very similar, in content and method, to the professionalization of engineers. The mission or mandate given to both occupations–to figure out how material reality works so that society can get what it wants from natural resources–led both professions to practice an intricate combination of scientific inquiry and technological strategy.

The fact that these occupations, with their interwoven elements of pure and applied science, emerged 100 years ago, in the midst of the Progressive Era, is a matter of huge significance for our times. The Progressives set their stamp on the resource-management professions. As historian Richard McCormick sums it up, the Progressives “honestly believed in the almost unlimited potential of science and administration.”[1]

Despite the passage of time, the assumptions and, especially, the hopes of the Progressives retain remarkable vigor. The psychic sport known as channeling, when the people of the past speak through the voices of the living, is a daily practice in resource management circles. In everyday conversation as much as in formal pronouncements, the Progressives speak through us and use our voices to keep their beliefs before the public. I have thought of calling this thesis my “Possessed by Progressives” thesis. But “possession” may not be the best term, since there is nothing particularly mystical about the ways in which Progressive thought maintains its hold on us. Plus, there are plenty of positive and beneficial outcomes from the condition, which is usually not the case with the more technically demonic form of possession. Still, there must also be some advantage in being a bit more alert to the ways that this connection shapes our laws and our behavior today.

The federal land management agencies originated in the Progressive Era, and these agencies were prime terrain for the development and definition of expertise in resource management. To this day, the federal agencies are shaped, in every imaginable way, by the mindset and operating assumptions of Progressives. To use one current example, when Chief Forester Dale Bosworth laments “analysis paralysis,” he is expressing a very Progressive-era-like hope for the assertion of rationality over a clutter of laws, policies, contentions, and conflicts. Similarly, charter forests, and the broader movement of watershed coalitions, represent a

latter-day effort to reconcile the Progressives' double faith in democracy and in expertise.

And yet the Progressives had a certain naiveté about human nature. As the influential reporter Ida Tarbell acknowledged, Progressives "knew little about human beings, and what as individuals and herds they can be counted on to do under certain circumstances."[2] In hindsight, it is perfectly clear that, in enterprises of resource management, science and technology had and have to share their territory with a complicated set of concerns that Progressives referred to as the human element. A scientist, engineer, or forester could come up with a fine and effective technical solution, but that solution would still have to run the gauntlet of human response: even with technical elements well attended to, a solution that did not anticipate and accommodate human attitudes (whether manifested in the votes of Congress or the resistance of local residents) was no solution at all. The Progressives, the historian John Whiteclay Chambers writes, "represented an unprecedented willingness to intrude into the economy, society, and world affairs." They "believed that intelligently directed effort could affect change and manipulate the environment for the improvement of society."[3] But historian Richard McCormick captures the naiveté behind that faith: "the reformers of the early twentieth century nonetheless tended to consider conflicts resolved when, in fact, they had only been disguised by the establishment of scientific policies and the creation of governmental agencies."[4]

A fine example of Progressive attitudes toward "the human element" comes from the origins of the Bureau of Reclamation, and its founder, the engineer Frederick Newell. The Reclamation Service had barely been founded when Newell was lamenting the complications of dealing with "the human element." The engineering side, he said in the Third Report, "does not offer usually as great causes of delay as the . . . human element." The most difficult of the problems "are not those of engineering nor of construction," Newell said in the Eleventh Report, "but those having to do with the human side–namely, the attracting or securing of the type of farmer who can and will make a success by intensive agriculture."[5] The Eleventh Report came out not long before Newell was maneuvered out of his position of leadership in the Reclamation Service, surely its own testimony to the power of the "human element."

As the first Chief Engineer of the Reclamation Service, Frederick Newell repeatedly confessed his frustration with the "human element," the factor that threw the engineers' calculations into disarray and disorder. In 1914, Newell was dismissed from the Service, and he transferred his substantial energies to the cause of defining and formalizing the engineering profession. Astonishingly--breathtakingly--he seems to have put aside everything he might have learned from his work in Reclamation. In 1918, this is what Newell said: "In all of these matters, which pertain to the conservation and use of the resources of the country, both material and human, and the development of ideals, the engineer should be the leader." As historian Edwin Layton observed, "Newell recognized that the engineering of society implied treating man as a material." Human groups should be thought about, Newell said explicitly, as machines "in which the wheels and bearings are men and not metals," while engineers should develop a "beneficial control of human forces and sentiments."[6] Could this be the same fellow who, during his

years with the Reclamation Service, repeatedly lamented the way in which "the human element" defeated the plans and calculations of engineers?

Of all the people on the planet whom we might expect to be wiser and more skeptical about the ability of experts to "engineer" human behavior, Frederick Newell, after 12 years with Reclamation, would seem to be that individual. But Progressive faith is resilient, and breathtaking in its resilience. Twelve years of having that faith battered, and Newell was ready to reassert it as if he had spent those years in a library reading utopian literature about ideal human societies.

So here are two of the questions I put forward for our consideration. First, how on earth did Frederick Newell, and other Progressives, remain so innocent on matters of human nature? And second, how much of that innocence remains lodged in the souls of resource management professionals--maybe especially in the souls of foresters?

I regret to say that historians have not designed any sophisticated methods to track the persistence and recurrence of attitudes and habits of mind. What does it mean, to live in the present and to continue to hold to elements of a faith set up and structured 100 years ago? How do some ideas survive the passage of time in such robust and resilient shape? What analogy should we work from, when we look at the passing on of values from one generation to the next? We can probably throw out analogies drawn from evolutionary biology. When ideas hang around long after their point of origin, this is <u>not</u> a matter of "intellectual genes" replicating themselves in different host organisms over time; there is far too much room for individual choice and change in the workings of human minds than that analogy would allow. There is probably more to be made of frameworks drawn from anthropological studies of the ways in which older members of tribal societies train younger members into certain assumptions about right and wrong, the possible and the impossible.

My own preference, in analogies, would be this one: our relationship to our intellectual ancestors is rather like inheriting a furnished house. We can, if we choose, just live in the house and keep all the furniture, arranged just the way its first owners had it arranged. Or we can keep some furniture, and unload the rest at a yard sale; we can even take out walls and put in windows and add rooms and generally reconfigure the place. But change hinges on <u>choice</u> and conscious reflection.

In the person of Gifford Pinchot, foresters hold a direct tie to <u>the</u> archetypal Progressive. Thanks to Char Miller's recent biography of Pinchot, we know a lot more about Pinchot's life as governor of Pennsylvania, and we know how truly dedicated he was to democratic values, so dedicated that he alarmed many of his conservative contemporaries.[7] After you have read Miller's book, you really cannot cast Pinchot as an elite expert who only mouthed the slogans of democracy. Pinchot's beliefs and convictions seem to be very much alive in the minds and hearts of many foresters today, but it is also true that we should be careful to note the selectivity in this situation. In the manner of many Progressives, to take one compelling example, Pinchot was a Prohibitionist. He did not drink alcohol himself, and he supported campaigns to prohibit others from drinking. This is not a position

held by many foresters in our times. Pinchot may be a role model for foresters today, but not when it comes to leisure-time activities. Some selectivity is noticeably at work here!

When it comes to science and technology, the practices of foresters of 2002 have changed substantially since 1902. The study of soil organisms and their crucial role in forest health, or the effort to reincorporate fire into forest processes, would be prime examples. That flexibility is hardly surprising; by the very nature of scientific inquiry, foresters were professionally encouraged, even required, to reach new understandings and reconsider old assumptions. But when it comes to a certain innocence and refusal of realism about human nature, foresters of 2002 bear a striking resemblance to Progressives of 1902. In fact, this situation extends well beyond forestry. A decade of watching environmental scientists of many different specializations deal with the public and with politicians has led me to see a certain similarity between the vulnerability and defenselessness of resource scientists, trustingly presenting their findings, and the vulnerability and defenselessness of recently shorn sheep venturing into a winter storm without the company of a shepherd. The level of trust—"we'll just have a press conference, and tell the public what we found!"—is both astonishing and touching. Thus, there is something potentially very practical in looking back to Progressivism and sorting through the heritage that comes so directly from that era to ours.

A particularly compelling reason to undertake this reexamination in our times has to do with the very word "progress," obviously key to the movement called "Progressivism." As much as the reformers of 100 years ago varied in their opinions, they did share a belief in progress, and they even shared some elements of a definition of progress: greater harmony in society, greater order and control, greater exercise of reason in managing natural and human resources. Historians of the era do call our attention to the fact that the Progressives surrendered a belief in progress as automatic, as prearranged by Providence. But human effort could keep progress moving along. Progressives knew, in other words, which way was up.

To be a Progressive, you have to believe in progress and aspire to be an agent working in progress's behalf. And yet, in our times, the very idea of progress is up for grabs. What previous generations considered, with few doubts, to be progress—the development of resources for economic gain—is now seen by some sectors of society as a process of decline and loss, the exact opposite of progress. Rather than celebrating greater order and control as a measure of progress, significant sectors of society—located at all political positions, from far right to far left—see greater order and control as dangerous tyranny. And, for an audible group of advocates, restoration, or putting things back the way they used to be, has taken development's place as the desirable goal. In 2002, with the concept of progress so much subject to a tug-of-war, it is indeed hard to know which way is up. In this zone, the tensions of our Progressive Era heritage reach their peak. How can one be an agent of progress when the direction of progress is so much a matter of dispute?

Promising to serve society and provide for its needs, Progressive reformers asked society to give experts the authority to guide resource decision-making. This is

clearly a case study in the proposition, "Be careful what you wish for." Society, more or less, agreed to the deal. And then society turned out to be a very tough client to work for. Over the 20th century, for foresters, having the obligation to serve society must have felt from time to time as if they had the obligation to serve toddlers with a bad case of the terrible two's. You agree to get society the wood products it has asked for; you do so; and society, skipping the part where it says, "Thank you," says instead, "Now look what you've done! You've treated the forests as a commodity, and completely destroyed the biodiversity we now value!"

When I was in college, I had a roommate whose interesting behavior summed up, for me, this odd relationship between modern resource users and their attitudes toward the production of resources. Once, when I was preparing a turkey for roasting, I was able to elicit an archetypal response from this roommate. There was some loud music on, and, while washing the turkey and holding it under its wings, I felt a momentary inspiration, and pretended to dance with the turkey. My roommate Marcia, who was indeed an eater of meat, shrieked with agony. "Oh, stop!" she said. "You're making it look like that turkey is alive!"

" My goodness," I wanted to say, "whatever its current condition, if this turkey was not recently alive, then we are in trouble."

So there, in Marcia's reaction, you have it: desire to eat the turkey; complete unwillingness to face up to the process that brought the turkey to our oven and dinner table. Is there a way to call this hypocrisy to its practitioners' attention in a way that might lead to some degree of self-examination and a greater consistency between practice and principle? I am afraid that my efforts in that direction have produced more in the way of crankiness and defensiveness than enlightened change. This contradiction in attitudes may be one of life's miseries that simply asks for our endurance. But the contradiction does require some patience from those who have agreed to take on the job of "serving society" by supplying it with the products derived from natural resources. Foresters may just have to learn to live with a certain heightened sense of wonder and amusement when they see, for instance, some environmentalists building themselves large log cabins because, after all, log cabins look more natural and are closer to the earth.

Let us quickly review the way that historians describe and characterize the Progressives. From that foundation, I will invite your reflections on how we can best manage and negotiate in this complicated and important relationship between the past, and us.

By the 1890s, the pace of change in the United States had become very disorienting indeed. As historian Steven Diner sums it up, Americans of the Progressive Era "watched the forces of change sweep away familiar modes of economic life, alter the way they lived and worked, rearrange the familiar hierarchies of social status, and redefine their relationship to their government. It looked as if all the rules had changed." As a result, "many middle-class Americans concluded . . . . that they had lost control not only of their society but of their own lives."[8]

It is worth pausing here for a moment and noting one of the basic values of paying

attention to history: Everything that Diner says about the scale of disorientation that afflicted Americans a century ago could, with only small modifications, be reconfigured and made to address conditions today. Forestry, in fact, may be a particularly good example of the phenomenon of people feeling that "all the rules had changed." There is something a bit calming about stepping away from the agitating and confusing conflicts of the present and noting that people of the past felt that things were sufficiently agitating and confusing in their own times. We should not, in other words, flatter ourselves into thinking that rapid and disturbing change is a particular burden of our times.

In truth, many historians of Progressivism declare, very explicitly, that they see some big similarities between today's circumstances and the circumstances a century ago. Here is Diner's summation of these similarities: in our time, "Americans are again struggling for control amidst new and wrenching transformations brought on by the global information-age economy."[9] John Whiteclay Chambers sums up the connections between the Progressive Era and today: "Modern America was born in those early years, and we are heirs of many of the institutions, attitudes, and problems of the Progressive Era."[10]

If we think of the Progressives as people in disorienting times, trying to assert control and find new ways of bringing order to society, then Progressives are people with whom we must sympathize. And yet there are big paradoxes in the results of their efforts that we must acknowledge. Even though the speeches and writings of reformers were full of references to democracy and the empowering of the people, even though some of the most important Progressive innovations involved ways of making the results of voting more direct and consequential (in the initiative and referendum, and the direct election of senators, for instance), nonetheless, with all these expressions of hope for and commitment to democracy, this was an era in which "the electorate was contracting as voters were excluded or simply stopped voting." In practice, Chambers sums this up, "much of [the Progressives'] emphasis on democracy proved illusory."[11] Or, McCormick sums this up: by the end of the Progressive era, "the active electorate had become relatively smaller and less enthusiastic."[12]

Here is another huge paradox of the era, visible with hindsight: among the changes of the Progressive Era was the "development of a consumer society and culture that emphasized the importance of the ongoing acquisition of goods and services promoted as offering both a new frontier of economic expansion and a new mechanism for individual happiness and fulfillment."[13] In the same era in which American consumerism was unleashed, Progressive conservationists regularly invoked the need to avoid and minimize waste. This was certainly key to the origins of forestry; I think, especially, of the condemnations of "waste" that were central to Gifford Pinchot's declarations, and to those of others in early forestry. Many factors, no doubt, drove forestry to surrender its leading role in opposition to waste, to lose its commitment to speak to Americans about the need to correct their habits of waste. One could, I suppose, simply say that the rise of American consumerism was such an overwhelming historical force that it swept aside and drowned out opposition. But an opposition to waste still occupies a central place in the legacy and heritage of today's foresters, and for all sorts of good reasons it seems like a heritage they could beneficially repossess. "Conservation stands for

the prevention of waste, " Gifford Pinchot wrote in *The Fight for Conservation*. "There has come gradually in this country an understanding that waste is not a good thing and that the attack on waste is an industrial necessity."[14] Having foresters regain their identity as the resource professionals who won't tolerate waste would certainly add some productive disorientation to those who think they have everyone's positions on natural resources entirely figured out and categorized. Why not have the SAF put Pinchot's declaration–"Conservation stands for the prevention of waste"–on bumper stickers, and then distribute them to the many members of the Sierra Club currently driving SUVs?

Another persistent paradox hinges on race. In the March 2002 issue of the Society of American Foresters' newsletter, *Forestry Source*, Michael B. Lester, an SAF official and assistant state forester for Pennsylvania, writes with great frankness about the racial composition of the Society's membership. "Our latest membership numbers put us at 88 percent white male," he reports; "our ethnic makeup is 98.5 percent white."[15] Lester further notes that these proportions "do not reflect the demographics of people graduating with degrees in forestry. This is good news, in terms of who is joining the profession, but it is not so good news, in terms of who is joining the society."

As we think about the presence and visibility of ethnic minorities in the resource management profession, our thoughts should turn to the legacy we inherit from the Progressives. Consider the matter of timing, of the rise of the Progressives and the decline of the tribes. In the 1890s, Indian people were at their nadir, both in power and in population. Disease, malnutrition, and warfare had left the native population terribly reduced. Military conquest and the creation of reservations had driven Indian powers of self-governance underground. The U.S. Supreme Court had supported the "plenary power" of Congress–the power to govern Indian people with nearly complete authority. The idea of the Indian as vanishing and disappearing seemed to be coming true.[16]

So there is the historical coincidence: the precedent-setting, practice-determining laws of federal resource management were written and passed at a time when Indians and their desires seemed fading and irrelevant. This timing was not a matter of conspiracy or of malevolence. But the historical coincidence has still been fruitful in misfortune and misunderstanding. The resource management laws were written and implemented largely by people who saw no role in the American future for Indian people. Then the Indian population began a resurgence, and tribal self-government also underwent a restoration, both through the efforts of John Collier in the Indian New Deal, and in U.S. Supreme Court rulings of the mid- and late 20th century. Here, the Progressive legacy was a lasting assumption that Indians could be left out of the planning for natural resources. Years after the Progressive Era, this assumption had been shown to be inaccurate and unrealistic. It would prove to be a strenuous and contested undertaking to incorporate a recognition of Indian people and their circumstances into laws that had been designed when their power and population were at their lowest points.

The Progressive Era was a time of trouble for American minorities. The Indian situation was disheartening, and conditions for African Americans may have been worse. In the 1890s and the early 1900s, the post-Reconstruction arrangements of

Jim Crow segregation and disenfranchisement became institutionalized, and this was also an era of frequent and brutal lynchings. Much of Southern Progressivism involved improving education for white Southerners, and very explicitly finding ways to give white people opportunities that blacks would be denied. As historian Leon Litwack sums up Southern Progressivism, "some whites preferred to view the new restrictions on blacks as reform, not repression, as a way to use the laws to . . . . resolve racial tensions, and maintain the social order." A conviction in the inferiority of African Americans was by no means confined to Southern Progressives. "Theodore Roosevelt shared fashionable views of Negro inferiority, condemning, in his words, 'those very foolish white men who refuse to face facts and refuse to see that the average negro is on a different and far lower level than is the case with the white man.'"[17] That complicated component is included in Progressivism's legacy to us. Reckoning with that legacy requires us to make our peace with the fact that we will not find much wisdom on the subject of race relations in the writings, speeches, laws, and policies of the Progressives. But looking at the Progressives gives us some clues as to how the resource management professions evolved as they did, and also some clues as to how fundamental a rethinking and change in customs is necessary to break free of these origins.

In the contraction of voter participation, the launching of American consumerism, and the coinciding of racial exclusiveness with precedent-setting reform, Progressivism's paradoxes are powerful and lasting. Richard McCormick may have done the best job of summarizing the paradoxes of Progressivism, in terms of the stance of the reformers toward industrialism. The movement, McCormick tells us, "was infused with a deep, lingering outrage against many of the worst consequences of industrialism." And yet the Progressives campaigned "not to dismantle modern industry and commerce but rather to improve and ameliorate the conditions of industrial life." Thus, McCormick captures what he calls the "powerful irony [that] lay at the heart of progressivism: reforms that gained vitality from a people angry with industrialism ended up by assisting them to accommodate to it."[18] Progressives acted in a very delicate set of negotiations, criticizing and challenging industry on some occasions, supporting and defending industry on other occasions. Surely that is one of Progressivism's most visible legacies to forestry: a complicated, sometimes fulfilling, sometimes frustrating relationship to private enterprise and companies and corporations. Writing of the engineers of a century ago, Steven Diner summed up the range of their choices in a way that certainly still describes circumstances in forestry: "Some professional engineers sought autonomy from their corporate employers while others strove for economic security and social status by identifying completely with corporate managers."[19] Progressivism left its heirs with an ambivalent, unresolved, and perplexing relationship between experts and industry.

I now turn to a final paradox: the joining of scientific conviction and religious belief in Progressivism. Preoccupied with the Progressives' preoccupation with science, we might be tempted to make assumptions characteristic of our secular age and assume that people so loyal to science did not have much involvement with religion. And yet historians of Progressivism frequently remark on the religious faith that powered and guided many of the reformers. Historian Robert Crunden calls his study of the movement, "Ministers of Reform," and he wants us to accent the

double meaning of “minister.” As he says, many Progressives “agreed that America needed a spiritual reformation to fulfill God’s plan for democracy in the New World.” Many of them had “absorbed” what Crunden calls “the severe, Protestant moral values of their parents,” and “Protestantism provided the chief thrust and defined the perimeters of discourse.”[20] As “evangelistic modernizers,” John Chambers says, “progressives had a sense of morality and mission that led them to try to impose their standards on an increasingly diverse society and, in fact, through cultural imperialism, on the rest of the world as well.”[21] Richard McCormick reinforces this point, reminding us not to assume that religious belief and scientific practice are intrinsically incompatible: “Progressivism,” he writes, “took its inspiration, as well as much of its substance and technique, from two bodies of belief and knowledge: evangelical Protestantism and the sciences, both natural and social.” As McCormick sums this up, “Progressivism visibly bore the imprint of the evangelical ethos. Basic to this mentality was the drive to purge the world of sin.”[22] These religious underpinnings help us understand how it is that Progressives arrived at such a strong conviction in the justice and wisdom of their cause.

Now what bearing does this line of thought have on our understanding of contemporary forestry?

On September 14, 2001, I was supposed to give a plenary address to the Society of American Foresters, called “How Historians and Foresters Can Help Each Other.” On the morning of September 11, I was up early, working over the speech. When the planes hit the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, I was thinking about the conflicts between foresters and environmentalists, and especially about the way in which scientific expertise is placed at the center of the fray, pulled on and tugged at by both sides. It took me awhile to realize that the convention could not take place, and I would not be giving this speech. Struggles over forest management and the events of September 11 are tied together in my memory. In that context, we must give peace-making in natural resource conflicts our best shot. It may be that looking at the Progressives’ orientation to religious belief could be a step in that cause.

To prepare for the SAF speech, I had read over several years’ worth of the organization’s newsletter, *The Forestry Source*. This was a wonderful way to get a feeling for what was going on with the profession of forestry. In January of 2001, SAF President John Heisenbuttel wrote a presidential column which brought a response from SAF members which we will just call “spirited.” Because my collection of issues of *The Forestry Source* was a little incomplete, it took me a few more days before I saw the presidential column itself; I had only seen the fevered or fiery or, at the least, heated responses. So, when I finally saw the column that had triggered this reaction, I was properly astonished to see how mild-mannered and seemingly non-inflammatory it was.

The column bore the title, “Ending the Cold War Between Environmentalists and Foresters.” In it Heisenbuttel expressed his hope for more collaborative relations and communications between the two camps. The temper of those SAF members who wrote to respond inclined toward the declaration, “We do not want to end this war. We want to win it.” “The environmentalists are dedicated and determined to win the war,” one letter-writer said. “We should be,” too. Or, as another SAF

member wrote, "'ending the cold war between foresters and environmentalists' sounds a whole lot like capitulation or compromise with the enemy to me." [23]

Why did Heisenbuttel's peace proposal trigger such an intense and inflexible response? Why does the criticism of environmentalists bring such an unyielding and determined defense in some foresters? Would a consideration of the Progressive era's fusion of scientific confidence with Protestant fervor help us in answering this question, or would it distract us with a not-very-relevant historical analogy? In the Progressive Era, John Chambers told us, "Resurgent Protestant evangelism coalesced with such secular developments as professionalization and bureaucratization."[24] Might it be worth a moment's thought, to ask whether or not we are seeing, in the early twentieth century, some echoes and replays of that coalescing of the religious and the secular?

For someone in my position, watching the clashes over resource management in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, it is impossible to avoid thinking, "Perhaps we are not as secular as we think." Whether the argument is over implementation of the Endangered Species Act or the reduction of forest fuel loads through commercial harvesting, if the observer's attention drifts for a moment, is easy to gather to gather the impression that one has wandered into a fervent theological debate. "We stand at Armageddon," Theodore Roosevelt often said at the close of his speeches, "and we battle for the Lord."[25] Whether that sentiment is voiced directly or not, it is hard not to hear a message rather like that in many public statements on resource management today. "*We stand at Armageddon; we battle for the Lord; and we believe that endangered species should be preserved at all cost.*" Or, alternatively, "*We stand at Armageddon; we battle for the Lord; and we believe that forests should be managed for economic productivity and contribute to human well-being*." Maybe you have to be an historian and too much under the spell of the past in order to hear these echoes. Still, once you let yourself start hearing them, it is very difficult to shut them out.

The Progressives were people of great hope and optimism. They were anxious; they were worried; they were alarmed. But they were people who believed that the exercise of good will and hearty effort could make a real difference in relieving human dilemmas. As Richard McCormick puts it, the Progressives had "a basic optimism about people's abilities to improve their environment through continuous human action,"[26] and optimism is a resource we should never dismiss or squander.

We should be more selective in the inheritance we accept from the Progressives; some of the habits we acquired from them are not very functional in our times, and actually present obstacles to finding and taking the wisest path of action. In training foresters, we could increase the realism about human nature, while being careful to keep this realism from edging into disillusionment or, even worse, despair. It would be an awful mess, if we sorted through our Progressive inheritance, and, in the process of discarding some of its features, threw away that element of hope and optimism.

In Jim Fisher's book on T. J. Starker, he quotes a number of T.J.'s sayings, and one of them makes this point in a rather down-to-earth way. "Never throw your soiled hanky down the chute," T.J. used to say, "until you have replaced it with a clean

one in your pocket."[27] There is still much of value in the Progressive legacy. As hankies go, this one is, by many measures, barely used. With a little more attention to its care, maintenance, and upkeep, the Progressive legacy can stay out of the chute for many years to come.

Endnotes

[1]Richard. L. McCormick, *The Party Period and Public Policy: American Politics from the Age of Jackson to the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 287.

[2]Quoted in Steven Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997), p. 263.

[3]John Whiteclay Chambers II, *The Tyranny of Change: America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920 (1992; rpt. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2001)*, p. xx.

[4]McCormick, The Party Period and Public Policy, p. 288.

[5]*Third Annual Report* of the Reclamation Service for 1904, p. 44; *Eleventh Annual Report* of the Reclamation Service for 1911-1912, p. 2.

[6]Quotations from Newell and commentary from Layton, Edwin T. Layton, Jr., *The Revolt of the Engineers: Social Responsibility and the American Engineering Profession* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 117-118.

[7]Char Miller, *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2001).

[8]Diner, *A Very Different Age*, pp. 3 and 6.

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[11]Ibid., pp. 277 and 287.

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