



MINNESOTA NATIONAL FOREST

The Politics of Compromise, 1898-1908

Newell Searle

If and when the necessary land is acquired and attendant problems are overcome, recently designated Voyageurs National Park is expected to draw thousands of visitors to the Kabetogama Peninsula area of northern Minnesota. The opening of the park will fulfill a dream not only of today's supporters but also of those who plumped for a national park in Minnesota's north-land around the turn of the century and even earlier.

As far back as 1891, the same year that it created Itasca State Park, the Minnesota legislature petitioned the president to set aside unsettled land on the northern boundary for a national park. Although nothing came of this request and public opposition to a park soon was evident, a park movement developed that culminated in the formation of a forest reserve that eventually became Minnesota National Forest (later Chippewa National Forest). This article tells the story of that earlier movement.—Ed.

MINNESOTA PINERIES throbbed with prosperity during the hell-for-leather logging days of the late 1890s and 1900s. The state's lumber production reached its peak at the time Theodore Roosevelt became president in 1901. His administration strengthened the efforts of the nation's fledgling conservation groups, and rather quickly the federal government changed many of its long-standing resource policies. Throughout the

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early 1900s, therefore, the ultimate disposal of the nation's remaining timber resources constituted an issue of heated controversy in Minnesota and other states.

In 1899, a proposal to make a national park out of the pine lands belonging to the Chippewa Indians of Minnesota ignited a four-year contest between conservationists, social reformers, lumbermen, settlers, and government officials. A compromise agreement in 1902 finally dispensed with the national park and substituted a scientifically-managed, federal forest reserve in its stead.

This compromise embodied significant changes in conservation ideas. The original "woodsman, spare that tree" sentiment gave way to one of "highest use" determined by long-range planning and scientific administration. The latter theory and the public agitation both for and against the reserve provide a case study in the political behavior common to conservation groups. Against such a benchmark the maturity and development of contemporary conservation movements might eventually be assessed.

Like most conservation projects since, the Minnesota Forest Reserve required lengthy public agitation, skillful political maneuvering, and bureaucratic reorganization. The 1902 forest reserve bill materialized as an amendment to an 1889 statute relating to the Chippewa Indian lands in Minnesota. Page Morris, a Duluth congressman who had hitherto voted against conservation proposals, sponsored the act. The so-called Morris Act created the first forest reserve established by congressional action rather than by presidential proclamation. Congress assigned supervision of the reserve to the United States Bureau of Forestry, thereby

elevating that agency from a minor informational office to a managerial department. The reserve gave Gifford Pinchot, chief of the Forestry Bureau, the chance to test the principles that his organization exhorted private foresters to employ. Under Pinchot's direction, the Minnesota Forest Reserve served as a laboratory for the first comprehensive forest management plans undertaken by a federal agency. With this as their cornerstone, Pinchot, Henry Graves, and other lieutenants laid the foundations for a comprehensive national resource plan.¹

(The Minnesota Forest Reserve identified the area the 1902 Morris Act set aside. The act of May 23, 1908, changed the name to the Minnesota National Forest. Although called the Chippewa National Forest from the start, it was not officially so designated until 1928. At first the reserve was administered jointly by the Forestry Bureau, General Land Office, and Bureau of Indian Affairs. After Indian claims were finally settled in 1923, the Forest Service assumed full jurisdiction of these forest lands.)²

Twentieth-century conservationists found themselves in an era already charged with the currents of social reformation. Americans seemed caught up in the task of national house cleaning. Throughout the "progressive" period there was popular enthusiasm for conservation as well as such diverse causes as trust busting, muckraking, rational planning, the cult of the "strenuous life," woman's suffrage, and civil service reform. The heady, moralistic rhetoric of the era mistakenly induced many participants to regard conservation as a matter of "intelligent public sentiment" triumphing over "selfish special interest." This was not the case. Conservation originated in efforts to "promote efficient development and use of all natural resources" through rational planning.³

The earliest conservationists were an elite composed of public officials and businessmen mutually engaged in rational planning within public and private institutions. To them, conservation meant long-term commercial exploitation of resources in the interest of their respective industries and the nation's economy. When America exhausted its resources, as Gifford Pinchot, among others, feared it would do, then "disaster and decay in every department of national life follow as a matter of course." The necessities of national greatness elevated conservation to the "weightiest problem . . . before the Nation." Whether the resources be forest reserves, water power, or mineral rights, it was paramount that the people in general receive the benefits. President Roosevelt warned Americans in 1904 that nonuse of resources was "to be avoided by every possible means." Conservation, wrote Pinchot, "stands for development." It means "the welfare of this genera-

tion first, and afterward the welfare of the generations to follow."⁴

Planners quickly recognized the intricate relationship between one resource and another. To them, conservation signified the highest or wisest (that is, most profitable and long-term) use for a resource, not its preservation from use. "Wisest" use, therefore, depended upon judgments determined by economic, social, and political, as well as aesthetic and moral, considerations. Governmental determination of wisest use often crossed the desires of groups and individuals who embraced conservation as a moral antidote for the more "artificial, materialistic, and socially unstable cities." Those concerned only with preserving "objects of beauty, scientific curiosity, and recreation" were frequently disappointed. Political expediency, not sentimental congeniality, explains whatever affinity the Roosevelt administration showed for "nature lovers."⁵

But conservation was more than a calculated political thrust. At bottom it was part of a larger reordering of American cultural and political values in reaction to the preceding generation of excess. A tree, Roosevelt lamented, inspired but one thought, "and that was to cut it down." He recognized without apology that the frontier experience had instilled in Americans the "necessity to hew down the forests." Roosevelt called upon the businessmen and industrial leaders to mold in the public mind conservative attitudes toward natural resources. Among the luminaries to hear his plea at the 1905 American Forest Congress were Howard Elliott, president of the Northern Pacific Railroad; Whitelaw Reid, publisher of the *New York Tribune*; and lumbermen B. F. Nelson and Frederick Weyerhaeuser. The president assured businessmen in his message of December 3, 1901, that forestry "gives the assurance of

¹ Samuel Trask Dana, *Forest and Range Policy: Its Development in the United States*, 125 (New York, 1956).

² See Samuel Trask Dana, John H. Allison, and Russell N. Cunningham, *Minnesota Lands: Ownership, Use, and Management of Forest and Related Lands*, 113-116, 399-400 (Washington, D.C., 1960).

³ Gifford Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground*, 212 (New York, 1947); George Mowry, *The Era of Theodore Roosevelt*, 214-216 (New York, 1958); Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*, 1-3 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1959).

⁴ Gifford Pinchot, *The Fight for Conservation*, 4 (first quote), 42 (last quotes) (Garden City, New York, 1911); Theodore Roosevelt, "The Weightiest Problem Before Our People," in the *Chautauquan*, 50:33-43 (June, 1909); Gifford Pinchot, "The A B C of Conservation," in *The Outlook*, 93:770-772 (December 4, 1909); Theodore Roosevelt, *State Papers as Governor and President, 1899-1909*, 235 (quote) (New York, 1926).

⁵ Dana, *Forest and Range Policy*, 159; Hays, *Conservation*, 143, 145, 189.

larger and more certain supplies. The fundamental idea of forestry is the perpetuation of forests by use." But government forestry would not be successful, he warned, unless "your interest and support give it permanence and power."⁶

Although the lumber executives reacted defensively to criticism of their past logging practices, they willingly promoted scientific forestry. Before 1900, conservative forestry procedures amounted to financial liabilities for lumber companies whenever the market was depressed. The "wasteful" practices common to nineteenth-century lumbering were the only methods "that would yield the best returns." Only when diminishing resources advanced stumpage values did the "lumbermen . . . come to see some practicality in the proposition that methods of forest preservation should be introduced." By market standards, "wasteful" and "conservative" described practices dependent upon the scarcity of the lumber supply and the demand for wood products. Only a higher demand and a limited timber supply made conservation methods profitable in the long run and practicable in the short run. Threatened "timber famines" hastened the adoption of scientific forestry and the prevention of waste.⁷

Foremost among Minnesotans who urged conservative forestry were Christopher C. Andrews, the state's chief fire warden (and later commissioner of forestry), and William H. Laird, a Weyerhaeuser associate. Andrews promoted forestry in part because the "Congress and Government . . . disposed of the public pine lands in a prodigal manner, and at a price far below their value." Laird exhorted those who were most dependent on the national timber supply "to be foremost in forwarding any practical measures which may con-

tinue the industry." And, he asked, "May we not take timely action before it is too late?"⁸

Forestry in Minnesota experienced both setbacks and advances at the hands of individual lumbermen. Fire prevention gained popular support following the devastating fire that wiped out Hinckley in 1894, killing 413 people. The following year the legislature launched its pine land investigation of timber sales, and later it created the position of chief fire warden. By 1898 the *Mississippi Valley Lumberman*, published in Minneapolis, had high praise for foresters like Andrews "who were laboring for the lumberman as well as the public in general." In 1899 the *Lumberman* waged a successful fight to prevent repeal of the 1895 state fire warden law which provided for a system of local fire wardens over whom the chief fire warden had general charge. When the legislature established the Minnesota State Forestry Board in 1899, Frederick Weyerhaeuser was designated one of its members. He not only promoted scientific forestry and fire suppression but also donated 3,000 acres of partially cutover land to enlarge Itasca State Park. In retrospect, these measures seem small and halfhearted, but for their time they were significant. By setting a positive tone

FROM the St. Paul Pioneer Press, October 17, 1901



A Glimpse Into the Future: The Last Tree.

⁶ Theodore Roosevelt, "The Forest in the Life of a Nation," in American Forestry Association, *Proceedings of the American Forest Congress, 1905*, 3 (first quotes), 10 (last quote) (Washington, D.C., 1905); Roosevelt, *State Papers*, 102. For recent discussions of themes in this paragraph, see Ray Ginger, *The Age of Excess* (New York, 1965) and Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order* (New York, 1967).

⁷ N. W. McLeod, "The Lumberman's Interest in Forestry," in American Forestry Association, *Proceedings*, 100; J. E. Defebaugh, "The Changed Attitude of Lumbermen Toward Forestry," in American Forestry Association, *Proceedings*, 112 (first quote), 114 (second quote); Pinchot, *The Fight for Conservation*, 44; Henry Solon Graves, "The Problem of Private Forestry," in *The Forest and the Saw Mill*, the official report of the 1910 convention of the National Lumber Manufacturers' Association, 82 (Chicago, 1910).

⁸ C. C. Andrews, "National Park Association," in *The Courant*, 2:53 (November 1, 1899); Ralph W. Hidy, Frank Ernest Hill, and Allan Nevins, *Timber and Men: The Weyerhaeuser Story*, 380 (Laird quotes) (New York, 1963).

and style among conservation-minded businessmen, the lumbermen facilitated efforts to secure a forest reserve.⁹

DURING THE WINTER of 1898–99, the conflicting interests of northern Minnesota land agents, lumbermen, nature lovers, social reformers, and the Roosevelt administration deadlocked all efforts to dispose of the ceded Chippewa lands on the Leech Lake Reservation. Final disposal entailed three related questions: What should be done with the timber? What should be done with the land? What should be done with the Indians? Except on forest reserves already designated, government sale of timber automatically included title to the land. To sell reservation timber under existing laws meant the government had to acquire title to Indian lands. Even when title was obtained, though, no one agreed on what to do with the Indians.

Speculators, land agents, and people in small communities regarded the reservation as a barrier to their immediate profit and long-term prosperity. Some lumbermen, of course, wanted the Indian pine lands that were rapidly rising in stumpage value. Social reformers considered the reservation barbaric and a hindrance to “civilization” of the Indians. All (except the Indians) agreed that liquidating the reservation served both Indian and public interests, but neither the various parties nor the Indian Bureau could concur on the best means of liquidation.¹⁰ Although Minnesota’s congressional delegation had to agree on a single plan before Congress would act on the matter, an impasse resulted when the interest groups lobbied with their respective congressmen. From 1899 to 1902, pressure mounted to break the deadlock as reports and allegations of fraudulent administration of Indian lands reached the public press. Particularly outraged at mismanagement of Indian timberlands were a number of individuals who later became conservationists.

Much remains unwritten about the unhappy history of Indian affairs in America. It need only be mentioned at this point that policies laid down after 1870 proposed to force the Indians to conform to the prevailing white culture by destroying the native culture. The Dawes General Allotment Act of 1887 epitomized this policy. It aimed to “civilize” the Indians by dispersing them onto individual allotments, or homesteads. Each Indian head of a family received 160 acres of agricultural land (this figure was reduced to 80 acres in 1891) and a trust patent, redeemable in twenty-five years for a fee simple deed. Since the reservations contained more land than necessary to grant each Indian family either 160 or 80 acres, “surplus” lands were opened for public sale, with the proceeds credited to the Indians.¹¹

Backing the General Allotment Act were the individuals covetous of Indian timber as well as those who

sincerely thought the reservations were detrimental to the Indians’ welfare. Reformers believed that individual ownership of land in competition with white farmers would quickly transform Indians into models of white citizenship. President Roosevelt hoped that the General Allotment Act, when enforced, would operate as a “mighty pulverizing engine to break up the tribal mass.”¹² In reality, it undermined much of the moral authority of the Indian culture without absorbing the Indians into the larger society.

Minnesota’s Indian reformers and lumbermen backed an 1889 federal statute introduced by Representative Knute Nelson of Minnesota and commonly known as the “Nelson Law.” This act for the “relief and civilization of the Chippewa Indians in the State of Minnesota” sought to implement on the state level the applicable provisions of the General Allotment Act. In an effort to secure for the Indians all the benefits of timber harvesting, the “Nelson Law” was amended in 1897 to license only Indians to cut “dead and down” timber on the reservation. The good intentions of this amendment brought unfortunate results. The “dead and down” provisions facilitated instead of hindered illegal cutting of green timber by dishonest loggers.¹³

Public outcry against the “dead and down” operations came loudest from former proponents of the Nelson Law: lumbermen and Indian reformers. Joining them were businessmen, the Interior Department, and Minnesota’s congressmen. They objected most of all to the practice of deliberately burning forest trees to create “dead and down” timber for further illegal operations. Because the Indians owned no logging companies, they sold their “dead and down” permits to white loggers for as little as a quarter of their real value. Small operators, squaw men, and mixed-bloods bought the permits, cut the “dead and down” timber, and sold it to large lumber buyers like Thomas H. Shevlin and Thomas B. Walker. Lumbermen who could not buy this timber complained the most. Chief fire warden Andrews condemned the system as one that

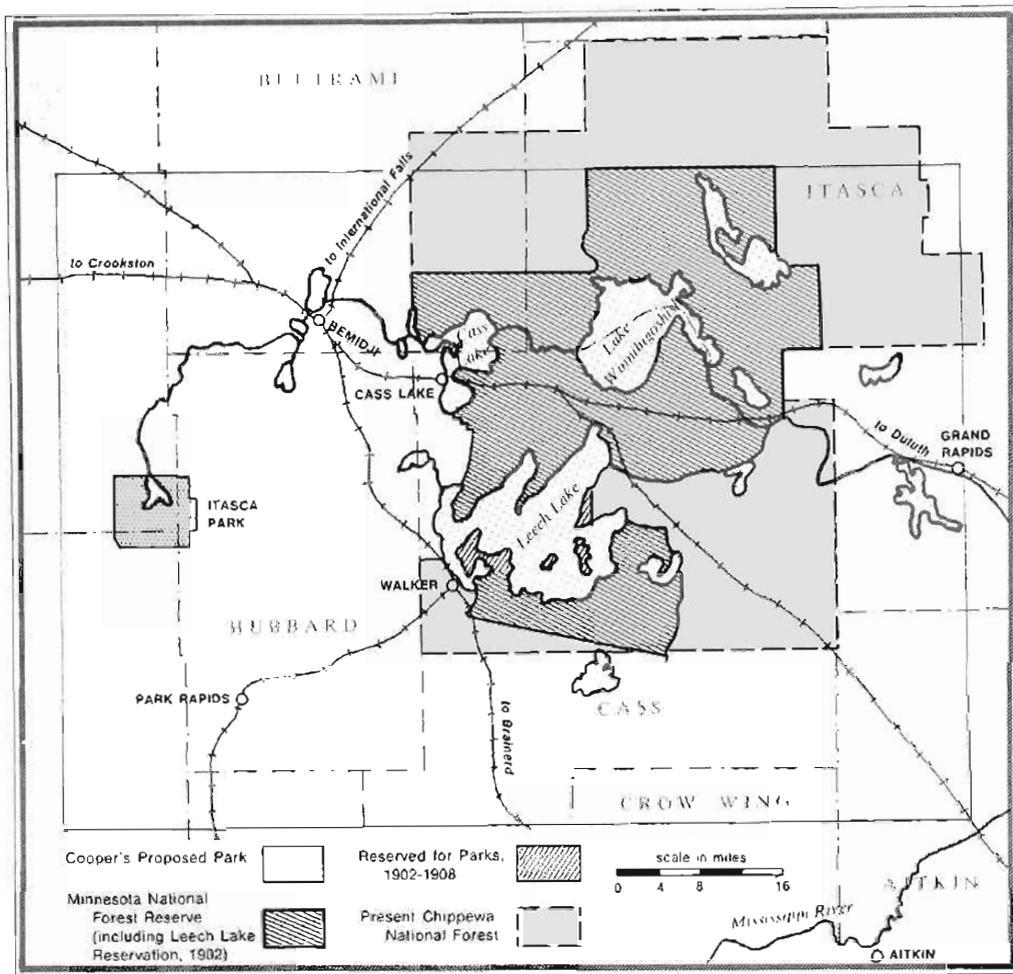
⁹ “Recognition by Lumbermen of Necessity for Forest Conservation,” in *Mississippi Valley Lumberman*, March 4, 1898, p. 10; “To Repeal the Fire Warden Law,” in *Mississippi Valley Lumberman*, January 27, 1899, p. 12; Hidy, Hill, and Nevins, *Timber and Men*, 187, 380.

¹⁰ For background on Indian administration from the Civil War to the turn of the century, see Leonard D. White, *The Republican Era*, 181–195 (New York, 1958).

¹¹ Jack D. Forbes, ed., *The Indian in America’s Past*, 113 (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1964); United States, *Statutes at Large*, 24:388; Dana, Allison, and Cunningham, *Minnesota Lands*, 87–89.

¹² Roosevelt, *State Papers*, 129.

¹³ United States, *Statutes at Large*, 25:642, 30:90; *Minneapolis Journal*, April 20, 1901, part 2, p. 1.



CONSERVATIONISTS, lumbermen, and local residents disagreed over the future of this area.

“offers a premium for firing the forest.” Another Minnesotan, unidentified, denounced “dead and down” operations as “a fraud and a steal from beginning to end.”¹⁴

Repeated complaints from the Minnesota Federation of Women’s Clubs prompted the General Land Office to investigate reservation logging in 1898 and again in 1901. Reports filed by General Land Office agents in 1898–99 denied the existence of any major frauds. Investigators confirmed allegations that mixed-bloods and non-Indians gained most of the benefits but

dismissed the severest charges as the work of “self-constituted correspondents” whose assertions were based “entirely on hearsay.” These protests, coupled with a short-lived Indian uprising at Leech Lake in 1898, caught the attention of federal officials. An Interior Department report disclosed that the Nelson Law “failed to secure to the Indians the largest benefit from the sale of the pine and agricultural lands.” The House Committee on Indian Affairs reported that “no act has been so troublesome to the Government” as the Nelson Law. An “examination of the reports . . . will convince anyone that great frauds were committed.”¹⁵

Although no one doubted the wisdom of amending the law, no two parties agreed on the form of amendment. As pressures mounted against the Nelson Law, the idea took root that a national park should encompass the reservation. The park adherents hoped, might solve the problem of the Indians, their lands, and their timber in one masterful stroke.

Park sentiment came from many sources over a period of years. The 1891 Minnesota state legislature passed a resolution for a national park. Andrews recommended a state park in his 1898 report. Similarly,

¹⁴ 55 Congress, 3 session, *Senate Documents*, no. 70, p. 24, 25 (last quote) (serial 3731); report of Lydia P. Williams, president of the Minnesota Federation of Women’s Clubs in 1900, in *The Courant*, December, 1900, p. 11; Minnesota Chief Fire Warden, *Report*, 1899, p. 30.

¹⁵ 55 Congress, 3 session, *Senate Documents*, no. 70, 8–15, 30–33 (first quote), 33–53 (serial 3731); Reverend J. A. Gilfillan, “Causes of the Late Chippewa Outbreak in Minnesota: An Address to the Mohonk Conference,” n.p.; Secretary of the Interior, *Reports*, 1900, p. lvii; 57 Congress, 1 session, *House Reports*, no. 1473, p. 1–2 (serial 4404).



THE CONGRESSIONAL party that investigated the proposed national forest posed for photographer Edward A. Bromley on an island in Cass Lake.

THIS LAMPOON of the congressional excursion appeared in the St. Paul Pioneer Press of October 1, 1899.



CONGRESSMEN AT LARGE—WALKER, MINN.

in 1898 the Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs tried to interest Governor David M. Clough in requesting the legislature to purchase a part of the reservation for a park. Shortly thereafter, the General Land Office advertised a public sale of 100,000 acres of ceded reservation lands for May 15, 1899. The impending sale furnished conservationists with their first tangible, political issue. During the winter of 1898-99, zealous women federationists distributed literature, wrote to congressmen, and mobilized public opinion in favor of a national park. Their crowning achievement was prompting the 1899 state legislature to request Congress to suspend until 1902 all reservation sales in Minnesota. They also petitioned Congress to buy from the Indians the ceded lands and transform them into a national park. Edward A. Hitchcock, secretary of the interior, suspended the land sale on March 30, 1899.¹⁶

BY MIDSUMMER, 1899, a diverse collection of individuals banded together to form the forest-park movement in Minnesota. Andrews and others deemed it "desirable" that the government "procure and hold as a park . . . a forest of white pine . . . while it is still possible to do so." No other lake "bordered with pine forest" matched Cass Lake "for availability as a health and pleasure resort." Andrews held that "it would be

¹⁶ Minnesota, *Laws*, 1891, p. 402, and 1899, p. 507-509; Minnesota Chief Fire Warden, *Report*, 1898, p. 54; Mrs. W. E. Bramhall, "The Park and Forest Reserve Plan—What It's All About," in *The Courant*, January, 1902, p. 3, 6; Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs, *Yearbook*, 1899-1900, p. 16, 19; Herman H. Chapman, "Minnesota National Forest," Chapman Papers, owned by the Minnesota Historical Society; Mrs. A. E. Giddings to C. C. Andrews, December 1, 1898, and Margaret J. Evans to Andrews, January 3, 1899, Forestry Division Correspondence, in the Minnesota State Archives; Secretary of the Interior, *Reports*, 1900, p. lv, lvi; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 31, 1899, p. 1.

¹⁷ Chief Fire Warden, *Report*, 1898, p. 54-56.

¹⁸ See *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 16, 1902, p. 6; Chief Fire Warden, *Report*, 1899, p. 33, and *Report*, 1900, p. 43-47.

¹⁹ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 29, p. 1, 4, October 1, p. 10, October 3, p. 3, 1899; Horace B. Hudson, "A National Park in the Minnesota Pine Forest," in *Review of Reviews*, 20:698-701 (December, 1899); John A. Campbell, Elbert Hubbard, and Henry P. Williams, *So This Then Is the Rescue of Helen*, (East Aurora, New York, 1900); Judson Cross to Andrews, July 20, 1899, Forestry Division Correspondence.

²⁰ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 1, 1899, p. 10 (first quotes); *Minneapolis Journal*, October 3, 1899, p. 1-2 (quotes), July 29, 1899, p. 7; Campbell, *Rescue of Helen*, preface; Andrews in *The Cowant*, 2:53-55; Mrs. Bramhall, in *The Courant*, January, 1902, p. 4; Cooper to Andrews, November 16, 1899, in Forestry Division Correspondence.

simply wicked for the people of Minnesota to allow the south shore of Cass Lake to be denuded of its forests."¹⁷

(At this time the distinction between a national park and a national forest was much less clear than it became after the establishment of the United States Forest Service in 1905 and the National Park Service in 1916. Florence [Mrs. William E.] Bramhall, influential chairwoman of the forest reserve committee of the Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs, labeled the national park as a Chicago idea and the forest reserve as a Minnesota plan, but she did so in 1902 when it was already apparent that the forest reserve was a compromise solution. Throughout the years from 1898 to 1902, Andrews and others spoke of a park managed on forestry principles. For this reason the term "forest-park" is generally employed here to designate the project that began as a national park and culminated in the Minnesota Forest Reserve.)¹⁸

The forest-park movement gained much-needed publicity in October, 1899, when Colonel John S. Cooper, a Chicago sportsman, organized a railroad excursion to Cass Lake for 100 congressmen and dignitaries. James J. Hill furnished a special ten-coach train, and lumberman Thomas H. Shevlin promised to entertain the tourists when they returned to Minneapolis. Among those pledging their support for the forest-park were Congressmen Joseph G. Cannon of Illinois and John Allen of Mississippi, Archbishop John Ireland, and Governor John Lind.¹⁹

After the Great Northern special clattered to Cass Lake, the guests "drank in deep draughts of the pure air, laden with all the balsamic properties of this favored region." The "most extravagant expressions of pleasure" were called forth by the "magnificent coloring of the forests," the *Minneapolis Journal* said, and, after "three delightful days" of hunting, fishing, and conviviality, the party returned to Minneapolis. Cooper expressed optimism that his "Trojan Expedition for the rescue of Helen" would succeed in securing a park of 4,000,000 acres in northern Minnesota. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* of September 30, 1899, assayed congressional promises and confidently told its readers that "the park project is already an assured fact."²⁰

After Cooper's excursion, forest-park advocates in Minnesota quickly assumed control of the movement. In contrast to the Chicagoan's romantic "Trojan Expedition" and grandiose plan (in general, he wanted 4,000,000 acres of Minnesota pine lands, including Chippewa reservations at Leech Lake, for the park), Minnesotans put forth hard-headed economic proposals, scientific arguments, and a modest plan. The Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs asked for only the Chippewa reservations, scaled down their park re-

quest to 489,000 acres of nonagricultural lands around Cass and Leech lakes, and finally accepted a forest reserve of 225,000 acres. To their own proposal they added the forestry provisions suggested by Herman Haupt Chapman, superintendent of the North Agricultural Experiment Station of the University of Minnesota at Grand Rapids from 1897 through 1903 (and later long-time professor in the Yale School of Forestry and president of the Society of American Foresters). He proposed a forest reservation of ten sections to be scientifically managed under Forestry Bureau regulations. The women's request also included park lands on scenic points and islands in Cass and Leech lakes, logging of mature timber on the remaining forest reserve lands, with 5 per cent remaining for reforestation, and public sale of agricultural lands. Arguments for and against the forest-park centered on such issues as the long-term profitability of scientific forestry, the value of cutover pine lands for agriculture, justice for the Indians, and the social benefits to be derived from a forest-park.

Although the various individuals in the forest-park movement seemed on the surface to have many similarities, their motives and aims often conflicted. By and large, the conservationists moved within the middle and upper strata of Minnesota society. Andrews, Florence Bramhall, Cyrus Northrop, and other supporters enjoyed social prominence. These Twin Citians possessed long records of public service, were well educated, and earned their living in businesses and professions. Their interest in reform and public service was both sincere and altruistic.

By far the largest role was played by the Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs without whose "far-sighted and patriotic support," Pinchot later recalled, "it would have been impossible" to secure the forest reserve. Federation members bore out Andrews' prediction that "their influence will be decisive if they will but exert it." Nevertheless, the women quickly discovered that "it is difficult to get anyone to work for the public with the zeal with which men work for their own pockets." Throughout 1898 and early 1899 the federation concentrated largely on protesting against logging on the Leech Lake Reservation and on mobilizing public opinion. During 1899 the women formed an alliance with the State Medical Society, the State Forestry Board, and, briefly, with John S. Cooper. The success of their public protests and legislative memorial to Congress gained them wide respect. A federation representative received membership in the Minnesota State Forestry Association, and the Minnesota State Agricultural Society delegated Mrs. Bramhall to represent it officially in Washington, D.C.²¹

Intensifying their activities during 1901 and 1902,



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UP AGAINST IT.

the women descended upon Washington to interview the president, Interior Secretary Hitchcock, the commissioner of public lands, the chief of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and members of various congressional committees. So great was their zeal that the cause swept out of Minnesota to inspire the assistance of federations in Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, New York, and other states. Through other state federations, the Minnesota women wielded a moral and political influence over an area wider than Minnesota itself.²²

Sometime during 1900 or early 1901 the national park movement of Cooper and the forest-park proposal of the Women's Federation parted company. The split, scarcely noticed at the time, was neither bitter nor inevitable. Separation was more a product of circumstance than of conscious difference of opinion. If the parties themselves were not overt rivals, their respective cities were. When jockeying for influence with sympathetic congressmen, the Women's Federation was subjected to pressures favoring compromise with the lumbermen that Cooper's Chicago organization never experienced. Thus, circumstances quietly worked to

²¹ Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground*, 205; Andrews, in *The Courant*, 2:54; Maria L. Sanford, "The Forest Park," in *The Courant*, 2:164 (January, 1900); Mrs. Bramhall, in *The Courant*, January, 1902, p. 3, and October, 1902, p. 13.

²² Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs, *Yearbook*, 1900-1901, p. 24; Lydia P. Williams, in *The Courant*, December, 1900, p. 11; Mrs. W. E. Bramhall, "Report of Legislative Committee," in *The Courant*, October, 1901, p. 11. Andrews enlisted the aid of forestry commissions in other states. See Charles Garfield to Andrews, April 19, 1900, Charles E. Oak to Andrews, April 23, 1900, William F. Fox to Andrews, May 3, 1900, and Walter Mulford to Andrews, March 3, 1902, in Forestry Division Correspondence.

divide the two groups before their genuine differences intervened.

Florence Bramhall recognized early that Cooper's 4,000,000-acre park proposal was a liability. The possibility of "locking up" so much timber for a park raised the ire of lumbermen in Minneapolis and Duluth and of the settlers eager to develop the northern region. Park opponents sometimes confused Cooper's proposal with the modest 489,000-acre request of the Women's Federation. Worse still, Cooper acted all along as though his and the women's plans were identical. Mrs. Bramhall said Cooper was "a dangerous element in the situation." She felt that he represented "not local but outside, not forestry but Park and sportsmen's sentiments." He proved unwilling to co-operate with Minnesotans, ignored advice and criticism, and went ahead "on his own lines." Most distressing, "he seem[ed] too anxious to attach his name . . . [to any] proposition to be [particular] about the wisdom of his utterances."

²³ Mrs. Bramhall to Chapman, August 8, 1903, in the Chapman Scrapbook, Chapman Papers, in the Yale University Library. The Minnesota Historical Society owns microfilm of the scrapbook, hereafter cited as Chapman Scrapbook, and other Chapman holdings at Yale. Chapman, "Minnesota National Forest," Chapman Papers, Minnesota Historical Society; Mrs. Bramhall, in *The Courant*, January, 1902, p. 4 (last quote).

²⁴ *Cass Lake Voice*, January 4, 1902, p. 1, 4, March 16, 1901, p. 1 (first quote), March 30, 1901, p. 1 (last quote); *Duluth News-Tribune*, December 30, 1901, p. 5, December 31, 1901, p. 2, January 8, 1902, p. 8; "Anti-Forest Reserve Contentions of Cass Lake Delegation," in *The Courant*, January, 1902, p. 10.

²⁵ Eddy to A. G. Bernard, editor of the Cass Lake newspaper, August 6, 1901, in *Cass Lake Voice*, August 10, 1901, p. 1; *Cass Lake Voice*, March 30, 1901, p. 1.

²⁶ *Cass Lake Voice*, March 16, 1901, p. 1.

FLORENCE E. BRAMHALL and John S. Cooper disagreed on the proper conservationist strategy.



Under these circumstances, the federation was eager to establish a program and identity of its own and did so by embracing the forest reserve plan put forth by Herman Chapman. Mrs. Bramhall learned of Chapman's scheme through a conversation with him, and the federation adopted his proposal in early 1901. Thus the way was then clear for Mrs. Bramhall to claim that "Col. Cooper's . . . plan was never the plan of the Federation."²³

IF THE OPPONENTS of the forest-park made no clear distinctions between the Cooper and federation plans, it was because both proposals seemed injurious to the immediate material interests of northern Minnesotans. Cass Lake residents were afraid that a park would ruin settlers, give Minneapolis lumbermen unfair advantages, waste tax money, and create a fire hazard in the unprotected pine forest. Cities aspiring to become metropolitan centers, such as Duluth and Bemidji, joined Cass Lake in the outcry that a park "would kill all further development and leave this section at a standstill." Such a park would place "a Chinese wall practically around the country."²⁴

To understand the position of anti-forest-park groups, it is helpful to note how they differed from the forest-park advocates. Unlike the latter, most northern residents were lower- to middle-class farmers and entrepreneurs. They owned shops and farms. Many possessed a grammar school education, lacked power and prestige, and knew a life of migration, unremitting labor, and frustration. By exploiting local resources to the fullest, they hoped to attain some of the wealth and status enjoyed by the park enthusiasts. Congressman Frank M. Eddy aptly stated their philosophy in a letter to the *Cass Lake Voice*: "God Almighty could not devise better use for 160 acres of agricultural land than to make a home of it, and of a pine tree than to have it cut down, sawed into lumber and built into a house." Cass Lakers agreed. Ideas to retain the last bit of primeval forest "do not belong to the present practical business age."²⁵

Like other frontier townsmen, Cass Lakers established shops and businesses ahead of actual demand for their services. Their economic success, investments, interests, and welfare seemed "dependent solely and entirely on the development and settlement" of northern Minnesota. Blind to all development but logging and agriculture, northern settlers doggedly asserted that prosperity would come to them only when the Nelson Law worked to remove the Indians and pine. To this end they petitioned Congress to open the reservation "as provided." This, they believed, would "result in the immediate development of the rich timber and agricultural interests of this section."²⁶

With such wide social and economic disparities separating the park and anti-park groups (not to mention geographical differences), it is not surprising that the rhetoric of a class struggle often colored the Cass Lakers' arguments. In general, northern Minnesotans regarded the park movement as the brain child of southern Minnesotans "who are meddling with a territory" rightfully belonging to northern residents. Judge Frank Ives of Cass Lake, for one, denounced "the Cooper-Andrews lumber barons' national park scheme" and added that "our people are tired of the misrepresentations of the park builders, that these lands are worthless for agriculture and useful only as the hunting and playground of a few nabobs who have more money than brains." Although intent is difficult to substantiate, Cass Lakers and others probably feared that their local economy would become dependent on providing services to wealthy tourists. This carried with it implications of servile status antithetical to the aims of the area's independent and single-minded settlers.²⁷

Resentment easily bubbled over into fears of economic intrigue. In editorial after editorial, the Duluth newspapers feasted their readers with spirited but largely groundless conspiracy stories. The *Duluth Herald* said that "Minneapolis attorneys" had "hoodwinked" Duluth legislators into passivity and thereby engineered the legislative memorial suspending reservation sales. The fact that the site of the proposed park lay near Duluth and, if commercially developed, "would materially assist in making [Duluth] the Zenith city of the state" seemed explanation enough for the interest Twin Cities businessmen showed in preserving the reservation from exploitation. Year in and year out, northern Minnesotans heard allegations against the park and read that it was "the most successful confidence game ever worked," a fraud upon the public, and a camouflage so the "lords of timber looting [can] get in their nefarious work" under the "dead and down" act.²⁸

The most telling evidence supporting such accusations remained Thomas H. Shevlin's early and short-lived enthusiasm for the park movement. According to the *Minneapolis Journal*, lumbermen were interested in the park movement as a pawn to keep the reservation pine off the market for a few more years so the value of their own stumpage would rise. There was nothing, the *Journal* held, to the surmise that Shevlin and others were "thoroughly committed to the park scheme from the most unselfish motives." Similar reports appeared in the *Mississippi Valley Lumberman*. Actually, Minneapolis lumbermen took no united stand on the controversy. Most of them did oppose Cooper's 4,000,000-acre proposal for the "impractical magnitude of the scheme" but were generally "in the van" of those furthering scientific forestry and reforestation. When

the Morris Act neared final passage, the *Lumberman* praised it as "the best and most practical scheme ever offered."²⁹

The contending parties never met head-on when advancing arguments for their respective positions. There were monologues instead of public debates. Forest-park advocates expressed doubts that pine land was as fit for agriculture as it was for forestry. In the interest of land efficiency Andrews urged a reserve for "the good it will do the science of forestry." He added that "if a park be acquired it will be managed on forestry principles." No burdens would befall local taxpayers because "the pine timber would pay for the park." Northern residents could expect many benefits in addition to a perpetual logging industry. Park tourists, for example, would cause "the circulation of very much more money" than would logging alone. Greater profits for all would be realized from sustained-yield forestry and from park patrons than "from three to four years of lumbering and the slow farming of cut-over land which might follow."³⁰

The actual suitability of pine lands for agriculture was apparently difficult to determine. For nearly two centuries agriculture had followed the cutting of hardwood forests in a vast area from New England to the Midwest. Very few settlers suspected, however, that pine trees grew in soils of a quality and composition quite different from those congenial to oaks and walnuts. In northern Minnesota, land booms occurred in cutover countries, and the Duluth papers reported them in their columns. Cass Lakers took it upon themselves to "show conclusively" just how fit for agriculture and unfit for a park the region actually was. The *Duluth Herald* remarked that "one of the greatest sources of Duluth's future development lies in that very land that is now the object of much contempt."

²⁷ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 28, 1901, p. 2 (first quote); *Duluth Herald*, December 29, 1900, p. 1.

²⁸ *Duluth Herald*, March 31, 1899, p. 4 (first quote), December 31, 1900, p. 4 ("Zenith city" quote), February 23, 1901, p. 8, December 31, 1901, p. 7 ("confidence game" quote); *Duluth News Tribune*, January 1, p. 4, January 3, p. 4 ("looting" quote), January 9, p. 4, January 12, sec. 2, p. 4, 1902. Although the Duluth newspapers were outspokenly against the park, a number of Duluth businessmen expressed no opposition at all. See Ray T. Lewis to Andrews, December 26, 1900, in Forestry Division Correspondence.

²⁹ *Minneapolis Journal*, October 3, 1899, p. 1; *Mississippi Valley Lumberman*, August 4, 1899, p. 15, August 11, 1901, p. 12 ("impractical" quote), August 18, 1901, p. 12, October 6, 1901, p. 14, February 14, 1902, p. 18 (last quote).

³⁰ Chief Fire Warden, *Report*, 1899, p. 33, 37, 40, *Report*, 1900, p. 45; Andrews, in *The Courant*, 2:54 (last quote).

Northern settlers offered these and similar arguments against the economic benefits claimed for a park. Open lands, they contended, naturally bring in thousands of settlers who will purchase dry goods, clothes, shoes, farm implements, and other commodities in nearby towns. Moreover, they will "speedily become taxpayers" and "lessen the burden of all others in the county and in the entire state." Some land boomers went so far as to claim that cutover pine lands were more valuable for farms "than prairie lands of the west." If pine-area farms should prove immediately unprofitable, settlers could always find work in logging camps and sawmills to tide them over.³¹

Repeated tests and careful observations at the experimental station at Grand Rapids generally confirmed the judgment that pine lands were inferior to hardwood soils in fertility and long-term productivity. Crops, especially vegetables, would make a good showing for several years, but then the fertility of the sandy soils would become quickly exhausted. When inexperienced persons purchased such poor land from speculators at high prices on a mortgage, "failure was inevitable."³²

THE PROBLEM of proper land use was a serious one. No natural barriers or topographic features separated agricultural from nonagricultural lands. Local speculators bought up cutover lands for as little as twenty-five to fifty cents an acre and then resold them for five to fifteen dollars an acre. Few settlers knew in advance the cost of clearing pine stumps, so they would blindly "plough ahead at it until they were forced to

give it up and seek a living elsewhere." Only a persistent demand for labor in lumber camps and sawmills staved off widespread agricultural failures. "If it hadn't been for the logging," Chapman quoted one farmer as saying, "I would have starved like a rat." Chapman deplored as "absolutely conscienceless" the means speculators employed to dispose of their land. He wished them no worse fate "than to condemn them to earn a living on the 'farm land' they have sold to poor but honest settlers with families to support." In the face of continuing land speculation, Archbishop John Ireland wondered whether "there [is] no other development that a country should crave save that of saw mills and of ploughed fields."³³

Between the speculators and the conservationists were the Indians. Too many of their spokesmen, unfortunately, were either white or of mixed blood. Andrews claimed that the Chippewa recognized their prosperity would be "very much more promoted" if the government bought their land for a park than if it were stripped of its timber. Supposedly speaking for one faction of the Indians, Theodore Beaulieu, a mixed-blood Indian Bureau employee, called the park the "only reasonable manner" of gaining "adequate consideration" for reservation lands. After the forest reserve became a fact, Chippewa Chief Flatmouth protested its establishment.³⁴

As self-appointed champions of the Indians' cause, members of the Women's Federation aimed to "protect the Indian from further robbery." Besides the benefits from government purchase of the reservation, the Indians would "learn refinement" from white park tourists. In addition, tourists would create a "better market for the neat products of their looms . . . [and provide] employment as guides and boatmen."³⁵

Spokesmen against the forest-park were just as zealous as the conservationists in their paternalistic defense of Indian rights. Episcopal Bishop James D. Morrison of Duluth expressed one phase of current moral sentiment. It was a "barbarous, cold-blooded proposal," he wrote, ". . . to preserve the Ojibways in a national park as a sort of aboriginal curiosity." What "decent man" would want to preserve the Indians as a "squalid mass of idle, ragged mendicants, not permitted to aspire to individual ownership of anything[?]" The best thing for the Indians, he concluded, was to sell the reservation lands at public auction and resettle the Chippewa on individual allotments.³⁶

Divided public opinion around the state polarized Minnesota's congressional delegation on the park issue. Petitions to congressmen and visits by the Women's Federation availed nothing. Andrews spent the month of December, 1900, in Washington vainly trying to bring his partisan influence to bear on Congressman

³¹ *Cass Lake Voice*, August 10, 1901, p. 1; *Duluth Herald*, February 16, 1901, p. 4 (quotes), April 26, 1901, p. 4; "Anti-Forest Reserve Contentions of Cass Lake Delegation," in *The Courant*, January, 1902, p. 10 (last quotes).

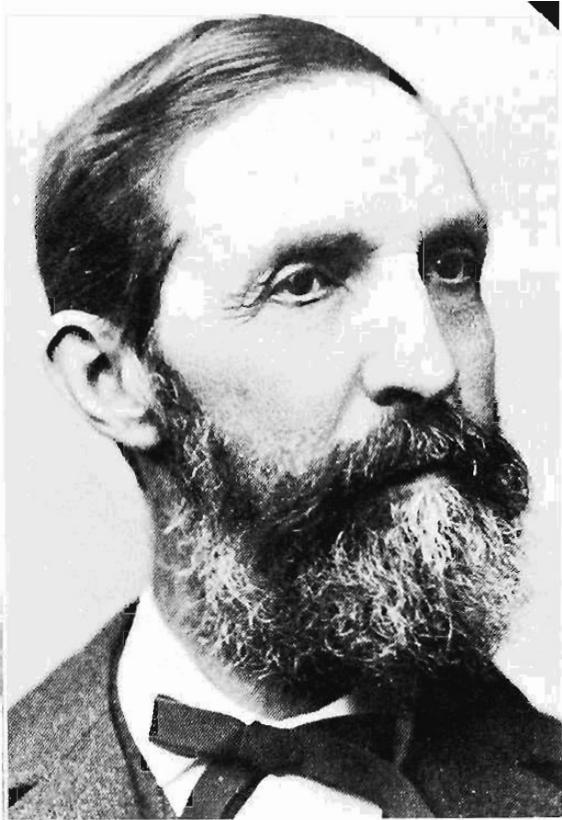
³² Herman H. Chapman, "Minnesota National Forest," Chapman Papers.

³³ Herman H. Chapman, "Minnesota National Forest Reserves," 1903 statement; "Chapman on Influence of Chippewa Forest Reserve," copy of paper Chapman read before the American Forestry Association convention on August 26, 1903, in Minneapolis, both in Chapman Papers; Archbishop John Ireland, "Duluth and the National Park," in *The Courant*, February, 1901, p. 3.

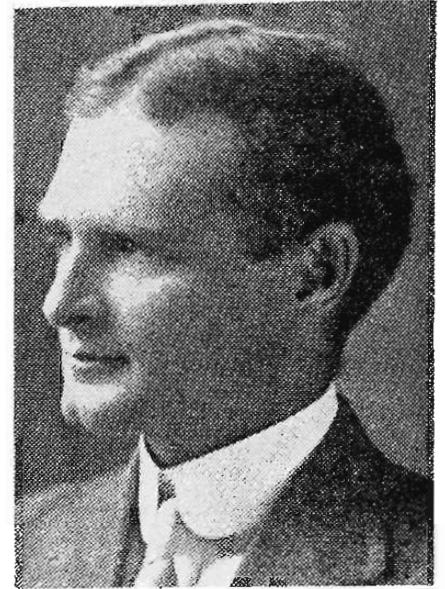
³⁴ Andrews, in *The Courant*, 2:54; Beaulieu to Andrews, November 17, 1900, Forestry Division Correspondence. Portions of this letter were printed in *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 26, 1900, p. 4. For Flatmouth's protest, see *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 6, 1902, sec. 1, p. 12.

³⁵ Chapman Scrapbook; Chief Fire Warden, *Report*, 1900, p. 45.

³⁶ J. D. Morrison, "Against the National Park—on the Proposed Site," in *The Courant*, January, 1901, p. 4 (quotes); *Duluth Herald*, March 31, 1899, p. 4; James A. Tawney to Andrews, February 1, 1900, in Forestry Division Correspondence.



CHRISTOPHER C. ANDREWS



HERMAN H. CHAPMAN

Morris. Morris, in turn, would do nothing without consulting his constituents. The solution seemed essentially political. Further consultations with Morris confirmed Andrews' suspicion that as long as influential Duluth Republicans opposed a forest-park Morris could not be expected to favor it.³⁷

Several attempts to amend the Nelson Law were made by December, 1901, and all died before coming to a vote. Morris himself favored any proposal acceptable to all of Minnesota's congressmen. Representative Frederick C. Stevens of St. Paul opposed a national park but favored "setting aside a [forest] reservation, to be under control of the federal government." Senator Knute Nelson of Alexandria urged opening the reservation in April, 1901, but favored a forest reserve by December. Representative James A. Tawney of Winona supported a national park, but Representative Frank M. Eddy of Glenwood argued for nothing less than a reservation opened to settlers. Eddy vowed that "as long as I remain in Congress, no more agricultural lands or timber lands that can be utilized . . . will be set aside as parks." Only Senator Moses E. Clapp of St. Paul attempted to construct a compromise with park and anti-park forces in Congress along the lines proposed by Chapman and the Women's Federation.³⁸

Chapman supplied one key to the congressional impasse. While visiting Washington in 1900, he urged Interior Secretary Hitchcock to administer the reservations on forestry principles. Hitchcock declined, grumbling that "this calls for legislation." During the months following this visit, Chapman devised the de-

tailed legislative proposal later adopted by the Women's Federation. As a showdown on the reservation approached, Gifford Pinchot shrewdly appointed Chapman a Forestry Bureau collaborator in January, 1901. This put Minnesota conservationists in direct communication with Pinchot, thereby opening the way for resolving the problem. Chapman worked out means for establishing a forest-reserve by quietly conferring with park advocates to bring them around to a compromise solution. He considered Cooper's 4,000,000-acre park "utterly impractical" and inconsistent with "sound economy." His only interview with Cooper "proved hopeless," and the Chicago sportsman was thereafter ignored. Andrews and Mrs. Bramhall enthusiastically accepted Chapman's plan and put the Women's Federation "squarely for forestry and a rational and practical program." Thereafter, Chapman served as a liaison

³⁷ C. C. Andrews to Alice Andrews, December 12, 1900, and December 15, 1900, Andrews Papers, owned by the Minnesota Historical Society; F. E. Searle to C. C. Andrews, December 18, 1900, in Forestry Division Correspondence. Searle, who was campaign manager for Morris, said cautiously that he personally favored the park but that public knowledge of his opinion would embarrass Morris.

³⁸ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 31, 1901, p. 1, February 2, 1902, p. 1, December 28, 1901, p. 2; *Minneapolis Journal*, February 22, 1901, p. 2; John S. Cooper to Andrews, April 20, 1900, October 11, 1900, and James A. Tawney to Andrews, February 1, 1901, in Forestry Division Correspondence; Frederick C. Stevens to Chapman, December 13, 1901 (quote), in Chapman Scrapbook; Knute Nelson to A. G. Bernard and Frank M. Eddy to Bernard, in *Cass Lake Voice*, August 10, 1901, p. 1; Chapman Scrapbook, marginal note; *St. Paul Globe*, December 31, 1901, p. 2 (quoted by *Cass Lake Voice*, January 4, 1902, p. 1).

between the Women's Federation and the Forestry Bureau.³⁹

When Pinchot appointed Chapman a collaborator, he did so because he thought it "quite possible that I shall need your active help in the Minnesota matter this Fall [1901]." During November of that year, Pinchot summoned Chapman to Washington to "discuss this whole question . . . and be of use with the Secretary of the Interior." The first important advance came shortly thereafter. Chapman mailed a copy of his forest-reserve proposal to Representative Page Morris and followed it with a personal visit. According to Chapman, Morris seemed favorably impressed. He declared that Chapman's plan was the "first practical suggestion he had had presented to him." Although Chapman's proposal was nearly a year old by then, Morris apparently noticed it for the first time, perhaps because Chapman had played the role of a disinterested and inconspicuous participant. Morris had already written a bill to open the reservation when Chapman's proposal came before him. Since he had no time to amend, re-write, and resubmit his bill just then, he agreed to adopt any forestry amendments acceptable to the rest of the Minnesota delegation.⁴⁰

On December 3, 1901, Morris introduced his bill without the forest-park provisions. It opened the reservation to logging, settlement, and Indian allotments. Several congressmen, the Women's Federation, and others dutifully rose to oppose the bill. Morris then took the next step of arranging the final agreement on January 17, 1902. He called together all the factions to "thresh it out." Among those summoned were Senator Clapp, Congressmen Tawney, Eddy, and Loren Fletcher of Minneapolis, two delegates from Cass Lake (Allen G. Bernard and Edward L. Warren), Pinchot, Cooper, and Chapman. Pinchot explained how the forest-reserve would conciliate all the interests without injuring any interested party. As a precaution, Pinchot granted Cooper an interview before the meeting to

"forestall any wild, damaging statements he might have made." Cooper fortunately acquiesced, and the delegation came to a full agreement. Pinchot drafted the final version of the bill, and Morris reintroduced it on February 3, 1902.⁴¹

During the bustle to compose and introduce the amended Morris bill, Chapman and Pinchot left their feminine allies singularly uninformed. Mrs. Bramhall at first expressed shock that Chapman would consult with Morris and later doubted the value of any forest-reserve compromise immediately acceptable to him. Her letters begged Chapman to stop discussing matters with Morris and to start conferring with the friends of the forest-park. A compromise with Morris, she feared, must be a bad move which will "undermine our strength [and] nothing but certain defeat awaits us." Even after Chapman insisted that Morris was serious in making concessions, she remained skeptical. The forestry provisions, she said, were acceptable only if "a man of character" was in charge of the forest. "Regulations don't count," she observed, "when men are unreliable. Mr. Pinchot will suit."⁴²

All in all, the forestry provisions of the Morris bill were quite modest but nonetheless auspicious for the future of forest conservation. The bill provided for a reserve of about 225,000 acres and specified that the Bureau of Forestry would supervise all reserve lands. On ten sections (6,400 acres) the bureau could establish whatever logging practices it thought fit. The remaining timber lands were opened for logging of all merchantable trees provided a minimal 5 per cent of the mature timber remained uncut for reforestation purposes. The government retained title to the land. Agricultural lands were alienated and opened to settlement and Indian allotments. As a gesture to the park promoters, certain points and islands in Cass and Leech lakes were set aside for park purposes.

Pinchot considered the measure an "entirely feasible bill, drawn along the most satisfactory lines attainable." For the Forestry Bureau he wanted "all we can possibly get, but we do not want to fail . . . by trying for too much." The bill was placed on the House calendar and passed over the last-minute resistance of Eddy and Fletcher. It might have died in a House-Senate conference committee, however, had Senator Clapp not pried it loose for final passage two days before Congress adjourned. President Roosevelt signed the bill on June 23, 1902, and the Minnesota Forest Reserve became a reality.⁴³

IMMEDIATE REACTION to the Morris Law was jubilant. The lumbermen liked it, Duluth liked it, Cass Lake liked it, Cooper seemed pleased, and the Women's Federation was elated. Newspapers prophesied

³⁹ Chapman, "Minnesota National Forest," Chapman Papers.

⁴⁰ Pinchot to Chapman, October 18, 1901, November 26, 1901, in Chapman Scrapbook; Chapman, "Minnesota National Forest," Chapman Papers; Chapman Scrapbook, marginal note.

⁴¹ Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground*, p. 205; Florence Bramhall to Chapman, August 8, 1903 (Cooper quote), Chapman Scrapbook; *Duluth News Tribune*, January 24, 1902, p. 1, January 29, 1902, p. 7.

⁴² Florence Bramhall to Chapman, December 27, 1901, January 2, 1902, Chapman Scrapbook.

⁴³ Pinchot to Chapman, February 3, 1902, and an undated letter, Chapman Scrapbook; United States, *Statutes at Large*, 32:400-405; *Congressional Record*, 57 Congress, 1 session, p. 7045-7052, 7088-7090.

that wealth and commercial importance awaited Cass Lake, Walker, and other villages once the reservation lands were opened. In Cass Lake the average citizen seemed "boisterously joyful" as large numbers of people streamed into the town to look over the land. Real estate transfers increased, and speculation raised prices by about 25 per cent. The Indians, the *Duluth News Tribune* reported, were "relieved that the long suspense attending negotiations for the disposal of their timber is ended, and are glad that their interests have been subserved." The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* editorialized that the bill provided "a very liberal forest reserve, considering the powerful combination of rapacious lumber interests from which it was rescued."⁴⁴

Everyone, it seemed, claimed credit for the bill. Editor Bernard of the *Cass Lake Voice* credited himself with going to Washington to call the congressmen together, pacify the park people, fight off the lumber barons, and suggest reforms in public land sales. Andrews was on more solid ground when he called himself the originator of the forest idea. Colonel Cooper, while not completely satisfied, thought that, "like most mortals, we builded wiser than we knew." Everyone gloried in the bill's passage except the disappointed land speculators.⁴⁵

By the end of 1903 the Forestry Bureau had dispatched its crews to survey and select the pine lands for cutting and reservation. Lumbermen for the most part quickly accepted and respected the bureau's recommendations and regulations.⁴⁶ In 1903 a United States Land Office was located in Cass Lake. All, in fact, went well until 1904-05. By then, however, it was clear that Cass Lake was not attaining the quick prosperity that everyone anticipated when the Morris Act was passed. Frustrations mounted, and the community petitioned for abolition of the forest-reserve and a complete opening of all public lands to logging and agriculture.⁴⁷ Three years later Congress responded with the act of May 23, 1908, which created "in the State of Minnesota a national forest." Some additional agricultural lands reserved under the Morris Law were opened to farming by the 1908 act, and the amount of uncut timber reserved for reforestation was increased from 5 to 10 per cent. All other provisions relating to the ten sections and park lands on the islands and points in Cass and Leech lakes remained unchanged. After the passage of the Weeks Act in 1911 and the Clarke-McNary Act in 1924, the secretary of agriculture added more lands to Minnesota National Forest (the name was changed to Chippewa National Forest by an executive order of May 22, 1928). By 1936 the federal government had authorized for purchase enough tax-forfeited forest and cutover farm land to enlarge the forest substantially beyond the 489,000

acres originally proposed by the State Federation of Women's Clubs.⁴⁸

FROM THIS EPISODE in the forest history of Minnesota, the author might hazard a few generalizations about conservation politics which, in essence, is the promotion of, or resistance to, the management, preservation, or restriction of resource appropriation and use. It flows from a deep well of private and public-spirited motives, a complex combination of competing and complementary objectives that usually cut across economic interests, social classes, and political parties. When an issue polarizes public opinion, individuals and groups frequently line up in reaction to *who* the protagonists are rather than to *what* the issues happen to be. The degree of opposition to or support for the Minnesota Forest Reserve crossed economic, social, and political divisions to concentrate around the size of the communities and their proximity to the proposed reserve.

The stiffest opposition came from communities with the greatest pecuniary interest in developing the proposed forest-reserve area. Except for Duluth, these communities were small, with shifting populations and a range of economic opportunities narrowly limited by their previous experience, their aspirations, and the physical environment. In this case, the forest-park opponents perceived the reserve as undercutting their aims and rendering them dependent upon seasonal prosperity and metropolitan affluence by eliminating most opportunities save recreation and tourism.

For the most part, urban centers have been the font of conservation sentiment in this country. This is due to some extent to the physical distance between the site and the city's immediate economic interests. Naively but honestly, conservationists could disavow any personal motive in conservation except enlightened citizenship and selfless public service.

Once the issue was joined, the urban conservationists employed political and social advantages their opponents did not enjoy. Individuals like Andrews and Mrs. Branhall moved easily among the molders of

⁴⁴ *Mississippi Valley Lumberman*, June 27, 1902, p. 18; *Duluth News Tribune*, June 20, p. 1, 5, July 6, 1902, sec. 2, p. 4 (quote); *Duluth Herald*, June 25, 1902, p. 8 ("joyful" quote); *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 28, 1902, p. 6.

⁴⁵ *St. Paul Globe*, July 1, 1902, p. 2; Alice E. Andrews, ed., *Christopher C. Andrews, Recollections: 1829-1922*, 293 (Cleveland, Ohio, 1928); *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 7, 1902, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Secretary of Agriculture, *Reports*, 1903, p. 499, 1904, p. 176.

⁴⁷ *Cass Lake Voice*, September 10, December 3, 10, 1904, all p. 1.

⁴⁸ United States, *Statutes at Large*, 35:268-272; Dana, Allison, Cunningham, *Minnesota Lands*, 113-117.

policy and opinion in the course of their daily rounds. Through these channels they could, and did, spread their claims of being guardians of a public interest broader than their own. It was also true that some, such as Cooper, feasted on momentary national publicity. Since these particular conservationists enjoyed material affluence, if not wealth, their economic security could in no way be threatened by their cause. Their prosperity even cloaked them with the appearance of providing for posterity.

The forest-park opponents, on the other hand, possessed few advantages over their conservation-minded contemporaries. In general, the groups and communities against the park were too small in numbers, too parochial in their concerns, or too isolated from the larger society to attract widespread public sympathy for their aims, regardless of their intrinsic merit. Private material interests *appeared* to motivate Cass Lakers' opposition because, in a smaller community, individuals clearly stand out. The impression that paramount private interests motivated Cass Lake's opposition, however, was to some degree an optical illusion. Private and public interests are often nearly identical, inseparable, and indistinguishable in such a small, personalized community. The relation between the prosperity of an individual and the welfare of the community is more easily traced in such places than in cities like St. Paul. Therefore, when the conservationists interpreted opposition to their aims as simply greed for gain, they were in error.

The developing northern communities were further handicapped by their sense of immediacy. As long as the day-to-day prosperity of the individuals (and hence the whole community) seemed very much uncertain, it was difficult for them to ponder seriously the claims of posterity. Their opposition to the forest reserve seemed entirely rational as long as it appeared to threaten their immediate prosperity. The issue unfortunately was clouded when the developing communities were

joined in resistance by some large lumber corporations. Their presence provided the conservationists with the large, identifiable, and impersonally powerful interest against which public opinion might be successfully rallied. When the conservationists advanced their cause, the thrust of their efforts missed the corporate interests they sought to regulate but affected (for better or worse) the immediate interests of the nearby villages.

In an attempt fully to understand conservation politics, one must be wary of the moralistic rhetoric often invoked by both sides. Rhetorical bombast generally obscures the legitimate interests of all parties concerned. It is historically immaterial, for the most part, whether the conservationists were more or less altruistic than their opponents. Altruism is an extraneous question. Of pertinence, rather, is the definition, determination, and furtherance of the public's interests. In the case of Cass Lake, exploitation of the ceded Chippewa lands certainly served the public interests of that community and of Duluth, Bemidji, and other northern towns. On the other hand, preservation of the Chippewa pine lands served the public's interest in St. Paul, Minneapolis, Chicago, and other Midwest cities. At issue, then, was *which* public interest seemed of greatest importance. In this case, Congress deemed cheap lumber and forest conservation of equal importance and (for political and other reasons) combined the two aims in one piece of legislation.

THE PHOTOGRAPH on page 242 of a stand of white pine was taken in Itasca County in 1897. It appeared as the frontispiece to the Minnesota Chief Fire Warden's *Report*, 1897, and was furnished by the State Department of Natural Resources. The picture of Florence Bramhall on page 251 is from Mary D. Foster, *Who's Who Among Minnesota Women*, 35 (St. Paul, 1924); that of John S. Cooper on page 251 is from *Review of Reviews*, 20:699; that of Henry H. Chapman on page 254 is from *American Forests*, September, 1963, p. 10. The other pictures are from the society's collection.

UNITED STATES
land office at
Cass Lake,
1911





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