

most cursory knowledge of the details of his own department. The life of the political head of a Department under our system, is a strenuous and busy one. He may often recognize that there is need for progress and improvement, but it takes time to work out the lines of such progress. Further, he is often deterred by the fear of hostile criticism, to which he could only oppose his own individual opinion. His motives are criticized and the wisdom of his measures impugned. Thus the boldest administrator, sooner or later, becomes disposed to adopt the policy of *laissez faire*. Under such circumstances, competent and disinterested support in carrying out the needed measures of reform ought to be welcome, and if, by the publication of the results of the work of this Commission, a strong and intelligent public opinion has been created in support of such measures, the way is made easy for their adoption.

One further word in regard to the methods and principles of action to be adopted in carrying out our work. It is absolutely essential to make it clear that it is not the province of the Commission, and it will not be its practice, to interfere with, to hinder, or to belittle the work of any other bodies, persons, associations or institutions. Our province should be to help, not to hinder. Where any person, organization, association or institution is engaged in doing work looking to the same result as that which we are aiming at, viz., the conservation of natural resources, it is our duty to support that work by every means in our power. There is no room for jealousy, there is abundant scope for all. There should be a community of interest and a harmonious co-operation all along the line, resulting in a great and strong movement for the adoption of the most effective policies.

The history of the movement which has resulted in our meeting is comparatively brief. The President of the United States having appointed the Inland Waterways Commission of the United States, that Commission on October 3rd, 1907, addressed to the President a memorandum suggesting that the time had arrived for the adoption of a national policy of conservation and suggesting that a conference of the Governors of the States of the Union should be held at the White House to consider the question. The President acted upon the suggestion, and the Conference, duly summoned by the President, met at the White House in May, 1908. Leading publicists in the United States declared that no more important gathering had ever taken place on the continent. It comprised not only the Governors of the States, but members of the United States Cabinet, Members of Congress, Justices of the Supreme Court and many distinguished scientific men. A declaration of principles was adopted and steps taken to promote