

Letter from John W. Weeks to Gifford Pinchot dated June 18, 1912 and concerning the Weeks law.

"Although I was born and brought up in the country, and in the White Mountain region, I did not have any other interest in forestry problems than that which comes from inheritance and environment under such conditions until I came to Washington to take my seat in the Fifty-Ninth Congress. As you very well know, new Members are not of the first importance here, and very frequently they wonder, especially if they have been busy men, employed in comparatively large undertakings, why they are here at all, and quite as frequently they look around for something of reasonable importance with which they can become connected and perform some kind of good public service. Almost the first thing which attracted my attention was the Forestry Service. I commenced to look it up along general lines and soon ascertained the situation which obtained relating to the White Mountain and Appalachian bills, coming to the conclusion that if any result was to be obtained it must mean cooperation between the Eastern and Southern sections of the country. As you know, attempts have been made for nearly twenty years to get some kind of legislation for forestry protection for these regions, but they had not been undertaken with sufficient energy or under such conditions that any favorable result had been secured. I regret that I have not at hand the date of the introduction of the different bills relating to this subject, with which I was connected, or of the hearings which were given on those bills, although I could have that looked up very easily if doing so would be any particular trouble to you, and will be glad to do so if you wish the information and will so advise me. Generally speaking, the older Members of the House, those recognized as the leaders on both sides, were opposed to this legislation and voted against it when final action was taken. It was equally true in the case of Mr. Clark, Mr. Williams, and other Democratic Members as it was in the case of Mr. Cannon, Mr. Dalzell, Mr. Payne, and Mr. Tawney on the Republican side, so that it was not only necessary to get the Members stirred up to the importance of the legislation, but also to overcome the positive opposition of these men, and that at a time when their influence was at its strongest.

"During the first session of the Sixtieth Congress, I was very much surprised one day to receive a request from Mr. Cannon to call at his office, on which occasion he announced that he wished to put me on the Committee on Agriculture. Upon his having made the announcement, I said to him, "I have no particular interest in the work of the Agricultural Department other than that which any other Member of Congress might have. I am on one very important Committee and Chairman of another Committee of less importance, so that I have all the Committee places to which I am entitled, and I think you would do well, not only from the Committee standpoint, but your own, if you would give this place to some one of the many who desire to be members of the Agricultural Committee." To this Mr. Cannon substantially replied that the Agricultural Committee had come to the first importance, that the Department had grown rapidly, that it was undertaking many new and somewhat unusual things, of many of which he doubtless approved, but some of which must necessarily be

experimental, and such experiments should be stopped when it was determined that they were impracticable, and for that reason it was especially essential that trained business men should be on the Committee. He further stated that on looking over the House membership he had selected me as the most available man offering and he wished I would take the place, which, under the circumstances, I, of course, consented to do. Before giving this assent, however, I said to him that I thought he ought to know that I was in favor of certain legislation which the Agricultural Committee would have to consider, to which he was opposed, or reported to be opposed, and that I did not think he ought to give me the appointment without having a full understanding of my views. He immediately said, "I suppose you refer to forestry legislation." I said I did refer particularly to that. He said, "Well, now, let me tell you just what my idea is. I think forestry legislation is coming in time, but it has not seemed to me that the time has arrived yet when we ought to commence to purchase lands for forestry purposes. I may be mistaken in this proposition, but my judgment is that it is too early to undertake such a policy. I am not, however, putting you on the Agricultural Committee because I expect you to make my views yours. In fact, I would not put you there, or give you any other appointment of responsibility, if I thought you would, and I want to say this, that if you can frame a forestry bill which you, as a business man, are willing to support, I will do what I can to get an opportunity to get it consideration in the House." And although Mr. Cannon voted against the final passage of the forestry bill, he carried out the statement which he made at that time and was of material assistance in getting the bill up for consideration. In fact, if it had not been for his assistance, I should have failed in getting it through at the time we finally succeeded. As you will recall, the bill first passed the House in the Second Session of the Sixtieth Congress about a week before adjournment and was finally killed in the Senate by filibustering, so that it was necessary to take it up as a new proposition in the Sixty-First Congress. I was not during that Congress a member of the Agricultural Committee, having been made Chairman of the Post Office Committee at the beginning of the session, but after a pretty long struggle the bill was reported out of the Agricultural Committee by a vote of ten to seven, finally passing the House and Senate in what seemed to me at the time to be workable shape, and time has demonstrated that that conclusion was correct. I think I ought to say that the Agricultural Committee, during both the Sixty-First and Sixty-Second Congresses, was made up of members, many of whom were radically opposed to this legislation. This included the Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Scott, and other influential members, all of which added to the difficulties of getting the bill reported out, and in the Sixtieth Congress it was finally reported from the Committee by a vote of nine to eight. As I have previously said, the vote in the Sixty-First Congress was ten to seven.

"There have been very few policies undertaken since I have been in Congress on which there have been given such thorough hearings as on this bill, and in behalf of which there has been such widespread interest. I think the hearing during the Sixtieth Congress was one of the most important that I have attended. At least a dozen States, and I think more, were represented by citizens of importance, three or four Governors being among this number and Governor Hoke Smith of Georgia taking charge of the hearing. Naturally, as a Congressman's work is devoted to specialties, I have not had time to give to Western forestry matters any more than the time which I can devote to other incidents of legislation as they come along, although I have always supported a reasonable conservation policy and liberal appropriations to maintain it. During the last Congress, especially, the Sixty-First, I was made Chairman of the Post Office Committee, which took practically all of my time, particularly during the first session, because I had not before been familiar with the work.

"A very interesting report has recently been made by George Otis Smith, Director of the United States Geological Survey, on the influence of forestry on stream flow as relating to the White Mountain region. You will recall that, in order to make constitutional the bill which I originally introduced, it became necessary to base the reason for the legislation on that proposition, and it was over that, that much of the contention took place during the hearings and in the debates which followed them. Even after the legislation was enacted many officers of the Army continued their opposition to it, contending that there was no connection between forestry and stream flow, and therefore the reasons for the legislation did not come within constitutional limitations. They even went so far as to say to Mr. Smith, the Director of the Geological Survey, that he could not certify, as the bill required, that in any particular instance there was such a connection without certifying to a false statement. This, naturally, put the Director of the Geological Survey on his guard and it was only after the most thorough investigation by that office that he was willing to attach his certificate to the principle thus involved. Within the last two weeks, however, he has reported to the Commission, established under the provisions of the Weeks Bill, that stream flow in the White Mountain region is, without question, affected by forestry conditions, coming to this conclusion after diligent and thorough investigations which seem to the Geological Survey and, after careful examination, to me, conclusive proof of the correctness of our previous theory. Purchases of land have already commenced in the Appalachian region, and last Saturday, June fifteenth, the Commission voted to buy about forty-two thousand acres in the White Mountain region. My own judgment is that the policy which the Government has now undertaken, hedged around as it is with suitable precautions and provision for care, will continue as long as the Government itself and that it will not only be a great advantage to the country along the lines covered by the purposes

of the bill, that is, in promoting stream flow and protecting watersheds, but will continue the beauty of mountain regions which are visited by millions of people, which beauty, under other conditions, might be destroyed; and, in addition to all this, that it will prove to be a profitable venture for the Government, producing a revenue which will amply repay it for any expenditures made in the original purchase and which may be necessary to carry out the policy. I have not been associated with any legislation since I have been in Congress which has given me any more satisfaction than this."