

# DEMOCRATIC PROGRAMS FOR ACTION

## Domestic Policies For a Growing And Balanced Economy

*A series of ten pamphlets*

**No. 2**

### The Democratic Approach To America's Natural Resources

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September, 1959

# The Democratic Approach To America's Natural Resources

A time when world population is increasing at an unprecedented rate, and when lagging industrial growth in the United States has the promise of accelerating, is not an occasion for letting our natural resources take care of themselves.

National and international conditions combine to make the quality of our resources management a basic factor in welfare at home and in strength for constructive action overseas. New policies and programs are called for. This is a time to emphasize resources management for human well-being and security. Yet the present Administration is content with efforts that have fallen far short of even maintaining the forward-looking programs which it inherited. The time calls for a comprehensive breakthrough in our natural resource policies and programs, but President Eisenhower has given us something much closer to a comprehensive breakdown.

## Our Growing Appetite for Materials

Our national appetite for materials is increasing rapidly. The products of farm, forest and mine are needed in larger amounts as the population grows and as the quantities consumed per capita also increase. The amount of raw material consumption continues to rise, although not as rapidly as the Gross National Product—because a greater share of income is going into services.

Americans now consume more natural resources per capita in a normal year than any other nation with the possible exceptions of the Canadians and New Zealanders. We are enlarging our appetites for these goods. It also is clear that we are eating up national reserves at a more rapid rate than any other nation. At least half of all the

raw materials entering into international trade in the Free World are consumed in the United States, and the trend overseas is also toward greater consumption.

At home there is increasing need to use available resources more efficiently, or to find substitutes, or to look beyond our borders for supplies. Overseas the rate of production of material goods is on the rise, but there are in many populous areas tremendous unmet demands for the bare necessities of life.

Although a slightly smaller proportion of the national output is coming out of materials production, there is a shift to increased leisure and this places a larger demand upon space for comfortable housing and for outdoor recreation. While the per capita use of timber products is decreasing, the total consumption of timber is increasing slightly and great new demands are made upon the woodlands for wildlife conservation and recreation.

Improvements in technology are providing more efficient production of some resources, as in the case of the bituminous coal mines, where more coal is mined with fewer men than twenty years ago. Not all materials industries are making as rapid advances in efficiency. Given enough technological change and innovation at the right time and place, there would be little reason to fear resource exhaustion, but the organization of industry and unsound public controls on resource exploitation may prevent this change. Once a valuable power site on a river has been appropriated by a private power company for one purpose it may not be developed for multiple public benefits for a long time. Unless practicable substitutes have been developed for a metal or fuel that is in short supply, there may be a period of unduly high costs while the substitute is sought. We cannot comfortably count on the scientist or the engineer preventing severe resource shortages over brief periods of time. Nor can we assume that import restrictions will protect us against high costs and later scarcity: they lead to higher prices for the consumer, more rapid exhaustion, and worsened relations overseas.

Wise resource policy is closely linked with international relations and national security, and with the welfare of our own economy and of individual areas that are affected by changes in materials production. It bears directly on maintenance of full employment, on the flow of commodities in world trade, and on the welfare of underdeveloped areas overseas as well as of depressed areas at home.

## Vital Periods of Resource Development

It is almost sixty years since Theodore Roosevelt launched Federal conservation activities in the United States with the first major efforts at reclamation and licensing of water power. This has been a movement of thought and action which uneasily embraced the concerns of many sectors of our nation: of farmers to save

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their soil, of power users to see that the energy of public streams was not monopolized, of Westerners to make the most efficient use of limited supplies of minerals and water, of Easterners to prevent the despoiling of their rivers and remaining forests. Sometimes these sectors have been in conflict, as when storage dams have threatened salmon runs or when mining operations have destroyed timber stands or stream channels. There has not been a single conservation policy during that sixty years; there has been a bundle of policies, sometimes reconciled, sometimes in opposition as the public view of national needs has changed.

The enthusiasm of the earlier years was smothered by the Taft Administration and World War I. Under the Republican administrations of the Twenties some advances were made in the already initiated programs and in beginning the National Park Service. Except for certain ingenious inroads upon the public domain, as in the case of the oil reserves, it was not a time of innovations. The great era of public concern for natural resources came into being in 1933. Then, under the Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration, a whole series of new efforts took root. The Soil Conservation Service, the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Taylor Grazing Act program, the National Resources Planning Board, the national flood control program, and the Tennessee Valley Authority are among them. These now have their widespread, lasting monuments: in the great concrete and earth structures of California's Central Valley and of the Columbia and

Tennessee Rivers, in the expanses of renewed forest land in the East, in the Oklahoma gullies which have been healed, in the Mississippi flyway refuges for waterfowl, and, most of all, in human lives that have been refreshed and improved.

Although World War II curbed much of this work, it was continued vigorously in the late Forties. Then began, too, a series of searching appraisals of public management of natural resources. The President's Water Resources Policy Commission in 1950 took stock of the broadly extending multiple-purpose development of water resources. In 1952 the President's Materials Policy Commission made a pioneering analysis of the nation's capacity to meet its needs for raw materials, appraising the outlook for the next twenty-five years. These were efforts by the Truman Administration to look ahead to emerging requirements and to ask what public policies would be needed to fill them. Unified policies were proposed, new approaches suggested.

### A Time For New Resources Policies

The world position of the United States and the new understanding of the part played by natural resources in economic growth make some of the traditional policies inadequate. There still is need to assess our own and the world's physical holdings of land, water and minerals in relation to prospective demands. There still is need to guard against thoughtless destruction of the complex web of soils, vegetation and water. We must be ever vigilant against ignorant or malicious degradation of those vital resources. But the changing significance of minerals, the spreading intricacies of world trade, and the growing demand for space impose new needs.

If it is to survive as a healthy nation in a peaceful world, the United States cannot be content with merely protecting rather than actively developing its mineral and energy sources. It cannot stand back and wait until its green landscape and clean streams are further defaced before stepping in to protect them. It must see its resources not alone as a base for material welfare but as a base for an enriched life that makes constructive use of our increasing leisure and mobility. And it must do so with full recognition of its key role in world affairs.

### No "New Starts"

In the face of conditions which call for strong and imaginative action, the Republican Administration has taken a generally passive role in the management of our natural resources. It has been willing to abandon basic principles of comprehensive development and use for optimum benefits. Its administration of the long-established policies has been spineless. It has watched precious time being lost in preserving essential resources. It has let private enterprise claim uniquely valuable public sites. Most unfortunately of all, it has failed to give that quality of leadership which can come only from the Executive Branch, in setting the sights high for national action. If there has been a policy in dealing with natural resources in recent years it has been one of muddling along with no "new starts." And while the avoidance of new starts in construction projects has been serious, the avoidance of new starts in thinking about the future needs of our people has verged on disaster.



The Louisville Times

*"If Ike Could Just Let Things Coast Along  
In A Dramatic Way—"*

### Spineless Management

At point after point where earlier administrations had fought to maintain established resource policies, the Eisenhower Administration has been supine. The Al Serena type of invasion of national forest lands by private interests is well known, but less publicized have been other cases of lack of vigilance.

• The public preference clause in power-marketing contracts under which monopolistic use of public power resources is curbed has been supported only under heavy public pressure.

• The administration of the fish and wildlife conservation programs and of the public lands has been allowed to wax rankly political.

• The muddle of water resource administration has worsened. Notwithstanding a report by a special Cabinet committee which suggested positive steps that the Administration might take to carry out improvements proposed in earlier years, little has been done to define the standards and methods of the different Federal agencies. The Cabinet committee had moved in the same direction as earlier groups but even its timid proposals fell on barren ground.

• Competent units to assist in the planning and programming of resources development in the major departments have been scuttled.

• The Flood Insurance Act, although soundly conceived, was administered so ineptly in its beginning that Congress wisely refused to appropriate funds to put it into effect.

• Responsibility for stimulating abatement of stream pollution has been proffered to state and local groups.

• Support for long-range research and planning has weakened.

### Sacrificing Time

If natural resources could be held like idealized bonds in a safety deposit vault without fear of injury, depreciation or obsolescence, the Eisenhower policies might have been lacking in imagination but not harmful. In fact, however, a period of inaction has caused serious harm in several ways.

One of the great transformations of our era is the tremendous urban sprawl which shows itself in the creeping borders of subdivisions, the long tentacles of highway construction, the spoilage of intervening lands, and the sudden invasion of rural countryside by industrial and military installations. A very broad and forward-looking approach to national land policy is in order. As our country becomes more urban and as leisure hours and disposable income are extended, the need for water and open space for recreation increases, and the aesthetic inspiration of natural beauty becomes more important. This shows itself around all of our growing cities and it is felt hundreds of miles away in reservoir areas and national forest camping grounds. With the currently swift advances in urban population, every year that is lost in setting aside space and natural monuments for recreational use is irrevocably wasted. To cut the modest programs of improving the already overburdened national forests and monuments is to

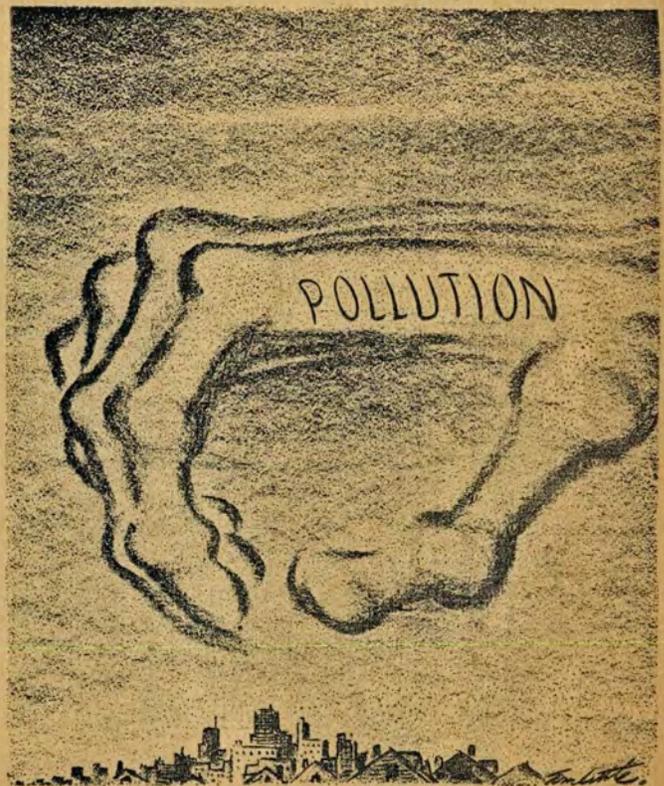
sacrifice time in which valuable recreational resources might be preserved.

Similarly, the decisions to terminate experimentation with pilot plants for processing petroleum from oil shale and coal lose the time in which economic oil substitutes might have been developed.

### Sacrificing Sites

The decision by the Eisenhower Administration to let private interests take over three sites in Hells Canyon on the Snake River in Idaho for power development means that those places will be appropriated for one major purpose whereas they might have been used more effectively for multiple purposes under public management. Much larger storage for downstream use might have been gained under alternative plans. Condoning this largely single-purpose exploitation of our resources not only gives the private power interests control of the public power sites, but it curbs possible use of storage space for irrigation, navigation, low-water control and flood control. It also imposes pressures on other parts of the stream system, as for example on the Clearwater River, to gain such storage as early as possible at heavy cost to wildlife and recreation values. The foreclosing of these key sites prevents later optimum development.

Wherever this policy of letting the private interests call the tune prevails, invaluable sites are being lost. Wilderness areas, once they are commercially exploited, are impossible to recapture, and power sites once yielded to a single purpose are lost to other purposes.



The Nashville Tennessean

Something In The Air

### Failure To Set Goals

Throughout the country there is increasing concern for the injurious effect on streams of municipal and industrial waste. After a long period in which state agencies carried on a losing battle to prevent undue stream pollution, Federal stimulation to state research and enforcement activities and to local construction of waste treatment works was begun in 1948 and has helped curb the tide of filthy water. Both state and interstate efforts, as on the Ohio River, have become more effective. The battle is still far from won. To cut down appropriations and to propose turning the whole program over to the states, as the Eisenhower Administration has done, is to jettison the effort when success is in sight. This is a conspicuous example of failure to set goals for the nation in its efforts to improve its natural resources.

Another case is the handling of experiments by public agencies in generating power from nuclear reactors. This source of power may turn out to be our largest, and of crucial value in some overseas areas lacking in conventional fuel sources. Because the research needs are of a magnitude beyond the interests of many private enterprises, and because the public health and safety are at stake, there is a special need for public leadership. A forward-looking administration would seek to try various commercial ways of using nuclear energy to enhance existing power programs. Yet the very limited investment in publicly sponsored experiments has been only in response to determined pressure from Members of the Congress.

One test of the Eisenhower Administration's interest in dealing with natural resource problems before they become acute is in the action taken to follow guidelines suggested by the President's Materials Policy Commission in 1952. By and large these have been neglected. The basic principle of trying to supply materials at the least social

cost has been violated by protectionist policies. No systematic effort has been made to provide the facts and analysis that are essential to continuing examination of mineral resources. Financial assistance has not been given to small mining operations. The needed stimulation of forest conservation by states and private operators has not been realized. A comprehensive energy policy has not emerged. Searching attention has not been turned to national power supply and transmission. In these and other ways the record is disappointing.

### A New Start on Recreation

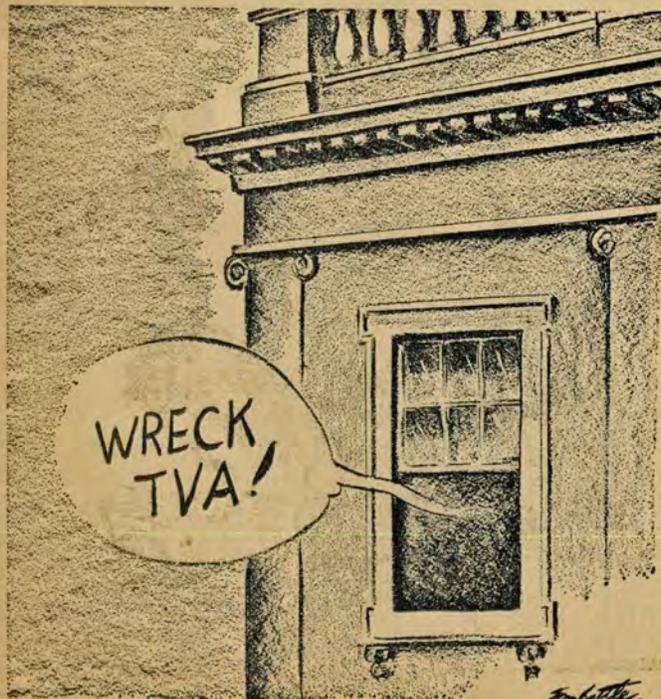
Even if it were possible to re-establish overnight the aims and dedication to resource development which prevailed in 1952, that alone would be inadequate for 1959 and the years ahead. New starts are in order, building on the best of the earlier programs, which have been coasting through the past six and one-half years.

No more precious time should be lost in expanding the land and water facilities required to supply the nation's need for parks, campgrounds, fishing streams, game refuges and similar outdoor recreational facilities. The bipartisan Outdoor Recreation Resources Review is long overdue and should be pushed vigorously. But efforts to preserve those resources should not await a formal report. Instead of cutting down the budgets of the Forest Service and National Park Service, as recommended by the Eisenhower Administration, their aid to state and local agencies should be strengthened and their investment in land and water facilities should be expanded. A new youth conservation corps would aid greatly in this effort. The accelerated, relentless invasion of green space on the margins of every one of our metropolitan areas must be met by far-sighted acquisition or reservation of land. The time to do so is before, rather than after, the city real estate operators have taken their toll in a scarred landscape. And the measures taken should not be designed simply to fill belatedly the traditional demands for park areas: the burgeoning city population with its greater leisure and extraordinary mobility, requires fresh, imaginative approaches to finding enjoyment and inspiration in our streams, rugged mountains and green woodlands.

### Integrated River Development

The Tennessee Valley Authority was established twenty-six years ago to help the people of that valley make beneficial use of its waters and soils and to test the wisdom and strategy of integrated development of an entire drainage basin. Thus far it has succeeded admirably. It has carried out a wise program of managing the waters of the valley and of improving the use of soils and forests. It has demonstrated that integrated water management can work, and that progressive marketing of electric power through public agencies can have a powerful effect not only upon the life of the region but on the power rates and marketing policies in neighboring areas. It continues to pioneer in development of fertilizers, in reducing flood losses on tributary streams, and in other ways.

Whether or not the authority form of organization is transferred to other areas, the TVA ideas are finding wide acceptance. While there is warm enthusiasm for these ideas in other countries, the Eisenhower Administration hamstringed them at home.



The Nashville Tennessean

There Was A Meeting In The White House



The Los Angeles Daily News

As proposed by the President's Water Resources Policy Commission, the integrated planning and management of all our great streams should be pushed vigorously. The nation will not be satisfied with single-purpose, partial efforts that do not promise optimal returns. The current special commissions and survey units for the Delaware, Potomac, Southeast Atlantic and Texas drainage areas are in the right direction but should be carried out more widely, and with positive rather than passive leadership from the President and the executive agencies.

One of the great lessons from TVA is that enlightened encouragement and support from the Executive Branch can stimulate very wide responsible action by local and state governments. TVA, rather than suppressing local responsibility, has helped build up healthy power marketing agencies, public health efforts, and planning programs among the city, county and state governments in its region. A judicious use of Federal experience and financial strength can enable the local agencies to play their proper role without Federal domination.

TVA has been inhibited by the present Administration in its attempts to carry its experimental and demonstration work further. It should be actively encouraged to move ahead and to develop its own financial support by issuance of bonds.

### Constructive Partnership

A watchword of the Eisenhower Administration in dealing with natural resources has been "partnership." There is a long tradition of Federal cooperation with private, local and state operators in such programs as reclamation, rural electrification, soil conservation, and wildlife management. But true partnership does not mean yielding all of one partner's inherited rights to the other, or letting one partner supply the resources and take the risks while the other takes the profits, or passively accept-

ing direction by one partner alone. It is not the kind of public abdication to private interests which was proposed in the abortive Dixon-Yates power contract.

The way to promote cleanup in the polluted streams near our cities and industries is to help states and municipalities work together to curb new abuses and correct old ones. Many of the troublesome problems are interstate. Joint local-state-Federal work of the type that has proved successful in the Tennessee Valley should be promoted. The cooperative program of stream pollution control should be expanded, rather than cut down and handed to the states as proposed by the Eisenhower Administration.

The states and municipalities should be given incentives and technical assistance in taking action to curb the rising toll of flood damage. Being cautious on new starts with flood protection projects is poor economy when at the same time the amount of property subject to flood damage is permitted to grow.

The states are becoming increasingly concerned with making efficient use of water supplies for urban and industrial growth. They should be aided in preventing shortages and in developing plans sufficiently far in advance to prevent hasty destruction of other values, such as recreation and wildlife uses, in last-minute drives to harness the streams.

A basin account system for calculating the benefits and costs of the Columbia Basin power, irrigation, navigation, and flood control developments should be set up promptly. The Federal Government should reassert its leadership in working with the states to promote the wise use of this great basin, and should cease allowing the private power companies to call the tune and the place for new power use of public waters.



The Denver Post

"... On Your Mark ..."



The Sacramento Bee

"We're Partners, Aren't We?"

### Developing Mineral and Energy Supplies

While the United States still has generous resources of many minerals, and enjoys ready access to a number of producing areas for minerals in short supply domestically, it should be taking all reasonable steps to guard against crippling shortages in the future. In particular, it should build up its energy sources, which are so essential to industrial growth and to the processing of raw materials and new substitutes. Solid support should be given to the Atomic Energy Commission to push ahead with basic research and technological development required for low-cost use of nuclear reactors in power production. As with the earlier Federal hydroelectric programs, preference should be given to public agencies and cooperatives in producing and marketing power from such plants.

Likewise, the United States should actively pioneer in the production of petroleum from shale and coal and in recovery of metals from low-grade ores. Pilot plants should be reactivated, or begun along new lines. Strong encouragement should be given to the prospecting and development of fresh reserves by new exploration methods. We should not await shortage situations and mounting prices to spur the research and the overseas production on which the welfare of many millions of people may largely rest.

In particular, we should be constantly vigilant to maintain a national system of electricity supply adequate to meet the growing regional requirements. Integrated development of a network to supply low-cost power is essential to the recovery of new resources.

The idea that the long-term welfare of the country can be enhanced by high-cost protection of our own materials suppliers should be revised in the face of world facts.

The setting of import restrictions on oil or zinc, for example, results in higher costs to American consumers, in dislocations among the overseas suppliers, and in more rapid exhaustion of our own supplies. These restrictions have been made without any thorough examination of national needs and ways of meeting them. The present program is a hodgepodge of attempts to bolster metal production, chiefly by stockpiling. A number of the Federal efforts have ground to a standstill without stabilizing the minerals industry. The Administration's lead and zinc subsidy has failed, and its import quotas are hurting overseas producers and domestic consumers. What is required is energetic expansion of overseas producing areas as a part of widening trade relations in the world.

### Facts and Programs

There is urgent need for a searching review of the policies and methods followed by the Federal Government in its management of the remaining public domain of the West. The maintenance of the soil and plant cover, the integration of its use with national forest lands, and the economical limits of grazing and mineral use, all deserve careful attention so that this major public asset may be managed more effectively in future for the public good.

Rather than playing down the basic research which is essential to careful resource development, such investigations should be vigorously encouraged and expanded. An all-out program to complete the geologic and topographic mapping of the country should be launched. Scientific cooperation should be expanded and tied in with international regional and river-basin development programs. Research on new development and exploration techniques should be pushed. This, instead of narrow protection, is the line which promises greater stability to the nation.

The country cannot afford to continue longer without a constructive, lively agency in the Executive Branch which will persistently examine our national resources in relation to national aims and will point out practical ways of gaining the largest public benefits from these resources. The facts on our land, water and minerals must be assembled. Alternative solutions must be weighed. Their probable impacts on the nation's life and its world position must be assessed. The kind of effort pioneered by the President's Materials Policy Commission should be renewed on a continuing basis. It is not enough to concentrate on temporary questions of oil shortage or surplus, or on heated controversies over water development in one basin at a time. Longer-range policies must be suggested and tested if casual and fortuitous decisions are to be avoided. This requires Executive leadership and the means to support it with essential facts and new ideas.

*This is the second in a series of ten pamphlets on Domestic Policies For a Growing and Balanced Economy. Also available is a complementary series on Foreign and Military Policy For Peace and Security, the first four of which have already been issued.*

*Copies of these pamphlets, as they are published, may be obtained from The Advisory Council of the Democratic National Committee, 1028 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D. C. Prices: For less than 100, 10 cents each; 100, \$7.50; 1000, \$65.00.*