

DISCUSSION

THE PROPOSED REORGANIZATION OF
FEDERAL DEPARTMENTS

THINGS are moving rapidly in Washington in a way which may throw immeasurable quantities of sand into the federal conservation machinery. One thing is a bill (S. 2970) which the Senate Select Committee on Government Organization has just reported out which would give the President wide authority for three years to make transfers among the government bureaus, and which also would change the name of the Interior Department to the Department of Conservation. While hearings were in progress on this bill, another one (H. R. 8202) was passed by the House. The House bill omits the provision for rechristening the Interior Department, but gives the President authority during the next two years to make extensive switches within the framework of the governmental administrative structure.

These proposed bits of legislation have a special significance to farmers, foresters and other conservationists, because of their hook-up, actual or potential, with the reports submitted to the President last winter by a committee headed by Louis Brownlow which made a study of the federal organization and suggested sweeping changes. Among the recommendations was that for renaming the Department of the Interior the Department of Conservation.

Under the Brownlow formula, the Department of Conservation, among other things, would administer public lands . . . and reservations. This, of course, could readily mean a transfer to the Department of Conservation, were it created, of bureaus now in the Department of Agriculture, such as the Forest Service, which administers the National Forests, and the Biological Survey, which administers a considerable number of federal wildlife refuges. A case could easily be made by proponents of the Department of Conservation idea to transfer at least part of the Soil Conservation Service—perhaps all of it.

The possibilities in this direction have led to numerous and vehement protests to Congress by all the major farm organizations in the country, by wildlife interests, by the American Forestry Association, the Society of American Foresters, the Association of State Foresters, and many others. These protests have pointed out that the integrity and unity of the whole agricultural policy and program is menaced; that administration of the National Forests, for example, is in chief measure an agricultural function, because it involves raising successive crops of trees which, as scientists well know, involves the same basic biological principles as the raising of any other crop. The same thing is true of the administration of the range resource in the National Forests. The Soil Conservation Service job is wholly agricultural. Any reallocation of

governmental functions in this field on the basis of who owns the land on which crops of timber or grass or other living things are being grown would be wholly illogical. In the case of the Forest Service, it would mean breaking it down and having one Forest Service in the Department of Conservation to administer the National Forests and another, presumably to be left in the Department of Agriculture, to administer the federal activity of trying to bring forestry to nearly 300 million acres of privately owned commercial timberlands and, with the Extension Service, to handle the forestry work relating to 150 million acres of farm woodlands. Presumably forest research would stay in Agriculture, so the foresters administering the National Forests under the Department of Conservation would be cut off from the continuous working contact with research, which is so essential to the proper scientifically supported administration of the forests.

The same illogical split would result in the activities of the Biological Survey. There is little doubt that the proponents of the Department of Conservation idea also have their eyes on the Soil Conservation Service. In other words, they want to get into the proposed Department of Conservation all the Federal activities in the field of natural resource conservation.

It is painfully obvious how wide open this would tear the Department of Agriculture and the unity of the handling of a conservation field which is strictly agricultural in its character. It is reversing the process which began in 1905 when the national forests were transferred from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture at the instigation of Theodore Roosevelt and the then Secretary of the Interior in order that the national forests might receive the technical administration handled in Agriculture, but wholly lacking in Interior. This process was continued under the present administration when the Soil Conservation Service, which was started as an emergency agency under PWA Administrator Ickes, was transferred by President Franklin Roosevelt to the Department of Agriculture, and when he later put resettlement under Agriculture. The Soil Conservation Service simply had to be brought into the Agriculture fold because its purely agricultural functions exercised elsewhere were resulting in the building up of a second Department of Agriculture in the field. This duplication of the Department of Agriculture would be the inevitable result of any reorganization in the conservation field along the Brownlow Committee lines.

Whether or not a Department of Conservation is created, various bureaus in the Department of Agriculture could be shifted to Interior or elsewhere, with the same disruptive effect on the cohesiveness of the

agricultural program. Until Congress once for all directs that agricultural functions shall be retained in the Department of Agriculture and those now elsewhere placed therein, the threat of dismemberment will continue to hang over the agricultural group of Federal activities.

One more thought—it is, of course, obvious upon reflection that there is a fallacy in the idea that any one department can encompass a major part of the governmental activities in the field of conservation and could possibly be entitled to that name. Conservation as a purpose is achieved by innumerable governmental activities quite unrelated. It would be almost as logical to suggest a department of thrift as to propose a Department of Conservation with the implication that it could be all-inclusive in this field.

No action was taken in the Senate on either bill, but the legislation will undoubtedly be pushed at the beginning of the next session.

Another baleful feature is in the Senate bill—the authority for the President, with Senate concurrence, to hereafter appoint bureau chiefs when the position is determined by the President to be policy-making in character. This opens the door wide to the spoils system in these important positions, many of which are now under civil service, and so offer a goal to ambitious and qualified scientists which, under the reorganization bill, would be denied them except by political preferment.

CORRESPONDENT

A UNIQUE DOCUMENT

THE following document is probably unique in the history of science. I have translated it from Issue 1, Volume XIV of the *Astronomical Journal of the Soviet Union*, where it appears in front of page 1.

OTTO STRUVE

YERKES OBSERVATORY,
WILLIAMS BAY, WIS.

**"We Demand Ruthless Punishment for the Vile
Betrayers of our Great Country.**

"The scientific workers of the Soviet Union have learned with a feeling of revolt and great wrath of the monstrous crimes perpetrated by the contemptible Trozkyists—those heinous traitors of their country, whose treacherous activities are at present being unraveled by the soviet court.

"Having sold themselves to the fascists, having come to an agreement with the diplomats and general staffs of some aggressive imperialistic states, this despicable gang of human degenerates, of servants of fascistic cannibals, being led by the agent of the Gestapo, the bandit Trozky, was selling our socialistic country and its riches to the worst enemies of human progress.

"The abominable traitors were organizing attempts to murder the best men of the present time, the leaders of the first socialistic state in the world; they were

organizing monstrous injuries to the socialistic factories, mines and railroads; they were murdering our heroes, the stakhanovtzi, our glorious and brave red soldiers; they were stealing from the soviet state, in order to maintain a pack of Trozkyists and in order to finance their criminal activities.

"In their attempt to undermine the military and economic strength of the great land of socialism, this despised gang of restorers of capitalism was trying to make it easier for the fascists to carry out their plans for seizing the territory of the SSSR and for the restoration of capitalism. They were dreaming of returning the power in our country to the capitalists, of liquidating the kolkhosi and the sovkhosi, of enslaving the soviet people, of creating unemployment, poverty and famine; they were trying to deprive the soviet people of its great conquests, which are written into the Stalin Constitution.

"We demand from our soviet courts merciless punishment for the infamous traitors! We demand the annihilation of the despicable degenerates!

"We also demand a complete investigation into the participation of the right-wing renegades—Bukharin, Rijkov, Uglanov—in the criminal activities of the Trozkyists, and we demand that they be called to the severest accountability.

"The scientific workers will give all their knowledge and strength for the even more rapid growth and flourishing of our great socialistic country, for the increased strength of the Red Army—that faithful guardian of the soviet frontiers.

"The scientific workers, together with all the soviet people, will unite still closer around the communistic party, its Central Committee and the beloved leader and friend, comrade Stalin."

Signed by the President of the Academy of Sciences, V. Komaroff, and by eighteen members of the Academy and professors.

(Izvestia, January 27, 1937.)

A MINNESOTA KITCHEN MIDDEN WITH FOSSIL BISON¹

FROM July 12 to August 25 the University of Minnesota has been digging an archeological deposit in a bog in Itasca State Park, the seat of the source of the Mississippi River. In cooperation with the State Conservation Commission and the Federal Government whose financing provided adequate labor, the Department of Anthropology has spent the major part of its 1937 field Summer Session digging the newly discovered bog deposit. To date the work has rescued some two thousand knife-marked, food-refuse animal bones, with bone and stone artifacts.

The bone bed is a marly layer which lies on the old lake bottom of an earlier southward extension of the present west branch of Lake Itasca. That old lake

¹ Preliminary notice.