

# THE SCIENCE NEWS-LETTER

*A Weekly Summary of Current Science*

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## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AT AMERICAN ASSOCIATION CALLS FOR CONSERVATION

The reckless and wasteful exploitation of our seemingly inexhaustible natural resources has brought the United States to a point where only the prompt application of scientific methods of conservation and utilization can prevent a serious check to national development.

This was the message of the retiring president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Dr. Charles D. Walcott, secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, delivered at the opening of the session in Washington.

"The cream has been skimmed and all too often, the milk has been thrown away," he said, and explained this point in the following language.

"The whole philosophy of exploitation has been based on the theory of making maximum profits for the exploiter, rather than the ideal of greatest service of lasting benefit to the people of the world as a whole. The resources seemed unlimited, and it was assumed that future requirements would adjust themselves automatically and that posterity would take care of itself.

"Now the point has been reached where it is evident that the resources has a limit. Expansion cannot continue indefinitely, nor can even the present scale of consumption be maintained as population increases, unless steps are taken to replenish the supply. The pressure of scarcity and increasing costs of exploitation demand the elimination of wastes, the intensive utilization of the resources that are left, and the discovery or creation of new supplies.

"The discovery of new principles or new methods may make it economically practicable to intensify farming. Better understanding of silvicultural principles and closer study of the life history of our forests will show us how to utilize that resource without jeopardizing its continued productivity, and without increasing the economic burden on the users.

"Our mineral resources, as a general proposition, cannot be renewed through human effort, at least in the present state of knowledge. But even with them, the available supplies can be extended almost indefinitely through the discovery of new methods of extraction, or through the discovery and utilization of substitute materials.

"In comparison with the magnitude of the task, the amount of research that is being done is exceedingly small."

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