

## **Remarks of George B. Hartzog, Jr.**

**At The Fifth Triennial Conference of The George Wright Society  
Tucson, Arizona—November 14-18, 1988**

Mrs. Hartzog and I traveled by car to Grand Teton from McLean this summer, stopping along the way at several national parks. I bring you good news and bad news of that trip.

The good news is that the talented career professionals of the National Park Service in the field are alive and well—like seeds in the desert they await only the life nourishing spring rains to flower again. Hopefully, the rains will arrive with the new Administration.

The bad news is that our national parks are being choked to death between the ravenous, vise-like jaws of unbridled self-interest and political bureaucrats hostile to the park preservation ethic. Many distinguished Journals and Citizen Organizations have detailed the crisis. To cite just a few:

*U.S. News and World Report* (August 29–September 5, 1988), reporting on Secretary Hodel's visit to the fires at Yellowstone, wrote: *"Largely obscured by the acrid smoke and political hyperbole was the fact that fires actually benefit wilderness areas by clearing undergrowth and dead trees, thus regenerating the forest and improving wildlife habitat. Left unmentioned altogether was the real threat to America's first and most ecologically pristine, national park: An ever tightening circle of mining, oil wells, timber clear-cutting, geothermal leasing, vacation homes and growing communities that is closing in on Yellowstone from every direction."*

The *Wilderness Society*, in its recent report illuminated the myriad of similar activities at park boundaries that threaten the integrity of many other national parks. The Society asserts that ten of our national parks are now "endangered" and many more are under siege.

The *National Parks and Conservation Association* has documented the adverse impact of inappropriate and unnecessary developments within many of the national parks.

The threats to the survival of our national parks are more than physical—they are ideological and personal, as well.

In an article on the national parks (July 28, 1986) *Newsweek* suggests that society needs—

*"...to re-think the role national parks and wilderness play in the American psyche, to decide once and for all whether a given natural feature is worth any more than people are willing to spend for postcards of it. On the one hand, there is the romantic idealism of William Reilly, President of the Conservation Foundation, who considers parks the cathedrals of American civilization, 'the quintessential American idea.' On the other is the tough-minded utilitarianism of Assistant Secretary of the Interior William Horn, who reminded park directors in a memo last December that 'natural features are conserved chiefly for the benefit, use and enjoyment of the general public.' Put more succinctly: do the parks exist to conserve nature or to put it on display?"*

On the personal side is the elite cadre of career professionals in the Washington and Regional Offices of the National Park Service which has been cowed, demoralized and decimated by the assaults of successive waves of partisan political appointees with special interest agendas. Today, only about five percent (5%) of the employees in the Washington Office of the National Park Service have ever pulled a day's duty in a national park.

Is it any wonder, then, that the agency has lost its way:

- ✦ promoting all areas of the National Park System as 'jewels in the crown' implying that the domestic water supply reservoir of Amistad National Recreation Area in Texas is the ecological equivalent of the real 'Crown Jewels': Yellowstone, Yosemite, Glacier and our other treasured national parks;
- ✦ developing and re-developing highways and resort accommodations in the national parks while stifling and neglecting the development of public facilities at the great urban recreation areas designed by the Congress to serve the teeming millions of our citizens living in the plastic and concrete environments of our Metropolitan Areas;
- ✦ where, at Yellowstone, more money is spent collecting and disposing of garbage than on trying to understand the web of life.

We may disagree on the battle plan, but none will gainsay that the battle to determine whether our national parks shall survive is joined on three fronts:

- ✦ How to cope with the activities outside park boundaries that threaten their survival?
- ✦ What park uses are compatible with their preservation?—and,
- ✦ Who shall manage our national parks: a cadre of career park professionals or short term, revolving door politicians driven by agendas of the special interests?

### **Outside Dangers**

In the past, when parks were threatened with adverse uses outside their boundaries, the boundary was extended to include the troubled area and then purchased. This is much like the approach recently approved by the Congress to resolve the issue of proposed development of a shopping mall/office park on hallowed ground adjacent to Manassas National Battlefield Park, Virginia. It will work there since the undeveloped land is valued only in the millions. It is doubtful, however, that such orthodoxy will work, for example, in the ten-million acre ecosystem of the Yellowstone Basin of which Yellowstone National Park is only one-fifth. There, the cost of the land outside the park and the relocation of households and businesses is to be counted in the billions, to say nothing of the special interest and bureaucratic wars such a move would ignite. Most of the remaining eighty percent (80%) of the land in the Basin consists of National

Forests, Wildlife Refuges, Indian Reservations and ownership by state and local governments whose programs are driven by multiple-use, commercial exploitation. Depending on their extent and location, many of these activities can be continued in the Basin compatibly with the preservation mission of Yellowstone National Park—but not when they are hard against its boundary.

Beginning in the 1960s, we tried cooperative regional planning with the Forest Service to protect the greater Yellowstone area. Our successes were small and temporary, not because of bad faith, but because the resource missions of the Forest Service and the Park Service are, for the most part, incompatible and adversarial. Specifically, the mission of the Forest Service is consumptive resource utilization—incompatible, in most instances, with the Park Service mission of non-consumptive resource management. Moreover, there was no final authority to adjudicate between the differing management options and missions.

Director William Penn Mott, Jr., has called for buffer zones around the troubled parks. Under this proposal, Congress would define the extent of the buffer needed to protect the biotic communities of the park. The Secretary of the Interior would be authorized to determine the level of protection needed within the buffer zone to insure the objectives of park preservation.

Competitiveness among government agencies for turf is as intense as between businesses for market share. And where large bureaucratic turfs of competing agencies are at issue, such as at Yellowstone, the Congress is not likely to grant unilateral authority to Interior to direct uses on Forest Service lands controlled by the Agriculture Department.

This is not unlike the issue that the task force on historic preservation faced in trying to draft legislation to protect our cultural heritage from destruction by competing programs of urban renewal, highways, etc. HUD, the Federal Highway Administration, Army Corps of Engineers and others, would not defer to Interior to adjudicate issues impinging on their bureaucratic turf.

Congress solved the problem by approving a two-step process: first it authorized and directed the Park Service to establish, maintain and publicize a National Register of Historic Places (buildings, districts, etc.). This register reflected the scholarly, professional judgment of what was important in the preservation and presentation of our cultural heritage. Second, it established a Presidential Advisory Council on Historic Preservation composed of private citizens, state and local government officials appointed by the President and ex-officio membership by such involved agencies and organizations as HUD, Transportation, Agriculture, General Services Administration and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The council is charged with the responsibility of advising the President and the Congress on the competing, conflicting demands of use and development *vis-à-vis* preservation of our patrimony. Even though its authority is advisory, in practice its ability to resolve conflict is comparable to mediation and arbitration. The council has

its independent staff. The whole concept has worked extremely well with a minimum of bureaucratic conflict and cost.

To resolve the competing, conflicting uses that threaten the ecological survival of our national parks, we need a congressionally-sanctioned Register of Natural Places and a President's Council on Nature Preservation to arbitrate among these uses.

The federal government lacks zoning authority inherent in the states and local governments. Thus, to enforce its decisions the Council should be empowered to promulgate compensable land use regulations. An owner aggrieved by the regulations would have the right to sue in the local U.S. District Court for damages alleged to have been suffered. If damages were proven, the court would enter judgment against the government. And when paid, the payment would operate to transfer a land interest to the government consistent with the regulation—a result similar to an easement.

### **Threats Inside The Parks**

Before we can deal with the serious threats that endanger the national parks from within, we need to re-think the meaning and purpose of our Crown Jewels, as suggested by *Newsweek*. Are the purposes of national parks—

- ◆ To be destination resorts to assuage the feverish rich and networks of highways for sight-seeing Americans in a hurry or places to exult amidst superlative wildness and scenic grandeur?
- ◆ Money machines for purveyors of tasteless food and tawdry merchandise, subsidized enclaves for private second-home retreats or places to gain an understanding of the people and events that shaped our heritage?
- ◆ Motor home parks for relaxing in recreational vehicles with all the modern conveniences from the home left behind or protectors of gene pools and preserves for scientists to research and learn about the web of life of which we are all a part?

The Congressionally mandated purpose of national parks is 'to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.'

On the other hand, the President's Advisory Council on Outdoor Recreation decreed that National Recreation Areas (most of them near large urban populations) 'should be readily accessible at all times for all-purpose recreational use.' Moreover, it decreed that federal investment in such areas should be 'more clearly responsive to recreation demand than other investments that are based primarily upon considerations of preserving unique natural or historical resources.'

The Congress endorsed these differing policies for National Parks and National Recreation Areas: first by establishing a number of large urban recreation areas; and secondly, by changing its historic policy for resort accommodations in the national parks.

For example, initially, the policy of the Congress was to permit development of hotels and related facilities in the parks **'as the comfort and convenience of visitors may require.'** In 1965 it changed this policy to provide that only those commercial facilities **'necessary and appropriate for public use and enjoyment'** would be allowed. Many **unnecessary** commercial facilities remain in the national parks.

A glaring example is to be found in Zion National Park. When Director, I persuaded Jim Evans, the chief executive officer of Union Pacific—and a dedicated park enthusiast—to donate its concession facilities at Zion to the Park Service rather than sell them to someone else. I sought the donation for the avowed purpose of removing the facilities from Zion. They had been determined to be neither **'necessary'** nor **'appropriate for public use and enjoyment'** of that fragile, tender valley. The facilities were to be allowed to continue in operation only on an interim basis while private enterprise developed adequate lodging and food facilities in the gateway area to the park.

When it came time to remove the facilities in 1975 (after my departure from the Service), the trade association of concessioners, the Utah governor and some of the Utah congressional delegation mounted a campaign to retain them, and they succeeded. One of the more interesting arguments advanced to keep the facilities in the park, according to historian William C. Everhart, was made by Governor Calvin Rampton who **'spoke of a 'devastating' economic impact, predicting (that if the facilities were removed) the traveling public would bypass the region, threatening the solvency of motel, restaurant, and service station owners.'**

Remarkably illuminating: the throngs of visitors to America's national parks do not come to see the parks but to stay in the concession accommodations! Such **'shortness of vision,'** as the late Ansel Adams lamented in his autobiography, is now one of the greatest enemies of the National Park idea.

Other **inappropriate** resort facilities in our national parks impact adversely on the habitat of endangered wildlife as at Yellowstone. At the same time the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway (the recreation corridor connecting Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks) remains largely undeveloped.

When many of the great western national parks were established, small enclaves of vacation cabins and modest year-round residences were included in the park boundaries. By law, the National Park Service fulfills the role of local government to these enclaves, with responsibility for health, fire, police, etc. A private consulting firm compared the cost of acquiring these properties *vis-à-vis* the cost of letting them continue to exist and develop into town-sites concluding that it would cost the federal government millions more to allow these environmental cancers to remain than it would to eliminate them. Each

Administration for more than three decades supported the policy to acquire these lands. In an abrupt reversal of this long established policy, Interior Secretary James Watt gutted the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the source of funding for such acquisitions.

So long as these environmental cancers remain within the boundaries of our national parks, our national parks cannot be saved.

### **Who Shall Manage Our Parks?**

Soon after his arrival, Watt removed the career Deputy Director of the National Park Service replacing him with a partisan loyalist inexperienced in park management and lacking empathy for the career park professionals. The Regional Director in Alaska—a third generation, career park professional—was summarily demoted because he had antagonized powerful, partisan park opponents. Another career Regional Director was harrassed into retirement.

William Penn Mott, Jr. who had served President Reagan as State Park Director when Reagan was Governor of California was appointed Director of the National Park Service in May, 1985. Among park people, Mott is a llegend in his own time. He moved quickly to replace the politically partisan Deputy Director with a talented career professional. Lamentably, Mott's tenure soon became trouble-laden. His new Deputy Director was censured by Secretary Hodel for drafting a memorandum Mott signed to the Secretary protesting Assistant Secretary Horn's reorganization of Mott's top staff; Horn changed Mott's evaluations and bonus awards for his senior staff to the extent that, in outrage, Mott refused to attend the awards ceremony; departmental underlings appointed for partisan political loyalty bypass Mott to countermand decisions of park professionals and to interfere with park operations in the Regions and in the Parks.

The obscenity of this destruction of one of the most highly regarded professional agencies in the federal government has been compounded with a many-weeks long Inspector General Investigation of Mott and one of his assistants on unstated charges of alleged misconduct. How disgraceful—even Salem 'witches' knew the charges!

### **Conclusion**

There are encouraging signs that the environmental storms that have ravaged our nation and, especially, our national parks may be abating.

First, the President-Elect told us during the Campaign that he 'is an environmentalist' and that positive concern for the environment will be a priority of his Administration.

Second, during his Campaign he issued a pro-civil service position paper. The paper promises a White House orientation program for new appointees to show them 'how to be effective in the federal environment,' ensure that they understand 'the limitations our democratic system' places on them, and stress that they must 'build teamwork among the political and career officials in their agencies.

(Mike Causey, *Washington Post*, November 10, 1988.) In short, no more bureaucrat bashing!

But we do not have to rely on these promises alone. Our Constitution vests public land policy-making in the Congress. And there are encouraging signs that the Congress will take an active role in remedying the deplorable situation with respect to park land acquisition and put an end to the abusive management style of successive Secretaries of the Interior that has plagued the National Park Service.

Congressman Morris K. Udall (D. Ariz.) introduced legislation in the 100th Congress to establish an American Heritage Trust Fund that would be financed with revenues from recreation user fees, park admissions and a portion of the income from off-shore oil and gas leasing previously earmarked for the emasculated Land and Water Conservation Fund. No new taxes would be required. This legislation should be enacted by the Congress.

Congressman Bruce Vento (D. Minn.) introduced legislation in the last Congress to put an end to the existing abusive management style. His bill would provide for a statutory term for the Director of the National Park Service, appointment by the President and confirmation by the Senate, similar to what was done with the FBI when White House and Justice Department meddling threatened the professional foundations of that Agency during the Watergate scandal. The Congress should enact Vento's measure.

The theme of your Conference *Parks and Neighbors* is aimed at *Maintaining Diversity Across Political Boundaries*. That word "Diversity" seems to be the new buzz word of the environment. It is a good word and I believe it is especially instructive today if we are to preserve our national parks. Webster's first or preferred definition of the word is: "a state or an instance of difference; unlikeness..." Webster goes on to illustrate it with a quotation by George Bernard Shaw: "They are concerned with the *diversities* of the world instead of with its unities."

My first encounter with the word as related to park management was at the symposium on National Parks for the Future sponsored by the Conservation Foundation at Yosemite National Park in 1972. The National Park Service and the National Park Centennial Commission had contracted with the Foundation to overview the National Park System and make recommendations for its second century of service to the American people. At that symposium Maitland S. Sharpe presented a most thoughtful paper entitled *National Parks and Young America* in which he wrote:

### ***Diversity***

"Running as an undercurrent throughout this report is the question: 'What are parks for?' I think it can be argued, following Dasmann, that, above all, diversity is the value which we should seek to maximize and against which proposals for new programs and facilities should be judged. It is critical, however, that we clearly delineate the unit within which we seek diversity.

'A manager of Yosemite argues that arts and crafts programs would increase diversity; they do not at present exist in the park. The preservationist replies that such proposals are undesirable and seeks to exclude them, also in the name of diversity. Both with good intentions, both ostensibly seeking the same goal, they disagree violently. Where they differ is in the size of the unit of analysis.

'We do not, most of us, live in parks. We live, rather, in a nation, the United States, and it is within that unit that the research for diversity is most meaningful. In contrast to an increasingly urbanized, mechanized, noisy, and crowded society, the parks stand out as quiet, natural, open, and wild places. As such, they represent a chance for different kinds of experiences—for diversity. To the extent to which parks are maintained as places which contrast sharply with the rest of our society, diversity will be maximized. If, however, they become more like every place else (even though that would represent a gain in diversity within the park), diversity will be lost over-all and our lives would be poorer.

'The notion of diversity is potentially of great utility in talking about the parks, particularly in deciding whether certain proposals are legitimate or appropriate. But the concept is useful only if we select a sufficiently large unit of analysis, i.e., the nation, within which diversity would be sought.'

For much too long we have been frustrated and fragmented by arguments over 'preservation and use' at each area, forgetting that this was a Congressional objective for the management of the whole of the National Park System as articulated in the Act of August 25, 1916, establishing the National Park Service. In the meantime, since 1916, the Congress has created a wondrously diverse National Park System: irreplaceable national parks, monuments **and** sites to preserve and commemorate our natural and cultural heritage and expansive natural landscapes for outdoor recreation. Thus, while the Congress has greatly expanded the 'National Park World' within which to implement the diversity of its objective, 'preservation and use' we doggedly pursue the diversity within the boundaries of each individual area. The result is that we continue to clutter our Crown Jewels with 'unnecessary and inappropriate' developments while denying outdoor recreational opportunities to millions of our citizens living in the desolate urban environments of our nation.

It is predicted that by the Year 2,000 eighty percent (80%) of our population will be crowded together in our Metropolitan areas.

Much of the two billion dollars of deferred park maintenance identified in the recent report of the General Accounting Office—the watch dog of the Congress—is aimed at improving roads, campgrounds and infrastructure to accommodate ever-increasing visitation to our endangered national parks. Before the next Administration and the Congress appropriate billions more for 'park improvements' they should take a closer look at the 'unnecessary and inappropriate' developments that already endanger our national parks and the shameful lack of maintenance and development of our National Recreation Areas. We should seek 'preservation and use' within the



diversity of the total of the National Park System.

Only then will we serve the outdoor recreation needs of our growing urban population and at the same time preserve their irreplaceable natural and cultural heritage. If we continue blindly, to seek the same standard of 'preservation and use' within the constricted boundaries of each area of the National Park System—managing each like the other—we shall neither fulfill the objective of the Congress nor save the 'Crown Jewels' of our nation—our great National Parks!

*George B. Hartzog, Jr.*, Director of the U.S. National Park Service, 1964–1973. McLean, Virginia.



## **The Role of the National Park Service in American Education** —An Address to The George Wright Society— Tucson, Arizona—November 15, 1988

***Alston Chase***

Last August, before Yellowstone's wildfires had cooled, the NPS Division of Interpretation announced plans to launch an ambitious campaign to interpret the fires for park visitors. Summer school courses, exhibits, posters, and books for adults and children are planned. Fifty part-time and twelve full-time naturalists, it was reported, will work on the project.

I personally can think of few things better than informing the public about the ecological role of fire in North America. So why does this announcement not make me happy?

Because I am not convinced that what the public will get from this campaign is an education. Those of you who have read my book may know some of the reasons for my lack of optimism, but there are other reasons as well.

While doing research on natural regulation in Yellowstone, I sometimes asked a park naturalist, "What do you think of professor X?"

Often the reply would be, "Professor X is not credible."

Over time I learned many otherwise distinguished scholars were deemed 'not credible' by researchers and interpreters in Yellowstone.

Why, I wondered, were these people not credible? The answer, I discovered, is that they had the misfortune once to criticize park policy, or had done research that failed to confirm hypotheses propounded by park biologists.

Later, I observed that papers written by park researchers also carried no bibliographic citations of works by these, apparently incredible, scholars. Some of these omissions were glaring.

While working on *Playing God in Yellowstone*, I was, as many of you know, Chairman of the Board of the Yellowstone Association. I saw no conflict in this. The duty of the Association was to support research