
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

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Cornell University, Ithaca, NY - Reforestation

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GUERNSEY T. CROSS, SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNOR

SPEECH OF GOVERNOR FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
Farm and Home Week,
Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.
February 13, 1931.

In speaking to this great group of farmers from all the corners of New York State and representing every branch and phase of farming, I appreciate that I am addressing a group that is primarily interested in country life, the life of the open, of natural things, both plant and animal.

I want to talk with you, therefore, about some problems of conservation, of the saving, the protection, the enrichment and the building up of our natural resources, not only for ourselves but much more for the generations that are to come.

I am particularly happy in presenting this to you, as this group and this College of Agriculture have time after time reminded me of the need for one great conservation measure in the solution of the problems of the abandoned farm region - namely the purchase and reforestation of the land by state or county.

We need to keep in mind, also, that reforestation may carry with it a balanced program of conservation, including the development of game, wild life and recreation.

Did you ever stop to think how fortunate New York is in having in a place easily accessible for its vast population of 13,000,000 human beings that great Adirondack group of mountains one-hundred miles square and containing lakes, streams, woods and animals, a playground for all of us and for many millions more from other states. In still another corner of the state, we

we have the Catskills, nearly as large in extent and just as beautiful. These are priceless heritages of the people of the state.

Now we have before us three proposed Constitutional amendments and one proposed law which the Legislature is considering and which deal with the Adirondack and Catskill mountains and with reforestation in general. One of these amendments and the proposed law, I believe, should pass. I am not so sure of the other two amendments. I want to discuss all of them with you.

X The first proposed amendment is one which is recommended by the New York State Reforestation Commission - the so-called Hewitt Reforestation amendment. This has two purposes: first, to set up a schedule of annual appropriations required to put into effect the enlarged reforestation program; and, second, to provide for extending that program to all of the counties of the State where idle land is located. The reforestation program as recommended by the Conservation Department and approved by the Reforestation Commission calls for the purchase and reforestation by the State of 1,000,000 acres within fifteen years at a cost of \$20,000,000. Lands best suited for this purpose are located in nearly all of the up-state counties and 45,000 acres have already been acquired in thirteen counties. This proposed Constitutional amendment should be passed by the Legislature and should be approved by the people next fall. It is the basis for all the work that should be done in getting these abandoned farm lands out of agriculture and put ^{to} use for which they are

best adapted - raising crops of trees.

This amendment also makes it possible for the State to start production forests in the Forest Preserve counties, but outside the Adirondack Park boundary commonly called the blue line. It does not endanger the Adirondack Park in any way or make it possible to lumber any State forests that are inside the blue line or that have been acquired up to this time in the Adirondack Preserve counties, but outside the blue line. Unless this amendment is passed, it will be impossible for instance to start production forests even in the southern end of Herkimer County simply because that county contains within its northern border a small part of the Adirondack Park and is therefore technically a Forest Preserve county.

There are two other proposed amendments which I want to mention. One of these would make it possible to build new highways through the Forest Preserve, destroying timber and forest growth for this purpose. The other would make it possible to develop great recreation centers in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks by cutting trees, etc. At first reading these do not look harmful. When we recall the struggle that the people of the state have had to prevent exploitation of the Forest Preserve by unscrupulous persons, and the great advantages to us and our descendants of having these great Preserves kept as nearly as possible in their natural condition, I am doubtful of the wisdom of too hasty action on these two amendments.

I believe that it is unwise to vote upon these amendments next fall. With three amendments before us, each dealing with the Adirondack and Catskill Parks, misunderstandings are liable to arise which will cloud the issue and confuse the public mind. We probably need more discussion of these last two proposals before we say definitely that they should be approved.

The other question which I wish to discuss is a proposed law - a bill now before the Legislature to extend the so-called blue line defining the Adirondack Park. The blue line is one of those imaginary boundary lines that we used to read about in geography, that defines the limits of the Adirondack Park. The Park now embraces about 3 million acres. The new bill proposes to extend this line in all directions and to take in about one and one-half million additional acres. Almost none of this additional area falls in the abandoned farm class. It is nearly all densely wooded land that ought to be in the Park.

There is also, but still further outside of the mountain and park area, in other words outside the proposed extension of the blue line a fringe of abandoned farm land that should be reforested. This area is estimated at one million acres.

If the Hewitt amendment passes, it will be possible to reforest this abandoned farm area with production forests in the same way that many other abandoned farm areas all over the state may be reforested. If the proposed law to extend the blue line passes, the Adirondack Park will be enlarged to include much forest land which should be park land and at the same time all production forest areas to be developed under the

Hewitt amendment will be kept well away from the park area proper.

These two pieces of legislation are interlocking and interrelated. Both should be passed at the same time; that is, the extension of the blue line should be done by legislative enactment this winter and the amendment to the Constitution providing for a permanent reforestation program should be passed by the Legislature again this winter and should be approved by the people next November.

There has been some misunderstanding of these two bills, some of it wilful and some of it sincere. There will be some opposition to them, some of it sincere and disinterested and some of it perhaps not so sincere. After the most careful sort of a study by myself and by my Conservation Commissioner, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., I want to state that in my judgment the interests of the state are best served and are entirely protected by these two pieces of proposed legislation - the extension of the blue line and the Constitutional amendment providing for a permanent long term program for reforestation in the State of New York.

At Cornell University — Farm and Home Week — Ithaca,
February 13, 1931

*Urging Passage of Legislation Extending the Blue Line and the Constitutional
Amendment Providing Long Term Reforestation Program*

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