

The Changing World

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EMPTY SHELVES IN THE EARTH'S STOREHOUSE

THE CRUST of the earth may be thought of as a vast storehouse of those resources with which man feeds, clothes, and shelters himself. Our ancestors conceived of mother earth as storing inexhaustible treasures in her storehouse and few could imagine using these treasures so wantonly that the shelves would ever be emptied.

But through sad experiences we have learned that soils do erode and wear out unless properly tilled and fertilized, that cutting our timber and failing to reforest not only exhausts our lumber and paper supply, but can change the balance of nature so drastically that eventually the land becomes barren waste. We are measuring the probable reserves of oil and metals under ground, and know that much of the treasure is already above ground.

And now we are in World War II. There is no time to worry about the over-all reserves when we face a crisis in which we must give our all to preserve life itself. Within these two war years we have drawn enormous quantities of resources from our storehouse. And the use of these resources in battle is final destruction; very little of the metal, little of the timber, and none of the oil will ever be salvaged. No one can predict how much further we must draw on our diminishing natural resources before victory is finally ours.

Already our oil geologists warn us

that our known oil reserves are not sufficient to win again if we were forced to fight another war. The oil scarcity may even deter the arrival of the air age in a world at peace. Our entire economy may suffer because of actual shortages.

What part should the schools play in this pending shortage? *First*, teachers must help children and adults understand the necessity of frugal use of all goods and services. The habit of thrift and care in general will be an important habit for human survival. *Second*, teachers must aid learners to see that replaceable raw resources must be husbanded—the soil properly cultivated and rebuilt, the forests cut on a sustained-yield basis, the game in field and stream protected for regeneration, water resources preserved for future users.

Third, teachers must assist in demonstrating that government action is often necessary to prevent uninformed groups from using up too rapidly the scarcer of the natural resources. *Fourth*, the teachers must aid pupils to establish habits of salvage, or of returning to scrap piles the rubber, paper, and metals which have served their usefulness.

And, *finally*, teachers must develop in children and youth that adventurous spirit of the research worker who is constantly seeking ways of processing new and untapped resources into useful goods and services.

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