

*Theodore Roosevelt:  
The Making of a National Policy  
Of Conservation*

Scott Jones  
American Presidential History  
Dr. Schnell

Theodore Roosevelt – speak softly and carry a big stick, trust buster, rough rider and big game hunting President of the United States of America. These are the most common characteristics many people associate with the twenty-sixth President. However, very seldom do most people remember Roosevelt the naturalist, or the highly respected authority on animal and bird life who often interrupted White House meetings to rush to the window to identify a bird singing on the lawn.<sup>1</sup> Roosevelt was one of a few men of his time who foresaw the possible destruction of the resources of the United States and its overall effect on the country.

During his presidency Roosevelt created five National Parks, four Big Game Refuges, fifty-one National Bird Reservations and the National Forest Service.<sup>2</sup> Roosevelt recognized America's vast natural resources as the source of the country's economic and political strength throughout the world, but he knew of the limits of those resources. In a speech to the "Congress of Governors" on the conservation of natural resources in May, 1908, Roosevelt stated, "Our position in the world has been attained by the extent and thoroughness of the control we have achieved over nature; but we are more, and not less, dependent upon what she furnishes than at any previous time of history since the days of primitive man."<sup>3</sup>

Roosevelt's goals of conservation, however, were accomplished against the wishes of many Congressmen and wealthy business owners. Also, Roosevelt started his campaign of conservation at a time when the average American thought little about such problems and cared even less.<sup>4</sup> It was only through his longtime passion for the

environment, his deep moral beliefs and his willingness to use the full authority of the Presidency that Roosevelt was able to implement his conservation program.

Theodore Roosevelt was the son, and second child, of Theodore Roosevelt, Sr., and Martha Bulloch Roosevelt. He was born on October 27, 1858. There were four children in all: Anna, the oldest, and, after Theodore, Elliot and Corinne. The family lived in one of the wealthiest parts of New York City. Theodore's father was, by profession, a glass merchant. The family was an extremely close one. Despite the demands of his job, Theodore, Sr. never neglected his family. He always found time to romp with his children, to comfort them when they were ill and to encourage their worthwhile interests.<sup>5</sup> In his autobiography, Theodore, Jr. stated, "My father was the best man I knew. He combined strength and courage with gentleness, tenderness and great unselfishness. He would not tolerate in us children selfishness or cruelty, idleness, cowardice or untruthfulness...With great love and patience, and the most understanding sympathy and consideration, he combined insistence on discipline."<sup>6</sup> These virtues of his father would later have a strong impact on the development of young Theodore's character.

Young Roosevelt, however, could not participate in many of the activities most young boys participate. He was born with bronchial asthma, which limited his endurance in many physical activities. Because of this, his father encouraged young Theodore to strengthen his mind.<sup>7</sup> Roosevelt was drawn to reading about the wilderness and its inhabitants. Why he was drawn to nature is unclear, but by the age of ten he had read enough about nature to dislike the Swiss Family Robinson. In his autobiography,

he wrote, "I disliked the "Swiss Family Robinson" because of the wholly impossible collection of animals met by that worthy family as they ambled inland from the wreck."<sup>8</sup>

Roosevelt began collecting animals so he could observe their characteristics and behaviors. This collection became large enough that he, with the help of his father, created the Roosevelt Museum of Natural History.<sup>9</sup> Roosevelt continued his collecting and observing throughout his childhood and disliked any event which would keep him away from nature. On many occasions Roosevelt wrote about his dislike for his family trips to Europe and being confined in the city of New York.<sup>10</sup> Upon entering Harvard in the fall of 1876, Theodore was intent on becoming a natural scientist. However, his ideas of natural science were different than those of the natural science department at Harvard. He wrote, "When I entered college, I was devoted to out-of-doors natural history, and my ambition was to be a scientific man of the Audubon, or Wilson, or Baird, or Coues type...[ with the professors at Harvard] the tendency was to treat as not serious, but as unscientific, any kind of work that was not carried out in the laboratory. My taste was specialized in a totally different direction...Accordingly, I abandoned all thought of becoming a scientist."<sup>11</sup> After this decision, Roosevelt was drawn to political economy at Harvard because of an outstanding professor, J. Lawrence Laughlin.<sup>12</sup> Because of this, Roosevelt would decide to make politics his career instead of science.

Despite the change in career goals, Roosevelt still was drawn to the outdoors. During the summer recess of 1877, Roosevelt and his friend Hal Minot explored the Adirondack Mountains. They combined to write and publish a four page leaflet, "The Summer Birds of the Adirondacks in Franklin County, N.Y." This was Roosevelt's first

known contribution to zoological literature.<sup>13</sup> In fact, the work was well received by the natural scientists of the time. C. Hart Merriam gave the work a favorable review in the April 1878 number of the Bulletin of the Nuttall Ornithological Club.<sup>14</sup>

After starting his political career after being elected to New York State Assembly in 1881, Roosevelt continued his desire to be outdoors. The following year, Roosevelt made the first of what would be several trips to the Dakotas and Rocky Mountain states.<sup>15</sup> During these visits Roosevelt began to witness, firsthand, what could happen to society if its resources were depleted. Although he thought of the elimination of the Indian was the right thing to do at the time, Roosevelt was able to see how the Indian way of life was destroyed simply by the elimination of the buffalo.<sup>16</sup>

By the time Roosevelt became President in 1901, he had published six books on wildlife and hunting. Among these is his three volume series published between 1886 and 1893 on hunting and ranch life. He had become in the words of C. Hart Marriam as “the first and last President of the United States to have a biological sense of proportions—to know the importance of everything from the forests to the birds, from hybridization to plant introduction.”<sup>17</sup>

While Roosevelt taught himself to become one of the leading experts on natural science, the development of Roosevelt’s character was also a big part of his eventual implementation of a national conservation program. This strong sense of character, and morality, was given to Roosevelt by his father. As was stated earlier, his father instilled in Theodore the ideas of unselfishness, generosity and discipline. Along with these traits, Roosevelt’s father also gave Roosevelt a sense of public responsibility.

Roosevelt, Sr. spent a lot of time working to correct many of the social problems in New York City, because Roosevelt, Sr. believed it was the responsibility of the wealthy to give back to the community.<sup>18</sup> This type of work would later develop in Theodore, who credited his father for making him aware his responsibility to the community, a belief that no one man is more important than the larger community and if that if the person in not acting in the public's interest, it is the responsibility of government to intervene.<sup>19</sup>

Roosevelt's father also showed Roosevelt a strong work ethic. He wrote about his father, "My father worked very hard at his business, for he died when he was forty-six, too early to have retired. He was interested in every reform movement, and he did an immense amount of practical charitable work himself."<sup>20</sup> His father believed that young Theodore would have to work to make his own place in the world. Roosevelt wrote, "My father had from the earliest days instilled in me the knowledge that I was to work and to make my own way in the world."<sup>21</sup> This type of work ethic and determination to succeed can be illustrated in two episodes of Roosevelt's life.

The first example would be Roosevelt's attempt to overcome his childhood illnesses through hard work. Probably because his father's time constraints and inability to keep comforting young Theodore when he was ill, Roosevelt, Sr. told him "...you have the mind, but you have not the mind, and without the help of the body the mind can not go as far it should. You must make your body."<sup>22</sup> With this command in the fall of 1870, Theodore began working out in the gym arranged for him by his parents in the family home. He and Ellie hammered away at punching bags, swung barbells and

spent hours straining at the horizontal bars.<sup>23</sup> However, progress was slow for him. Two years later, Roosevelt recalled in his autobiography of his embarrassment when a couple of boys about his own age who, to pass the time during a ride in a stagecoach, decided to make life miserable for him. When he tried to fight back, he found either one could handle him easily.<sup>24</sup> After this incident, Roosevelt decided to step up his physical workouts, and, with the permission of his father, begin to learn boxing.<sup>25</sup> Roosevelt worked hard enough to become “competitive at Harvard in boxing and wrestling.”<sup>26</sup> With this accomplishment, Roosevelt transformed himself with daily workouts from a sickly child who could barely keep up on family walks, to a man who, while not an athletic champion, could compete with athletes his own age.

Another aspect of Roosevelt’s early life which showed his self-determination to make his own way in life was his decision to attend Harvard. When it became apparent young Roosevelt would go to college, his parents found no reason to object when Roosevelt decided Harvard would be the college he would attend.<sup>27</sup> A problem existed, however, because of his illnesses, Roosevelt had no formal education. While he had acquired a vast knowledge history, zoology and geography, the Harvard entrance exam also required a knowledge in Latin, Greek and mathematics, subjects Roosevelt was woefully behind others his age.<sup>28</sup> The family hired several tutors to help Roosevelt in his studies, but it was Roosevelt’s determination which made the difference. He studied six to eight hours a day, seven days a week. His only breaks would be once a year for about ten days to go camping. This was a truly grueling schedule, especially considering he also continued his daily workout schedule.<sup>29</sup> He kept this schedule up

until the day before the entrance examination. One of his tutors, Arthur Cutler, was quite impressed with Roosevelt. He emphasized “the alert, vigorous character of young Roosevelt’s mind...He never seemed to know what idleness was...Every leisure moment would find the latest novel, some English classic or some abstruse book on natural history in his hands.”<sup>30</sup> It was with this dedication Roosevelt went on to graduate from Harvard 21<sup>st</sup> out of 171 in his senior class. Combine this determination with the strict moral code instilled in him by his father, a Roosevelt who will attempt to do what he believes is the right thing to do, whatever the cost, begins to appear.

The best example of the pre-President Roosevelt attempting to do the right thing despite its possible political consequences occurs during his term as Governor of New York State. It was during his term as governor Roosevelt came into direct opposition of the republican machine in the New York State Assembly ran by United States Senator Thomas Platt. Roosevelt stated, “The control by Mr. Platt and his lieutenants over the organization was well-nigh complete...He had built up an excellent system of organization, and the necessary funds came from the corporations as was needed.”<sup>31</sup> Roosevelt viewed the machinery as an evil to the common good of the people of New York. He wrote, “...the ordinary citizens had no control over the political machinery except in a very few districts...Wealthy men contributed big sums to the various bosses with expectation of gaining concrete and personal advantages (in which the bosses shared) at the expense of the general public.”<sup>32</sup> It was with this in mind, Roosevelt went head-to-head with Platt over the reappointment of Lou Payn in 1899.

Roosevelt had decided to take a stand against machine politics by refusing to reappoint ex-lobbyist and spoilsman Payn, an influential party lieutenant, as superintendent of insurance. Platt opposed this action, as did the contributors to the machine, because of the uncertainty of who Roosevelt would choose. Platt, however, knew Roosevelt would be unable to appoint anyone to the office without Senate approval, which Platt controlled. To complicate matters, the New York State Constitution required Roosevelt to gain Senate approval to remove anyone from an office. Roosevelt refused to give into Platt and got a break when news broke that Payn had borrowed \$434,000 without sufficient collateral from a company closely associated to the Platt machine. With this information at his disposal, Roosevelt offered a compromise allowing Roosevelt to appoint an organizational Republican who would be moral and upright in his dealings with the insurance companies.<sup>33</sup>

Roosevelt believed he had made his first big stand against corrupt politics and the wealthy businessmen bankrolling it. He wrote, "I won by combining inflexible determination with extreme good nature, and resolutely refusing the advice...to quarrel with the machine, in which case I should have had about six votes out fifty in the Senate."<sup>34</sup> The New York Times concluded, "To have compelled the machine to support the best man proposed because it was powerless to aid any poorer candidate is a triumph for the Governor and the cause of clean politics."<sup>35</sup>

The strict moral code of responsibility and the strong determination to do what he believed to be right came together when he became President of the United States on September 14, 1901 after President William McKinley died from an assassins bullet.

These characteristics are important because without them Roosevelt would not have been able to withstand the political pressures of the issues that faced him and he would not have been willing to use whatever powers of the Presidency he needed to accomplish his goals. This was especially true in the attempt to implement a national conservation program. If he would not have been willing to use the full powers of the Presidency, Roosevelt would not have been able to change the way America viewed its national resources.

Immediately into his administration Roosevelt announced his plans on conservation and its importance to America. In his first annual message to Congress on December 3, 1901, Roosevelt stated, "It is no limitation upon property rights or freedom of contract to require that when men receive from Government the privilege of doing business under corporate form, which frees them from individual responsibility, and enables them to call into their enterprises the capital of the public, they shall do so upon absolutely truthful representations as to the value of the property in which the capital is to be invested. Corporations engaged in interstate commerce should be regulated if they are found to exercise a license working to the public injury...The wise administration of the forest reserves will not be less helpful to the interests which depend on water than to those which depend on wood and grass. The water supply itself depends upon the forests. The western half of the United States would sustain a population greater than that of our whole country today if the waters that now run to waste were saved...The Government should construct and maintain these reserves as it does other public

works...These reserves should be set apart forever, for the use and benefit of our people and sacrificed to the shortsighted greed of a few.”<sup>36</sup>

Roosevelt, however, met with opposition from businessmen who had financial interests in the lands of the West. For more than twenty years these businessmen were used to being able to do whatever they wanted with the land they owned. These men had a tremendous amount of influence over the Congress, where Roosevelt had many opponents.<sup>37</sup> Chief among these opponents was the dominant Republican leader Mark Hanna. Hanna referred to Roosevelt as “that damned cowboy,” and after learning of Roosevelt’s nomination for vice-president in 1900, Hanna wrote to his friend McKinley, “your *duty* to the country is to live for four years from next March.”<sup>38</sup> With such opposition facing him, Roosevelt turned to the people for support. Under the coordination of Gifford Pinchot, chief of the Forest Service, the Roosevelt administration set out to educate the public on conservation issues through the media.<sup>39</sup> Immediately, Roosevelt set out to implement the first phase of his conservation program; reclamation. Using the media almost daily with Roosevelt dazzling reporters in the White House with his personality and Pinchot issuing press releases to over 2,000 newspapers, Congress was forced to act upon reclamation.<sup>40</sup> A bill sponsored by Francis Newlands passed both houses and was signed by Roosevelt in the fall of 1902. Roosevelt immediately implemented the program and by 1904 sixteen land reclamation projects were underway in the West.<sup>41</sup>

Roosevelt also faced problems in setting aside forest reserves. In 1891, Congress had passed the Forest Reserve Act giving the President the authority to create

forest reserves. However, when the President created these reserves, the land then fell under the authority of a Division in the General Land Office. This office was largely under the control of Congress and the clerks working in the office who were “wholly without knowledge of forestry, few if any of whom had ever seen a foot of the timberlands for which they were responsible.”<sup>42</sup> Roosevelt, in that first message to Congress had asked for the transfer of these lands to the Department of Agriculture’s Bureau of Forestry, which was led by Pinchot and many other leading conservation experts. Congress, however, did not act upon the President’s wishes. Without any support in Congress, Roosevelt and Pinchot again turned to the media.

Pinchot, with Roosevelt’s approval, used progressive newspapers as outlets for stories on conservation and the reasons for the need to transfer the forests to his agency. He also used the Government Printing Office to create newsletters and pamphlets to publicize his now named U.S. Forest Service. Using Roosevelt’s popularity with the people, Pinchot’s news releases often featured articles from Roosevelt supporting the cause of the transfer of the forests.<sup>43</sup>

The efforts, however, failed because of the pressure the land developers in the West were putting on Congress to block the President’s efforts. In the fall of 1903, Roosevelt wrote Pinchot that he could not force Congress to pass the legislation without the support of the West.<sup>44</sup> Instead of giving up the fight, Roosevelt and Pinchot stepped up the fight by announcing the creation of a presidential commission to study federal land laws. Both the President and his advisor were not interested if the Public Land Commission could force enough pressure on Congress to transfer the lands, its purpose

was to keep the issue of conservation in the public spotlight by holding highly publicized meetings and studies in Oregon, California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado and Wyoming.<sup>45</sup>

Another example of Roosevelt's attempt to persuade Congress to transfer the land was the American Forest Congress of 1905. Pinchot arranged the conference in Washington D.C. in January, 1905, just prior to Congress opening debates. Pinchot's agency press bureau released many advanced news stories to newspapers around the country. Adding to the publicity of the event, Roosevelt agreed to be honorary president and made a speech, which drew the White House press corps to the event. Both Pinchot and Roosevelt were pleased with the amount of coverage and pressure the event put on Congress to approve the transfer of land.<sup>46</sup>

Equally important to the coverage of the Forestry Congress was Roosevelt's announcement the week before. During a White House briefing, Roosevelt announced two prominent opponents of the transfer of lands, Senator John Mitchell and Congressman Binget Hermann, had been charged with fraud in connection with land under the management of the government. The eventual effect of this announcement was to discredit the opposition to the transfer of land.<sup>47</sup> With this new information and the popularity of the Forestry Congress, when Congress opened session in 1905, one of the first bills passed was the transfer of government land to jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service.<sup>48</sup>

Now with the Forest Service's jurisdiction over government land, Roosevelt and Pinchot added more than 43,000,000 acres by 1907 to the government reserves under

the Forest Reserve Act of 1891.<sup>49</sup> Also, Roosevelt and Pinchot set about determining the best uses for the land that had been set aside. Roosevelt now felt comfortable allowing a nature expert, such as Pinchot, to examine the land.<sup>50</sup> Soon after, Roosevelt made a recommendation to Congress to allow settlement on lands deemed appropriate for agricultural use.<sup>51</sup> Congress passed the measure on June 11, 1906 and Roosevelt had successfully managed to institute governmental study and control over the nations resources.

As would be expected, this was not popular among the developers in the West. With the help of the pro-development Congress, these developers began attacking Roosevelt's actions as "dictatorial."<sup>52</sup> In fact, by 1907 Senator Charles Fulton had received enough support to add a rider to the Department of Agriculture appropriation bill. The rider would mandate no new forest reserves could be created in six western states without the approval of Congress.<sup>53</sup> Roosevelt was faced with a problem. He could not veto the bill and risk losing the funding of his Department of Agriculture, but he also could not sign the bill and lose his authority to proclaim new reserves to be conserved. With the same dogged determination as he approached other problems, Roosevelt let the bill remain on his desk while he, under executive order, set aside another 17,000,000 acres for the Forestry Service to maintain.<sup>54</sup> Four days later, Roosevelt signed the bill. Of course, there was nothing Congress could do about the President's action, because any legislation freeing the land would meet a certain veto. Adding to the Congressional setback, Pinchot, lacking any other means to set aside land,

withdrew 2500 power sites from the public domain by designating them U.S Forest Ranger Stations.<sup>55</sup>

However, because of the extensive press network implemented by Pinchot, Roosevelt escaped the incident without losing support of the public. Pinchot continued to issue releases about the need for conservation. However, Congress, again, started to block Roosevelt's efforts. By early 1907, Congress was pressuring Roosevelt with legislation to release lands to power companies. However, because of the studies done by the Forest Service, Roosevelt denied these requests with vetoes. The studies stated the land in question was not best suited for power companies. Without enough votes to overturn the vetoes, Congress was helpless to do anything. Roosevelt wrote, "The opposition could only muster a few negative quotes."<sup>56</sup>

To counter the negative comments of their opponents, Roosevelt and Pinchot turned to the media. Roosevelt announced the creation of several new commissions to study conservation in all areas of the country, therefore allowing his message of conservation to reach all parts of the country. This enabled them to keep their conservation ideas popular with the public, if not popular with the Congress.<sup>57</sup>

Roosevelt also turned the media to explain his position. He would later write in his autobiography, "I was not against development. My opponents never mentioned the railroads and corporations, which applied for and were given rights in the National Forests. For this reason, I was forced to tell the people myself."<sup>58</sup>

Roosevelt was grateful for this avenue, which had been created by Pinchot. He wrote, "Without the publicity, the Forest Service could not have survived the attacks

made upon it by the representatives of the great special interests in Congress, nor could forestry in America have made the rapid progress it has.”<sup>59</sup>

The best example of this type of publicity, and the positive effects it had on the conservation movement, happened in the October, 1907. After Roosevelt had created the Inland Waterways Commission to encourage multi-state planning along the Mississippi River, Pinchot organized a trip down the river for the President to publicize the administrations efforts to act in the best interests of the people.<sup>60</sup>

The trip was an enormous success. With Pinchot’s efforts, the trip made the front page in St. Louis three days in a row, and the Memphis Commercial Appeal ran a headline declaring the trip the “greatest gathering in the history of the South.” Newspapers and magazine on both the East and West coasts reported extensively about the trip.<sup>61</sup>

To keep conservation a vital national debate, Roosevelt announced on the trip that plans were in the work for a White House Governors Conference on Conservation to be held in May, 1908. Pinchot immediately set out to make this conference a success. Pouring over every detail from invitations to attend to daily press briefings on the importance of the conservation meeting, Pinchot went above and beyond his previous media efforts.<sup>62</sup> Pinchot invited all governors, Congressmen, cabinet members, Supreme Court Justices, leading businessmen, and many prominent scientists.<sup>63</sup> This type of gathering would automatically draw political reporters, but Pinchot also invited 40 newspaper and press associations reporters, and 21 representatives of the periodical press.<sup>64</sup>

The conference was a tremendous success for the President's crusade for national conservation. The 44 state governors in attendance all signed a declaration in support of conservation, 41 state conservation commissions were created, scientific organizations appointed several conservation committees with people other than scientists, and several commissions including the National Conservation Commission and National Country Life Commission were created.<sup>65</sup> With all of the significant people at the event and all of the preparations done by Pinchot, the conference received front-page news all across the United States. Editorials and articles friendly to the conservation movement became the norm. The only opposition came from a handful of trade magazines or a bitter political commentator.<sup>66</sup>

However, Congress refused to give monetary support for some of the new commissions. Because of the showdown between Roosevelt and Congress over the appropriation bill for the Department of Agriculture, Congress fought back by not funding the National Country Life Commission and ending the funds given to the Inland Waterways Commission.<sup>67</sup> Despite this setback, Roosevelt and Pinchot were pleased with their efforts on conservation by the end of Roosevelt's administration. Pinchot wrote, "Conservation has become the commonplace of the time."<sup>68</sup>

Most critics of Roosevelt did not judge him on his conservation policies. Most of the critic of Roosevelt came in the opinion of his possible abuses of the power of the Presidency. Roosevelt's successor, William Howard Taft, stated, "My judgment is that the view of ...Mr. Roosevelt, ascribing in undefined residuum of power to the President

is an unsafe doctrine, and that it might lead under emergencies to results of an arbitrary character, doing irremediable injustice to private right.”<sup>69</sup>

In the area of conservation, Roosevelt received numerous praises during the rest of his life and after he had passed away in 1919. In 1911, Robert LaFollette, U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, predicted, “When the historians of the future shall speak of Theodore Roosevelt, he is likely to say that he did many notable things, but that his greatest work was inspiring and actually beginning a world movement for staying territorial waste and saving for the human race the things on which a peaceful, progressive and happy life can be founded.”<sup>70</sup>

Several historians have also placed Roosevelt’s conservation program as one of his most important contributions to the nation. David Muzzey in 1937 called the program Roosevelt’s “greatest service to the nation.”<sup>71</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager wrote in 1952, “Unquestionably the most important achievement of the [Theodore] Roosevelt administration was in the conservation of the natural resources of the nation.”<sup>72</sup>

The conservationists of the nation, not surprisingly, also praised Roosevelt’s programs. Charles Van Hise wrote, “these policies will place him not only as one of the greatest statesmen of this nation but one of the greatest statesmen of any nation of any time.”<sup>73</sup> Roosevelt’s close advisor Pinchot wrote, “The greatest work that Theodore Roosevelt did for the United States, the great fact which will give his influence vitality and power long after we shall all have gone to our reward, is that he changed the attitude of the American people toward conserving the natural resources.”<sup>74</sup>

Despite the praise he received for the conservation program, Roosevelt attempted to make sure he did not receive all the praise. In his autobiography, he wrote, “Men like Gifford Pinchot, Frederick Newell, John Wesley Powell and the countless number of federal employees deserve most of the credit. I saw them work and I can speak with the fullest knowledge of what they did. They took the policy of conservation when it was still a nebulous and they applied it and made it work. They actually did the job that I and others talked about.”<sup>75</sup>

Roosevelt went on with his praise of Pinchot in letter he wrote to Pinchot just before leaving office. Roosevelt wrote, “As long as I live I shall feel regard for you a mixture of respect and admiration and of affectionate regard. I am a better man for having known you...and I cannot think of a man in the country whose loss would be a real misfortune to the nation more than yours would be. I owe to you a particular debt of obligation for a very large part of the achievements of this administration.”<sup>76</sup>

Despite the humility of Roosevelt and his gratitude to the people around him, it was his conservation program because he was the President. Many other President’s have had capable men doing work for them, but because of various reasons, these President’s are unable to accomplish anything. Every decision was Roosevelt’s to make. He could have easily said no to any of Pinchot’s programs or ideas. However, because of his background in nature and his strong determination to do what he feels is the moral thing to do, Roosevelt used all of the powers of the Presidency available to him.

Taft, and probably others, were critical of the way Roosevelt went about doing things, not only in conservation, but in his other decisions as President, which include the building of the Panama Canal and the administration of the colony of the Philippines. Part of this comes from the fact the Presidency had been in decline and did not have a strong personality since Abraham Lincoln. Roosevelt's character was different. Very few men at the time had been able to overcome serious childhood illness to lead a regiment in war. Very few politicians of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were willing to stand up to the businessmen and political machine throughout the country. Roosevelt combined these characteristics to re-establish the power of the President. Roosevelt defied Congress in the Department of Agriculture appropriation bill. Roosevelt established a national conservation program, despite never having a helpful Congress.<sup>77</sup>

This was, and is, a remarkable achievement. Many Presidents, most notably, Andrew Johnson, have had problems with an opposing Congress and have been unable to implement programs and often had to spend time fighting political allegations. This can be used as a reason for some of the troubles of the current President, Bill Clinton. These Presidents have historically been graded very low. An allied Congress, of course, allows the President to use more power, but Roosevelt did not have such circumstances. However, because of his character and willingness to fight for a cause he viewed to be worthy, Roosevelt was able to overcome what had been a downfall for many Presidents.

While Taft was President, could he have broken up more trusts than Roosevelt, or set aside three times more forest reserves than Roosevelt, if it had not been for

Roosevelt preceding him and establishing national support for the causes of the progressive movement?

It was this establishment of national support, especially in the area of conservation, that is Roosevelt's greatest legacy to the Presidency of the twentieth century. Roosevelt, more than any President prior to him, used the media to wage a public relations campaign for conservation.<sup>78</sup> Roosevelt set the precedent for the Presidents who followed him. Since Roosevelt, many President's have used Roosevelt's example of using the media to gain public support. These would include Woodrow Wilson with World War I, Franklin Roosevelt with the New Deal and World War II, Harry Truman with the Korean War, Dwight D. Eisenhower with Cuba, John Kennedy with Cuba and civil rights, Lyndon Johnson with Vietnam, Richard Nixon with Vietnam and Watergate, Ronald Reagan with conservatism and Soviet Union and George Bush with Iraq. These are just a handful of Presidential policies that the media were used to help the President win support. It is Roosevelt's handling of the press in a cause he was willing to fight for that established this characteristic of the modern President.<sup>79</sup>

Roosevelt, deeply influenced by his father and the circumstances of his life, was able to draw upon an inner strength that few Presidents have been willing to use. This can be seen in Roosevelt's fight for a national conservation program. Because of this, you do not have to praise Roosevelt, but he deserves the admiration for doing what he thought was the right thing to do.

## Notes

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Cutright, Paul Russell. Theodore Roosevelt: The Making of a Conservationist. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985: 215.
- <sup>2</sup> Chessman, G. Wallace. Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of Power. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969. 162-3
- <sup>3</sup> Johnson, Willis Fletcher, ed. Addresses and Papers of Theodore Roosevelt. New York: The Unit Publishing Co., 1909. 447.
- <sup>4</sup> Mowry, George E. The Era of Theodore Roosevelt and the Birth of Modern America: 1900-1912. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958. 213-4.
- <sup>5</sup> Cutright, 3.
- <sup>6</sup> Roosevelt, Theodore. An Autobiography. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913. 7.
- <sup>7</sup> Cutright, 17.
- <sup>8</sup> Roosevelt, 18.
- <sup>9</sup> Cutright, 30.
- <sup>10</sup> Cutright, 63.
- <sup>11</sup> Roosevelt, 25-7.
- <sup>12</sup> Cutright, 118.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., 102.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., 102.
- <sup>15</sup> McCullough, David. Mornings on Horseback. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981. 249.
- <sup>16</sup> Cutright, 152.
- <sup>17</sup> Marvinney, Sandy. "Theodore Roosevelt, Conservationist." Conservationist, June, 1996. 15.
- <sup>18</sup> McCullough, 30.
- <sup>19</sup> Roosevelt, 162-3.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., 9.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., 25.
- <sup>22</sup> McCullough, 112.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., 112.
- <sup>24</sup> Roosevelt, 29-30.
- <sup>25</sup> McCullough, 113.
- <sup>26</sup> Roosevelt, 31.
- <sup>27</sup> Cutright, 73.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid. 73.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., 73.
- <sup>30</sup> Morris, Edmund. The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1980. 75.
- <sup>31</sup> Roosevelt, 286-7.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., 285-6.
- <sup>33</sup> Entire story from: Chessman, 68-71.
- <sup>34</sup> Roosevelt, 303.
- <sup>35</sup> Chessman, 70.
- <sup>36</sup> Johnson, 7-30.
- <sup>37</sup> Patterson, James T. America in the Twentieth Century. San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovonovich, 1989. 77.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., 77.
- <sup>39</sup> Ponder, Stephan. "Publicity in the Interest of the People: Theodore Roosevelt's Conservation Crusade." Presidential Studies Quarterly, Summer 1990. 548.
- <sup>40</sup> Cutright, 213.
- <sup>41</sup> Cutright, 214.
- <sup>42</sup> Roosevelt, 414.
- <sup>43</sup> Ponder, 550.

- 
- <sup>44</sup> Roosevelt, 416.  
<sup>45</sup> Ponders, 551.  
<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 551-2.  
<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 552.  
<sup>48</sup> Cutright, 216.  
<sup>49</sup> Marvinney, 19.  
<sup>50</sup> Cutright, 217.  
<sup>51</sup> Roosevelt, 416.  
<sup>52</sup> Mowry, 215.  
<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 215.  
<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 215.  
<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 215-6  
<sup>56</sup> Roosevelt, 421.  
<sup>57</sup> Ponders, 552.  
<sup>58</sup> Roosevelt, 421.  
<sup>59</sup> Roosevelt, 425.  
<sup>60</sup> Ponders, 552.  
<sup>61</sup> Ponders, 552-3.  
<sup>62</sup> Ponders, 553.  
<sup>63</sup> Cutright, 228.  
<sup>64</sup> Ponders, 552-3.  
<sup>65</sup> Cutright, 229.  
<sup>66</sup> Ponders, 553.  
<sup>67</sup> Mowry, 216.  
<sup>68</sup> Ponders, 553.  
<sup>69</sup> DeGregorio, William A. The Complete Book of U.S. Presidents. New York: Barricade Books Inc., 1991. 389.  
<sup>70</sup> Cutright 232.  
<sup>71</sup> Cutright, 232.  
<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 232.  
<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 233.  
<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 233  
<sup>75</sup> Roosevelt, 433.  
<sup>76</sup> Johnson, 463.  
<sup>77</sup> Patterson, 80-81.  
<sup>78</sup> Ponders, 556.  
<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 556