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THE POLITICS OF IMAGES: FOREST MANAGERS vs. RECREATION PUBLICS

BEN W. TWIGHT* and WILLIAM R. CATTON, JR.**

INTRODUCTION

Today's environmental clashes illuminate only too clearly previous reports by social scientists that managers and users of our public forests do not share the same image of the forest as a resource.¹ This paper explores possible political implications of such differences based on data from a recent study of user definitions of a resource, discusses some historical background, and examines various related studies.

Public foresters and influential recreation groups have had political conflicts since the turn of the century. The first of these, a 1902 battle over logging between Cornell Forestry Dean Bernhard Fernow and aesthetic-minded recreationists, resulted in the closure of that university's school of forestry.² Perhaps the most recent was the North Cascades National Park battle.

Recent historical literature concerning the evolution of national forests and national parks suggests that most of the national parks set aside since 1916—and the National Park Service itself—might never have been established if the U.S. Forest Service had been willing to meet at least some of the demands of the aesthetically oriented recreation groups.³ The Olympic, Sequoia-Kings Canyon, and Grand Teton National Parks contain examples of former national forest lands which recreation groups sought to have the Forest Service reserve from utilization. Failing to convince the Forest Service, these groups organized successful political campaigns to transfer the lands to a competing organization.

In these cases, public foresters, believing the lands should remain

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1. Bultena & Taves, *Changing Wilderness Images and Forestry Policy*, 59 J. Forestry 167 (1961); Burch, *Two Concepts for Guiding Recreation Management Decisions*, 62 J. Forestry 712 (1964); Lucas, *Wilderness Perception and Use: The Example of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area*, in *Readings in Resource Management and Conservation* 363 (I. Burton & R. Kates eds. 1965).

2. A. Rodgers, *Bernard Eduard Fernow: A Story of North American Forestry* (1951).

3. S. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency* (1959); Gilligan, *The Development of Policy and Administration of Forest Service Primitive Areas in the Western United States, 1959* (unpublished thesis in University of Michigan Library); Swain, *The Passage of the National Park Act of 1916*, 50 Wis. Magazine of History 4 (1966).

available for commercial use, failed to answer to politically influential groups whose support they had previously enjoyed. This lack of response resulted in political cleavages between the recreationists and these foresters. Demands became solidified, issues were polarized, and organized citizen forces diverted their support elsewhere. Failing to anticipate change, the foresters were put on the defensive, with consequently less control over the final outcome. This pattern of organizational response appears to occur repeatedly within the U.S. Forest Service.

With some exceptions, sympathetic or anticipatory response to recreation pressures has been limited. While the Forest Service officially sanctioned developed recreation facilities in 1920, it specified that they "should receive attention only when they do not interfere with the work of protecting the National Forests and regulating the use of their resources for utilitarian purposes."⁴ Since that time the Service has provided many developed recreation facilities, but primarily where there was little conflict with commodity production. Its greatest innovations, however, have been mainly those designed to offset existing or potential political pressure for transfer of lands to the national park system. Much of the Forest Service primitive area and wild area system (now "wilderness") can be traced to this purpose. These primitive areas were eventually scheduled to be logged as they were considered only temporary. In 1939, however, wilderness advocate Robert Marshall and other outside pressure forced revision of the regulations.⁵

Philosophical reasons suggested for this forester-recreationist impasse have been varied. Looking beyond the traditional Forest Service concern for the primacy of timber and the stability of the local timber economies, some authorities have indicated more fundamental causes. Gould feels that professional foresters have customarily tended to view recreation as "somewhat sinful."⁶ Sharpe has speculated that a fear of recreation or a matter of dignity might be involved.⁷ Dowdle suggests that professional foresters may feel that they alone are the experts in determining what the people need from the forest.⁸ Some political scientists have gone even further and

4. Kneipp, Memorandum to the District Foresters, *quoted in* D. Baldwin, *An Historical Study of the Western Origin, Application and Development of the Wilderness Concept, 1919 to 1933, 1965* (unpublished dissertation in University of Denver Library).

5. Cate, *Recreation and the U.S. Forest Service, 1963* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis in Stanford University Library).

6. Gould, *Forestry and Recreation*, 6 *Harvard Forest Papers* 1 (1962).

7. Sharpe, *The Forester and Outdoor Recreation*, 63 *J. Forestry* 762 (1965).

8. Dowdle, *The Role of the S.A.F. in Formulating Public Policy*, *Proceedings of the Soc'y of Am. Foresters* 32 (1966).

stated that foresters have an "elitist tendency to ignore democratic processes" in order to dictate what is best for the land.⁹

Other professions appear to have similar tendencies; elitism has been noted among education professionals in a study of the New York School System by Rogers.¹⁰ Further, it has recently been pointed out that there are many bureau-constituent conflicts throughout United States public administration, particularly between clientele groups and public agencies dominated by a single professional specialty. Mosher attributes these conflicts to a collision course between the drives toward professionalization and towards citizen participation.¹¹

The concept of "unshared images" may help to explain such conflicts.¹² Part of a person's image of the world is the belief that this image is shared by other people. In the case of natural resources it has been suggested that some managers believe that what other people *should* prefer coincides with preferences they themselves hold.¹³ Such a bias has been called a "selective perception" and is common among "in groups" of a variety of organizations and professions.

What is critical is the manager's image or perception of the resource and of the choices open to him in managing it. These images or perceptions are shaped by values, particularly those absorbed during his professional education and organization experience. When such images become implicit, they are incorporated as accepted elements of plans presented for public choice.

Sociologists have found that the leaders of an organization may project their own perception of a situation into other people's actions.¹⁴ In forest management planning this could lead to misinterpretation of what users and interest groups really want. These hazards become apparent from Burch's study of perceptions of Oregon's national forests and Lucas' study of wilderness perceptions in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area of Minnesota. Both found that managers and recreationists do indeed have different images of the resource.¹⁵ The potential such perceptual schisms provide for con-

9. Maass, *Conservation, Political and Social Aspects*, in *The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* 276 (1968); Reich, *Bureaucracy in the Forests*, in *An Occasional Paper of the Center for Democratic Institutions* 10 (1962).

10. D. Rogers, 110 Livingston Street 268-69 (1969).

11. Mosher, *The Public Service in the Temporary Society*, 32 *Pub. Ad. Rev.* 47 (1971).

12. Bultena & Taves, *supra* note 1.

13. White, *Formation and Role of Public Attitudes*, in *Environmental Quality in a Growing Economy* 124-25 (H. Jarrett ed. 1967).

14. Taylor & Catton, *Problems of Interpretation in Clinical Sociology*, 33 *Sociological Inquiry* 37 (1963).

15. Lucas, *supra* note 1; Burch, *supra* note 1.

tinued political controversy set the background for the study which follows.

Beginning in 1968, the authors attempted to determine differences, if any, between managers' and users' perceptions of an urban landscape resource—in this case an arboretum.¹⁶ The purpose was to determine whether the contrasting views occurring in the wildland recreation setting carried over to the city.

THE RESOURCE

In the center of metropolitan Seattle, Washington, lies an arboretum, administered by the College of Forest Resources of the University of Washington. This unique area contains about 200 acres of naturalistic landscape—botanical plantings in an open forest setting—bordered on three sides by the city and on one side by lagoons and islands of Lake Washington. Located one-half mile from the campus, the arboretum is easily accessible for forestry, botanical, and other teaching and research purposes. It is also easily accessible to a population of over one million persons. Visits to this arboretum exceed 580,000 per year and are of a regional nature, with about one-fourth of these visits from outside the city.

The naturalistic design of the landscape was an unintended consequence of a pragmatic decision necessary to gain control of the property for the arboretum in 1934. The forestry dean had to have a master plan for the area in order to lease this city-owned parkland, but having no funds for such a plan, he found it useful to accept both the funds and the planner (the famous landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.) offered by the Seattle Garden Club.

THE RESOURCE MANAGERS' PERCEPTION OF THE RESOURCE

The managers' perceptions of the arboretum resource were inferred from a study of stated goals and operating plans. These guidelines indicated that management intended the arboretum to be a scientific, educational, and horticultural facility. Presumably the goals were oriented to the service of a clientele—the arboretum's particular consuming public. Perhaps this clientele could be expected to favor improved horticultural displays and scientific plantings which would further the goals of the arboretum.

16. B. Twright, *The Clientele of the University of Washington Arboretum, 1968* (unpublished M.S. thesis in University of Washington Library).

THE USERS' PERCEPTION OF THE RESOURCE

To test the hypothesis that there would be a user-manager perceptual schism, 1,812 questionnaires were mailed to a sample of registered owners of vehicles observed in the arboretum during the spring and summer months. To obtain comparisons with users of other land resources, questionnaires were also mailed to a sample of 708 randomly selected visitors to three Seattle city parks and six Puget Sound area state parks. Response to both questionnaires was just under 40 percent.¹⁷

Two scores on the questionnaire were developed: (1) a *preservation* score which measured users' preference to keep the arboretum unchanged versus development of the area for more intensive horticultural and scientific pursuits; and (2) a *naturalness* score which measured respondents' preference for a natural landscape versus more developed facilities, activities, and grounds. These attitude scores were tested for significant relationships with socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.

Results indicated that many clientele did perceive the arboretum resource differently than did its management. Respondents were found to be oriented toward aesthetic and amenity values rather than scientific, educational, and horticultural goals as originally specified. Socio-economic characteristics of most arboretum respondents were strikingly high, with educational levels of college completion or above indicated at a frequency four times greater than that occurring in the general population in 1966. Occupational and income status were also proportionally higher.

Respondents indicated a tolerance for existing goal-oriented uses and facilities in the area but were opposed to new developments for these purposes. Perceived personal benefits of the arboretum were related to its contrast with the urban environment, its qualities of pleasant landscape, restful and quiet surroundings, and the apparent privacy.

Horticultural displays and services provided were thought to be of importance, but when forced to decide what was more important

17. The samples obtained in the arboretum cannot be construed to represent the entire user population. Samples were obtained by recording auto license numbers of all vehicles in the area during peak-hour use periods on selected peak-use days. Significant variation related to season, location, and low-use days were tested for with negative results. A statistical test for nonresponse bias was made with negative results. However, walk-in users (estimated to constitute 12% of the use) were not represented in the sample. Rental cars were excluded from the sample, which caused out-of-state users, as well as drivers of leased cars, to be under-represented. Low-income persons from the central city who use the area as a local park probably did not respond representatively to the 12-page questionnaire, although this was not supported by the test for non-response bias.

between "enjoyment of a variety of plants and flowers" and "pleasant landscape," 52 percent chose the landscape. When forced to decide what was more important between "enjoyment of a variety of plants and flowers" and "a quiet, restful atmosphere," 63 percent chose the restful atmosphere.

This non-horticultural orientation was strongly related to a high *naturalness* attitude score ($\gamma = 0.32$ to 0.43).¹⁸ Comparison of data indicated that these amenity-oriented users were quite similar in socio-economic characteristics to wilderness users in the Pacific Northwest.¹⁹ With both groups high socio-economic levels were related significantly to scores indicating strong appreciation of "natural" landscape features. The higher the socio-economic status, the stronger were attitudes favoring such a "natural" environment. Interestingly, with arboretum users, a desire for privacy—being away from other people except for chosen companions—was also related to a high *naturalness* score ($\gamma = 0.47$). The socio-economic characteristics most significantly related to preference for privacy were high education ($\gamma = 0.24$) and youth ($\gamma = 0.25$). Stankey has recently confirmed the existence of a strong relationship between natural landscape appreciation and desire for privacy in studies of Montana wilderness users.²⁰

A comparison with the city and state park data indicated that those respondents, though above the mean population in socio-economic characteristics, were of lower status than arboretum respondents. The city and state park respondents also showed weaker attitudes on the *naturalness* score, although they did prefer parks' aesthetic features to developed recreational facilities, such as game courts and play areas.

DISCUSSION

It appears that the landscape conditions provided by the University Arboretum attract a particularly high-status clientele and that this clientele perceived the resource differently than did the managers.

18. The relationship tested for here was the *tendency* of persons who were not oriented to horticultural features to have a high *naturalness* score. This calls for the use of a measure of association of two rank-ordered variables which *gamma* provides. Gamma measures the predictability of order on one variable from order on another. See J. Mueller, K. Schuessler & H. Costner, *Statistical Reasoning in Sociology* 279 (1970).

19. See Hendee, Catton, Marlow & Brockman, *Wilderness Users in the Pacific Northwest—Their Characteristics, Values and Management Preferences* 12-13 (U.S.D.A. Forest Service Research Paper, PNW-61, 1968).

20. Stankey, *Strategies and Problems in Managing for Wilderness Quality* 30-32 (paper prepared for the Resources for the Future Multi-Disciplinary Workshop on Research in Wildlands, Wildlife and Scenic Resources, Aug. 4-5, 1971).

Burch has suggested that specific physical environments attract users of a specific social character.²¹ The data here suggest that high-status users discriminated between the Olmsted-designed "natural" landscape and the landscapes of the nearby city and state parks sampled. However, all the areas studied have aesthetic characteristics which attracted members of upper-middle social classes disproportionately from their representation in the normal population. In the case of the arboretum, though, the key influencing factor may derive from the forestry dean's 1934 decision to utilize a professional landscape architect's naturalistic design.

The apparent result of this decision was the attraction of a major clientele group, not intentionally sought by the College of Forest Resources, who are socio-economically characteristic of the people in our society *who participate most in the political process*. For managers operating in the "political market place," such a result has important implications. The people who participate most in the political process, whom Easton calls "politically relevant," must have their demands satisfied at least some of the time if critical levels of support are to be maintained for an existing system.²² This statement must not be misunderstood, however. It does not imply that the university-affiliated foresters who administer the arboretum have to comply obsequiously with the nonprofessional whims and expectations of a politically powerful clientele. Other studies have found that professional leaders can assert leadership even when they are economically dependent on those whom they lead. For example, in a study of the Episcopal Church, Glock and Ringer found that the clergy did not merely endorse the social attitudes of their parishioners but could in fact remain "ahead" of them in receptivity to social change.²³

Foresters affiliated with the university are presumably committed not only by this affiliation but by professional standards to administering the arboretum for its prescribed purposes. They cannot openly court support from clientele groups whose demands lie outside the area of the university's scientific and educational goals. This has left them in a difficult political position, under pressure to meet public demands which their commitments may obligate them to leave to some other type of organization. Indeed, a recent reduction in the university's arboretum budget has forced the user/manager-goals/benefits issue into an open political controversy.

21. Burch, *supra* note 1, at 711.

22. D. Easton, *A Systems Approach to Political Life* (1965).

23. Glock & Ringer, *Church Policy and the Attitudes of Ministers and Parishioners on Social Issues*, 21 *Am. Sociological Rev.* 148 (1956).

IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER LAND MANAGERS

A cultural organization like the university probably cannot justify meeting the demands of politically relevant groups whose perceived needs lie outside the area defined by the university's cultural goals. However, in similar situations, active competition for the support of an elite clientele makes eminent political sense for socio-political organizations like the U.S. Forest Service.

This is true for all organizations interested in increasing their own prosperity and hence their power and effectiveness. If an organization, because of its image of the resource is unable to meet the demands of and generate support from a politically relevant segment of its clientele—if it cannot provide satisfaction for at least some of the demands of that group—frustrations and disappointments will accumulate.²⁴ The political support and influence of the clientele group may turn to a competing organization. As Thompson and McEwen have stated: "Competition for society's support is an important means of eliminating not only inefficient organizations but also those that seek to provide goods or services the environment [of the organization] is not willing to accept."²⁵

In spite of the traditional commitment of many public land agencies to timber production, it may be possible for them to devote more of their scenic mountain lands to satisfying the demands of the politically influential recreation groups. Economic and technical information indicate that much of our lumber, paneling, and paper needs can be met primarily from the most productive timber lands and from substitute pulp crops.²⁶ The timber economy and recreation demand also are favorable for such a shift in priorities, since forest industries are increasing their own holdings and since domestic consumption of timber has remained relatively constant since the turn of the century.²⁷ However, recreational use of the national forests increased more than 10 times in a recent 15-year period and, depending on economic conditions, may go up more than 45 times by the year 2000.²⁸

Social forces at work, such as increased leisure and the tremendous educational and occupational upgrading of our population, are associ-

24. Pinard, *Mass Society and Political Movements: A New Formulation*, 73 *Am. J. Sociology* 682 (1968).

25. Thompson & McEwen, *Organizational Goals and Environment: Goal Setting as an Interaction Process*, 23 *Am. Sociological Rev.* 25 (1958).

26. Gould, *The Changing Economics of the Forest Products Industries*, in *Proceedings of the First National Colloquium on the History of the Forest Product Industry* 60-62 (1967).

27. Waggener, *Some Economic Implications of Sustained Yield as a Forest Regulation Model* 6 (U. Wash., Institute of Forest Products, Contemporary Forest Paper No. 6, 1969).

28. Gould, *supra* note 6, at 9.

ated with increased wildland recreation use and suggest an explosion in demand.²⁹ Psychologically, an increase in the cultural taste for wildland recreation might well be expected.³⁰ As one's educational level and occupational level are raised, one's basic needs are more readily satisfied and one is more apt to develop aesthetic and knowledge needs. Perhaps this progress toward "self-actualization," as described by the psychologist Abraham Maslow, stimulates an increased demand for scenic resources—particularly those scenic resources which provide images of diversity, privacy, and challenge.³¹ Interestingly, Tocher and most recently Scott, have also suggested such a relationship between the Maslow need satisfaction ladder and the aesthetic appreciation of wilderness.³²

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has attempted to focus on the schism between managers' and users' images of public forest resources and the inherent political implications of this dichotomy. Some of the long history of the forester versus recreationist conflict may be explained by an understanding of these relationships.

Forest land-use conflicts are substantial and continuing. However, with more attention to social science findings, astute public forest administrators may learn both to provide wider public service and to enhance their organizations' public support. Population changes and the "one man, one vote" ruling³³ now indicate that the strongest sources of political support are in the cities. Yet federal forestry managers have been slow to widen their commitments beyond traditional ties with the weakening rural power base. Some managers continue to behave as if commercial users were the most numerous and politically relevant clientele group interested in the public forests, and to continue to act in disregard of public opinion. "We have just failed to *sell* forestry" is an expression often heard.

Managers may imagine that their plight is unique, but this is not the case. For example, when sociologists studied a voluntary association whose membership was dwindling after the situation that had spawned it had ceased to exist, they found the leaders of the organization wistfully hoping to find better ways to "communicate" their

29. Catton, *Motivations of Wilderness Users*, 7 Trends in Parks and Recreation 9 (1969).

30. Recent inflationary changes may be slowing these trends.

31. A. Maslow, *A Psychology of Being* 25-42 (1962).

32. Tocher, *The Relationship of Parks and Equivalent Reserves to Recreation Visitor Needs and Behavior*, 1971 (paper presented to the Seventh International Seminar on Administration of National Parks and Equivalent Reserves, U. Wash., Seattle, Washington); Scott, *Toward a Psychology of Wilderness Experience*, 14 Nat. Res. J. 231 (1974).

33. *Reynolds v. Sims*, 377 U.S. 533 (1964); *Baker v. Carr*, 369 U.S. 186 (1962).

presumably impeccable goals and thereby reactivate the sympathies of former members as well as preserve the loyalties of present members.³⁴ The leaders themselves were reluctant to accept the reality of change and tended to become more narrowly sectarian.³⁵

But change continues and the political pot continues to boil. Idaho has elected an avowed pro-Sawtooth National Park governor, and a national controversy over Forest Service logging practices continues. Some foresters, resisting the trends, question whether recreation groups are representative enough to merit managers meeting their demands. Yet the representativeness of these groups may not be all that is relevant. With many of their members in the traditional professions or on the faculties of the universities, these recreation and conservation groups probably function as reference groups to college youth, who are at their most susceptible age for a change in social outlook. Riley and Riley have pointed out that an individual's actions tend to be channeled by his reference groups and by the alignments of these groups within society.³⁶ Attitude change is most extensive among subjects who have changed reference groups, as have many college students coming from lower middle class and blue collar homes.³⁷ One wonders how many forestry or lumber industry groups have served as reference groups, projecting their image of the world to new members of the "politically relevant" segment of our society.

Public land managers seem to have concentrated their efforts on "selling" forestry to their rural constituency and on techniques of scientific management. Schiff suggests that they have failed to ask fundamental questions about their mission.³⁸ An assumption or value judgment that society's needs automatically will be met by scientific forest management with a timber-production emphasis seems to lead to a continually defensive political position. Perhaps by taking a more cooperative stance, by endeavoring to see the resource through the recreationist's eyes, and by involving him more in decisionmaking, forest managers will regain the recreationist's support.

34. Catton, *Unstated Goals as a Source of Stress in an Organization*, 5 *Pacific Sociological Rev.* 33 (1962).

35. Gusfield, *Social Structure and Moral Reform: A Study of the Women's Christian Temperance Union*, 61 *Am. J. Sociology* 230 (1955).

36. Riley & Riley, *Mass Communication*, in *Sociology Today* 561 (R. Merton, L. Broom & L. Cottrell eds. 1959).

37. Siegel & Siegel, *Reference Groups, Membership Groups and Attitude Change*, in *Attitudes* 194 (M. Jahoda & N. Warren eds. 1966).

38. Schiff, *Innovation and Administrative Decision Making: The Conservation of Land Resources*, 11 *Ad. Science Q.* 21 (1966).