American Resources; Their Management and Conservation. By J. Russell Whitaker and Edward A. Ackerman. Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York. 497 pages. c. 1951.

THIS BOOK DOES MORE than its title suggests. It seeks to provide current answers to two serious questions ever facing the country: What natural resources are at hand? How may we safeguard and develop them? This aspect of the book makes it a useful guide for citizens who wish an objective appraisal of these resources and an understanding of the measures needed to conserve them so that they may be used efficiently.

The authors do not present this as a "scare" book. They do not believe that deterioration of resources has brought the world or our country to the brink of a cataclysm. They seek to present a balanced, understandable analysis of the position of the United States at the midcentury, an analysis which recognizes problems but also grants hope for the future. In doing this, the authors have designed the book for use in classrooms, and by every citizen as well. It is so documented that the student, as well as the citizen who wishes to know the proof of the statements made and conclusions reached, may examine them for himself.

In dealing with the outlook for potential production the authors come to rather more hopeful conclusions than those in some other recent books on the subject but they point, on the other hand, to excessive faith in the ability of scientists to meet every need, no matter what shortages may occur from destruction of resources. It is recognized that scientists have worked wonders in solving natural limitations and opening new opportunities. But such success can make us too optimistic, for there is no substitute for natural resources as a whole, and there are limits to which one resource can be substituted for another.

In analysis of the effects of past exploitation of resources and in trying to find solutions, the authors show the difficulty of fixing clearly in the mind of every citizen the now limited opportunity for migration. Migration as a mass movement of large populations to cure economic and social ills is no longer possible, either to new lands or to far-away industrial centers, but its appeal as part of our folklore remains to be modified in the light of facts.

The subjects covered from the first chapter, Earth Bound Civilization, to the last, An American's Guide to Conservational Resource Management, go farther than most books in taking account of the social and economic and political setting of natural resource and conservation problems. Five major groups of resources are considered: (1) Cultivable lands; (2) grasslands and forest lands; (3) water resources, surface, and subsurface; (4) mineral resources; (5) fish and wildlife; and other recreational resources. This survey utilizes the findings of recognized specialists in these fields, but independently analyzes the interrelations of the different problems. A significant feature is the over-all concern with the total resource base at the level necessary to meet current and anticipated needs.

Prominence is given throughout to a recognition of the place for conservational resource management and to accompanying movements in the United States as elsewhere, that give promise for its achievement. These are resources inventories and analyses of resource traits and remedial programs on local, regional, and national levels. But they are stated to be tasks of such magnitude and complexity that completion and assessment of the results are likely to require decades.

The discussions of cultivable lands, grasslands, and forests, and water resources, are competent and important studies. They have great factual and policy significance today in the evaluation of feasible production potentials, as, How much land do we need in cultivation and in pasture, and how best to maintain its productivity economically? The authors believe that a main agricultural problem in this country in the next few years will be wise use and improvement of land that can be safely cultivated in the present arable area, rather than reclamations of undeveloped lands.

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