

recognise the magnitude of the question before them. While recognising the imperative necessity for the development and use of the great resources upon which the civilisation and prosperity of nations must depend, the American Governments realise the vital need of arresting the inroads improvidently or unnecessarily made upon their natural wealth. They comprehend also that, as to many of their national resources, more than a merely conservative treatment is required; that reparatory agencies should be invoked to aid the processes of beneficent nature, and that the means of restoration and increase should be sought whenever practicable. They see that to the task of devising economical expenditure of resources, which, once gone, are lost for ever, there should be superposed the duty of restoring and maintaining productiveness wherever impaired or menaced by wastefulness. In the northern part of the American hemisphere destruction and waste bring other evils in their train. The removal of forests, for instance, results in the aridity of vast tracts, torrential rainfalls break down and carry away the unprotected soil, and regions once abundant in vegetable and animal life become barren. This is a lesson almost as old as the human race. The older countries of Europe, Africa, and the Orient teach a lesson in this regard which has been too little heeded.

Anticipating the wide interest which would naturally be aroused in other countries by the present North American Conference, the President foresaw the probability that it would be the precursor of a World Congress. By an Aide-Mémoire of the 6th January last, the principal Governments were informally sounded to ascertain whether they would look with favour upon an invitation to send delegates to such a Conference. The responses have so far been uniformly favourable, and the Conference of Washington has suggested to the President that a similar general Conference be called by him. The President feels, therefore, that it is timely to initiate the suggested World Conference for the Conservation of National Resources by a formal invitation.

By direction of the President, and with the concurrence of Her Majesty the Queen of the Netherlands, an invitation is extended to the Government of Great Britain to send delegates to a Conference to be held at The Hague, at such date as may be found convenient, there to meet and consult the like delegates of the other countries, with a view to considering a general plan for the inventory of the natural resources of the world, and to devising a uniform scheme for the expression of the results of such inventory, to the end that there may be a general understanding and appreciation of the world's supply of the material elements which underlie the development of civilisation and the welfare of the peoples of the earth. It would be appropriate also for the Conference to consider the general phases of the correlated problem of checking, and, when possible, repairing the injuries caused by the waste and destruction of natural resources and utilities, and make recommendations in the interest of their conservation, development, and replenishment.

With such a world inventory and such recommendations, the various producing countries of the whole world would be in a better position to co-operate, each for its own good and all for the good of all, towards the safeguarding and betterment of their common means of support. As was said in the preliminary Aide-Mémoire of the 6th January, "The people of the whole world are interested in the natural resources of the whole world, benefited by their conservation, and injured by their destruction. The people of every country are interested in the supply of food and of material for manufacture in every other country, not only because these are interchangeable through processes of trade, but because a knowledge of the total supply is necessary to the intelligent treatment of each nation's share of the supply."

Nor is this all. A knowledge of the continuance and stability of perennial and renewable resources is no less important to the world than a knowledge of the quantity or the term remaining for the enjoyment of those resources which when consumed are irreplaceable. As to all the great natural sources of national welfare, the peoples of to-day hold the earth in trust for the peoples to come after them. Reading the lessons of the past aright, it would be for such a Conference to look beyond the present to the future.

You will communicate the foregoing to the Government of Great Britain, with the expression of the President's hope that we may be soon informed of its acceptance of the invitation. You will at the same time inform His Excellency that upon informal inquiry a gratifying assurance of the sympathy of the Government of the Netherlands has been received.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT BACON.

No. 71 (11208).

SIR,—

Chicago, Illinois, 12th March, 1909.

I have the honour to inform you that, in a conversation which I had yesterday with Mr. Gifford Pinchot, head of the Forestry Branch of the Department of Agriculture, and Chairman of the recent International Conference on the Conservation of Natural Resources, I inquired from him how long the sittings of the proposed World Congress on the conservation of natural resources were expected to last, and what programme, if any, was contemplated for its proceedings. He is expected to be the principal delegate from the United States to this Congress, and in view of your last despatch to me upon the subject it seems worth while to convey the substance of his reply.

He observed that, although the date of September next had been suggested for the meeting of the Congress, it might probably be postponed until the following spring. It was likely then that the sittings would be short—say, two or three weeks only—because the first business of the Congress would probably be to determine how the actual natural resources of the earth should be ascertained and tabulated by the various countries represented. Many countries would possess the information already, and little would need to be done by them beyond selecting the material facts, and putting them in the most convenient form. Other countries, however, might have to collect and arrange the facts, and would need time—perhaps a year or more. To settle the best