



John Ise (1885-1969) educated a generation of college students with his economics textbook and his classes at the University of Kansas where he taught for nearly 39 years. In addition to his teaching and research he was a popular speaker, social critic, conservationist, and prophet of the energy crisis.

# JOHN ISE, 1885-1969, ECONOMIST, CONSERVATIONIST, PROPHET OF THE ENERGY CRISIS

RICHARD B. SHERIDAN

Thirty-nine years ago the mighty Ise age came grinding down upon Kansas; ponderous; irresistible; moving all before it; changing the intellectual landscape. Now the Ise age is receding into the academic memory of K.U.; but students will long remember, and take increased courage and inspiration from the legend and cultural heritage left by one of the greatest natural phenomena ever to strike the high prairies.—Editor, *University of Kansas Alumni Magazine*, March, 1955<sup>1</sup>

## I

**D**URING his long and productive life, John Ise was, among other things, a musician, economist, law student, school teacher, university professor, historian, humorist, author, popular speaker, social critic, conservationist, and prophet of the energy crisis. He was an educator, philosopher, and critic of contemporary society. He was a native Kansan with deep roots in the family, community, and farm life of his boyhood which he sought to preserve and record in books of literary and scholarly merit. His character and personality reflected the somewhat contradictory but at the same time mutually supportive characters of his mother and father. In varying degrees these characteristics included industry, endurance, courage, perseverance, generosity, frugality, pessimism, optimism, aspiration to material success, hatred of waste, love of music and literature, faith in education, and family affection, loyalty, and solidarity. In his mature years John Ise impressed people with his apparently contradictory attitudes. He was variously known as a cheerful pessimist, a gloomy philosopher, a prairie curmudgeon, a radical conservative in the sense of seeking to preserve the best in our human and environmental heritage. He was an eloquent and homespun noncon-

formist, a pungent commentator, an intellectual gadfly with a self-imposed mission to shock his students and the wider public from their intellectual lethargy. He purposely cultivated a mixed image; he was an expert in the use of the Socratic method of teaching; he wanted people to think—to think hard—about social and economic issues, to drop their shields of self-righteousness enough to discover why they acted as they did. Many found him an extremely witty man whose tongue-in-cheek humor pricked the pretentiousness and sham of much of the popular culture. He was frequently attacked for his outrageous and controversial views on politics and economics. Though much in public view, John Ise at the same time mapped out an ambitious course of research in the economics of natural resource exploitation and conservation which culminated in the publication of scholarly books and articles. Moreover, he educated a generation of American college students of introductory economics with his textbook which became a best seller.

John Ise was born June 5, 1885, on a farm two and one-half miles from the north-central Kansas town of Downs in Osborne county, the son of Henry Christian and Rosa Haag Ise. His father, who had come to the United States from Wurttemberg, Germany, had his name truncated from Eisenmenger to Ise by an officer he served under in the Civil War. Rosa or "Rosie" Haag Ise was born on a farm near Racine, Wis., the daughter of John Christopher Haag and Rosena Christina Freihofer Haag, who had both emigrated from Germany. The Haag family later migrated from Wisconsin to Kansas and settled on a farm near Holton. Here Henry and Rosie were married in 1871. Henry had previously taken up a free claim near Downs and had built a cabin for his pretty, brown-eyed bride of 17. Their son John was later to portray the heroic life story of his parents and their pioneer experiences on the prairies of Kansas in his book, *Sod and Stubble*. It is a story of almost unbelievable hardship and

The author is indebted to Dr. Gerald Alonzo Smith for helpful suggestions in preparing this article. He also wishes to thank the staff of Watson Library and the Archives of the University of Kansas for supplying materials for this study.

1. John Ise, "K.U. Says Farewell to the Ise Age," *Alumni Magazine*, Lawrence, v. 53, no. 7 (March, 1955), p. 6, editor's introduction.



John Ise's parents, Rosie and Henry Ise, were married in 1871 when Rosie was 17, and settled on a free claim near Downs. Their son, John, later portrayed the heroic life story of his parents and their pioneer experiences on the Kansas prairies in his book, *Sod and Stubble*. Illustrations of Rosie and Henry by Howard Simon reproduced from the book, published in 1967 by University of Nebraska Press.

amazing endurance, courage, and perseverance. The Ise's survived such natural disasters as droughts, hot winds, blizzards, prairie fires, grasshoppers, and chinch bugs, and such man-made hazards as depressions, mortgages, claim jumpers, horse thieves, lightning rod salesmen, and Indians. When Rosie learned that Henry was planning to borrow on mortgage security, she sought to dissuade him, saying,

No, I guess not, unless you have reasonably good luck. And you never have good luck. It's always bad luck. Anyhow, that's what you have to figure on. If it isn't hot winds, it's chinch bugs, or grasshoppers, or black leg, or cholera, or distemper, or something you didn't expect. Interest is a terrible thing anyhow, a terrible thing, the way it eats and eats, due twice as often as it ought to be, and always at the hardest time. I never saw interest come due when it was easy to pay, never.<sup>2</sup>

Despite tremendous hardships, Henry and Rosie held on to their claim and managed to transform it into a farm that was capable of supporting a large family. Henry was a kind and considerate man, well read and possessed of intellectual and musical talent, an able and industrious farmer, but plagued with poor health. Moreover, he was a poor manager who led his family to the brink of disaster by being overly trusting of improvident neighbors who borrowed equipment and money that were never returned. Rosie, on the other hand, had much practical sense and managerial ability, great physical energy, a Spartan sense of duty, and the grim and invincible determination that would not admit defeat. Babies came almost as regularly as crops, making endless demands on Rosie as she nursed infants and cared for little children, besides carrying on the ordinary tasks of a farm woman on the frontier of white settlement. Indeed, the babies came to the number of 12, of whom 11 lived to maturity.

2. John Ise, "Mother's Recollection of Her Early Life," pp. 1-24; John Ise, *Sod and Stubble: The Story of a Kansas Homestead* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), pp. xi-xii, 1-31, 183.

After Henry's death, Rosie sent nine of her children through college, and some of them afterwards to Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Stanford, the University of Chicago, and the University of Zurich, Switzerland.<sup>3</sup>

John, the eighth child, was sickly as a baby, a victim of infantile paralysis. He was a life-long cripple whose right leg was later amputated and the stump fitted with a wooden leg which enabled him to walk slowly and laboriously with the aid of a cane. He grew into a hectic adolescence, being naturally stubborn, individualistic, and restive under any sort of discipline or control. He was sensitive and keenly desirous of the approval of others. Being denied the healthy discipline of play with other children, he devoted much time to music and became a versatile and accomplished musician. He inherited his parents' Germanic faith in education, applying himself diligently to the reading of his ten-volume collection of the *Literature of All Nations*. He finished high school in three years, after which he taught two years in the grade school in Downs.<sup>4</sup>

There is little doubt that John Ise held more earned degrees than any member of the University of Kansas faculty in his time. He held the bachelor of music, bachelor of arts, and bachelor of law degrees from the University of Kansas, and master of arts and doctor of philosophy degrees from Harvard University. He entered the University of Kansas in 1904, and graduated with a degree in music in 1908. He returned in 1910 to get a bachelor's degree in economics; in 1911 he received his LL.B. During his K.U. student days he sang in one of the downtown movie houses, chased horses for the local humane society, and held other jobs to defray the cost of his education. At K.U. he played the violin, viola, piccolo, cornet, and mandolin, and taught music until he decided it was too demoralizing having pretty girls in his classes all the time. In 1912 he received his M.A. degree in economics from Harvard University and then taught agricultural economics at Iowa State College for two years. He received his Ph.D. degree in economics from Harvard in 1914, after successfully defending his dissertation on the United States forest



John Ise joined the K.U. faculty as an assistant professor of economics in 1916. At the time of his retirement in 1955 he estimated that 12,000 to 15,000 students had passed through his classes. This photograph was taken about 1933.

policy. In 1916 he joined the faculty of economics at K.U. as an assistant professor. He remained on the faculty for 39 years, except for one year as visiting professor of economics at Amherst College in 1941-1942. In 1921 he married Lillie Bernhard, from which union came two sons, John and Charles. At the time of his retirement in 1955, John Ise estimated that 12,000 to 15,000 students had passed through his classes.

The longer I teach the more I love students. It is true that some of them are abstemious with respect to work and some of them hanker little for the riches of intellectual adventure; but by and large they are about the finest people in the world, kind, generous, honest (98% in my experience) and most punctilious in avoiding any effort to ingratiate themselves with the professor—I hear about apple-polishing but I have seen practically none of it.

In fact, John loved to teach so much that after retirement he held one year appointments as visiting professor at Goucher College in Baltimore, Md., and Trinity University, in San Antonio, Tex.<sup>5</sup>

3. *Ibid.*, pp. xi-xii, 26-28, 146-149, 160, 206-207, 246-247.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-163, 167-180, 185, 277, 301, 312; J.D.W., "John Ise, The Downs, Kas., Singer, Still Hums as Teacher and Writer," *Kansas City Times*, June 1, 1938.

5. *Ibid.*; Ise, "K.U. Says Farewell to the Ise Age," p. 6; Clifford S. Griffin, *The University of Kansas: A History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1974), pp. 446-455, 575-578.



## II

JOHN ISE'S career as a conservationist and prophet of the energy crisis needs to be seen against the background of the three conservation movements in United States history. From the time of the Mayflower, Americans have been prone to raid and plunder their landed resources in their drive to accumulate wealth and achieve material well-being. Given a temperate continent, rich in soils and minerals and forests and wildlife, men have been enticed to think that these resources approached infinity by comparison with human needs and desires. As Stuart Udall observed, men were intoxicated by the myth of superabundance, the fallacy that our resources were inexhaustible. Rather than practice the careful and balanced husbandry of their European forebears, American farmers typically planted crops until yields declined and then moved on to fresh soils and repeated the "skinning system" generation after generation.<sup>6</sup>

The myth of superabundance which had been fostered by the principles of individualism and economic *laissez-faire*, came under attack by thoughtful and socially minded Americans who were alarmed by the rapid destruction of natural resources. They saw that the urge to unlimited exploitation, when linked to the new technology of the industrial revolution, threatened to strip and gut the resources of the nation in a few decades. Accordingly, politicians such as Theodore Roosevelt and civil servants and scientists such as Gifford Pinchot launched a crusade for the wise use of these resources for the long-term benefit of the American people. Roosevelt made conservation a national issue in what is now regarded as the first conservation movement in the United States. Due to his exertions and those of other dedicated conservationists, progress was made in establishing the Forest Service, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service and other agencies which administer programs calling for the wise use of the nation's resources.<sup>7</sup>

Whereas Pres. Theodore Roosevelt had led

and coordinated the forces of the first conservation movement, his distant cousin Pres. Franklin Delano Roosevelt launched a new conservation campaign which became an integral part of his New Deal administration of the 1930's. Upon taking office, the younger Roosevelt faced the nation's most severe economic depression, which was exacerbated by natural disasters in the form of droughts, dust storms, and floods. He and his advisers realized that by means of soil conservation, reservoir construction, and tree planting, floods could be controlled, cheap power generated, fresh water supplied to urban and rural people, and river navigation facilitated. To achieve these and other goals, Roosevelt pushed through bills creating the Soil Conservation Service, Civilian Conservation Service, Tennessee River Valley Authority, Federal Emergency Relief Administration, and other agencies. Land was acquired by government purchase, adding to the national forests, national parks, wildlife refuges, and river valley developments. The second American conservation movement was dominated by public works, by soil conservation programs, by river basin schemes, and by massive employment of idle labor. Most notable among these developments was the new emphasis placed upon the problems of soil conservation.<sup>8</sup>

As American society became increasingly urbanized and industrialized, conservationists saw the need to protect the physical and human environments from pollutants emitted by factories, refineries, motor vehicles, and power generating plants. Historian Timothy O'Riordan wrote that whereas the first and second conservation movements were symbolized by the forester and the soil conservationist, respectively, the third conservation movement was symbolized by the ecologist, the scientist who studied the balance of nature and the interrelationships of plant, animal, and human communities. Thus the third conservation movement generated public concern over man's misguided use of his environment and the possible long-term repercussions on his health and survival.<sup>9</sup>

6. Stuart Udall, *The Quiet Crisis* (New York: Avon Books, 1963), pp. vii-xii, 66.

7. *Proceedings of a Conference of Governors, in the White House, Washington, D.C., May 13-15, 1908* (Washington: 1909), pp. 3-10; Charles Richard Van Hise, *The Conservation of Natural Resources in the United States* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1910), pp. 1-14; Roy M. Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776-1936* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942), pp. 301-342; Udall, *Quiet Crisis*, pp. 138-148.

8. V. Webster Johnson and Raleigh Barlowe, *Land Problems and Policies* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1954), pp. 67-72; Udall, *Quiet Crisis*, pp. 148-158.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. vii-viii, 171-202; Timothy O'Riordan, "The Third American Conservation Movement: New Implications for Public Policy," *Journal of American Studies*, London, v. 5, no. 2 (August, 1971), pp. 155-171.

John Ise devoted the greater part of his adult life to the cause of resource conservation, lecturing, teaching, writing, and serving as a consultant and adviser to government agencies, learned societies, and business organizations. His long life extended over the first two conservation movements and into the early years of the third. In 1948 he testified in a court case involving an oil company that he was an economist with special training and experience regarding problems of conservation, and that conservation had been his particular field of study for 35 years. Ise said that his doctoral dissertation at Harvard University was written on the conservation of forests, and later published in 1920 by Yale University Press under the title, *The United States Forest Policy*. "When I finished that book," he testified, "I began work on a book on the conservation of oil, and incidentally gas, which the Yale University Press published in 1926," under the title *The United States Oil Policy*. He said he was "working on a book on the conservation of scenic lands, under the title 'The United States National Park Policy,' but I am only about half done with it." Besides these three books, he noted a few articles he had published in learned journals and a trade association journal. Moreover, he told of his work as a consultant and adviser to various organizations.<sup>10</sup>

But Ise's brief account of his accomplishments obscures colorful facets of his career as a conservationist. No doubt his parents planted the seeds of a conservation ethic in their children by the example they set. Ise wrote in *Sod and Stubble* that among the various ethnic groups—Germans, Swiss, English, Irish, Welsh, Americans—who settled in the vicinity of his father's claim on the frontier, there were men of almost every imaginable calling, but only the Germans and Swiss "really wanted to farm." As a student at Harvard, Ise met or corresponded with Prof. Frederick Jackson Turner, Dean Edwin F. Gay, Gifford Pinchot, and Sen. Richard Pettigrew of South Dakota. In later life he was a friend and correspondent of Sen. Paul Douglas of Illinois. Ise first visited the national parks sometime before 1916. In later years he and his family made annual automobile trips to the parks where he combined recreation with scholarly research.

He spoke frequently on conservation, perhaps not always to a sympathetic audience. In November, 1948, he told a luncheon meeting of the Kiwanis Club of Lawrence, "We have wasted nine-tenths of the natural gas and half of the oil resources of the country. The strange thing is, that now we see actual scarcity of both at hand, we go on wasting them the same as ever." Moreover, he told a reporter for the *University Daily Kansan* in January, 1960, that men had spread across America a century ago like a devouring horde of locusts or Japanese beetles, destroying everything that they found which was destructible. He [man] did create cities—about the ugliest in the world. He also built roads and railroads so that he could go farther and destroy more in a process called "development." I wonder where another century of creative development will leave us."<sup>11</sup>

### III

TO JOHN ISE the character and material achievements of the American people were largely owing to the rich natural resources with which they had been blessed. He stated this thesis in the preface of his 395-page *United States Forest Policy* as follows:

The history of the United States is fundamentally a history of rapid exploitation of immensely valuable natural resources. The possession and exploitation of these resources have given most of the distinctive traits to American character, economic development, and even political and social institutions. Whatever preëminence the United States may have among the nations of the world, in industrial activity, efficiency and enterprise, in standards of comfort in living, in wealth, and even in such social and educational institutions as are dependent upon great wealth, must be attributed to the possession of these great natural resources; and the maintenance of our preëminence in these respects is dependent upon a wise and economical use of remaining resources. Thus the question of conservation is one of the most important questions before the American people. . . .<sup>12</sup>

By the late years of the 19th century the rapid exploitation of American forests had contributed greatly to the making of America but had reached a point demanding wise and economical use and preservation for future generations. Dr. Ise questioned the policy of

11. Ise, *Sod and Stubble*, p. 12; "Waste Is Large. K.U. Professor Points To Growing Scarcity of Natural Resources," *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, November 5, 1948; "Ise Not Confident About Humans," *University Daily Kansan*, Lawrence, January 7, 1960.

12. John Ise, *United States Forest Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920), p. 11.

10. Testimony of Dr. John Ise, "John Ise Papers," oil case in U.S. district court, circa 1948, University of Kansas Archives, Lawrence.



John Ise devoted the greater part of his adult life to the cause of resource conservation. His long life extended over the nation's first two conservation movements and into the early years of the third. Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), 26th U.S. President, was a leader in the nation's first conservation movement. Because of his efforts and those of other dedicated conservationists, progress was made in establishing the Forest Service, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service, and other agencies which administer programs calling for the wise use of the nation's resources.

private ownership and exploitation which had led to the destruction of large areas of virgin forest. He noted that between 1820 and 1870, at a time when the population of the United States more than quadrupled, a vast number of farms had been carved out of the forest. Pines and oaks had been remorselessly felled, underbrush had been fired with relentless carelessness, and thousands of acres of valuable timber had gone up in smoke. As lumbering became more of a commercial business, timber was often cut in advance of any real economic demand, the trees which were felled were only partly utilized, large amounts of low-grade material were destroyed in the woods or mills, and inferior species in the forests were wholly or partially left uncut.<sup>13</sup>

Ise realized that there were circumstances under which the wasteful use of natural resources was not only inevitable, but even wise. "The people of America could not possibly have treated their forests with the same care that Europeans have shown," he wrote, "for there were too many forests and too few people." He noted that the rapid cutting of white

pinus in the Great Lakes states, while it meant scarcity and high prices in the future, had enabled settlers on the prairie to build comfortable homes with cheap lumber. Similarly, lumbermen could not be justly criticized for not cutting timber conservatively and replanting cut-over forests, Ise contended. Given the great cost of holding standing timber—taxes, fire prevention, and interest charges on the heavy investment required—lumbermen had typically cut and slashed the trees, clearing the land as quickly as possible, pursuing a wasteful policy of "cut out and get out."<sup>14</sup>

Western Americans came in for sharp censure. Ise contended that their boundless optimism made them unreceptive to predictions of future scarcity, their individualism and dislike of restraint made them hostile to bureaucratic government, and their deep-rooted dislike of experts and "theorists" made them hostile to the administration of the forest reserves. Ise deplored the West's infatuation with the idea of rapid exploitation.

The people saw the apparently unlimited lands and other resources awaiting development; and entered upon their

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26, 359-362.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 361-362, 374-375.



Theodore Roosevelt's distant cousin, Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945), who became the 32d U.S. President, launched the nation's second conservation movement. Taking office at a time when the country was experiencing its most severe economic depression, he made conservation an integral part of his New Deal administration. This second movement was dominated by public works, soil conservation programs, river basin schemes, and by massive employment of idle labor. A third conservation movement with its emphasis on ecology was to come later.



task with the energy which has generally characterized the frontier. They were, as indeed they still are, "boosters" of the most enthusiastic brand, partly because optimism was in the very air, and partly because many of them had appropriated some of the resources, and were engrossed in an effort to get more, not always with the intention of using them to establish homes, but rather in the hope of selling to someone else at a profit.

The upshot was "reckless and wasteful destruction of magnificent forests, and a flagrant and notorious theft of valuable lands—a story that Americans will follow with little pride."<sup>15</sup>

Dr. Ise, on the other hand, commended the conservationists who had protested against forest destruction at a time when the American people overwhelmingly believed in the myth of superabundance. Forest conservationists singled out for special mention were Carl Schurz, F. B. Hough, E. A. Bowers, Richard Pettigrew, Gifford Pinchot, and Theodore Roosevelt. Ise contended that it was *not* due to the wisdom of the national legislature that some national forests were established with a scientific system of administration. Rather, credit was due "entirely to administrative offi-

cials—Schurz, Cleveland, Sparks, Walcott, Fernow, Bowers, Pinchot, Roosevelt, and others; and these men had to fight Congress at almost every step." Special commendation went to President Roosevelt who reserved the greater part of the national forests, and to his trusted assistant and adviser, Gifford Pinchot.

Pinchot saw that the government was rapidly losing its timber land, and he organized a field force to gather information as the basis of recommending reserves. During these years, the timbermen of the Lake states were looking westward for new fields to exploit, and their agents in the West were assembling blocks of timber land as fast as they could. Thus proceeded the race between the government and the private individuals for the remaining western timber.

Roosevelt and Pinchot thus represented a force which was able to accomplish great things for conservation.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the concentrated ownership of timber lands, extravagant wastes, and little effort to reforest cut-over lands, Ise believed it was not yet too late to adopt a rational policy with regard to the remainder of these natural resources. Among Ise's proposals for reform,

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 369-374.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 143-150, 161, 202, 370.



that of government ownership was by far the most radical and controversial.

An increase in government ownership is one remedy which will prove helpful, whatever our view of the situation. It will obviate the fear of artificial price control, will insure stability in the lumber market, reduce waste to a minimum, and provide for proper reforestation. The present unsatisfactory conditions in the lumber industry are an inevitable result of the policy of private ownership and exploitation which the government followed previous to the adoption of the forest reserve policy in 1891; and the remedy for these ills is to be found in a return to the policy of government ownership.

Ise went on to point out that "almost all of the advanced countries had found it necessary to take over the management of their forests; and the United States must eventually enlarge her field of activity along this line." Ise wanted to protect the nation's springs of prosperity, its sources of well-being, its raw materials of industry and commerce. He wanted to persuade his fellow Americans to assume responsibility as trustees of the nation's welfare so that future generations would benefit from wise and farsighted policies.<sup>17</sup>

John Ise's *United States Forest Policy* did not go unremarked in newspapers, magazines, and learned journals. The *Times Literary Supplement* of London said that "Dr. Ise shows how intricately the utilization of this great branch of natural resources has been bound up with the nation's commercial development." Historian Charles A. Beard noted in the *Nation* that "Books like this by Mr. Ise will contribute to the growth of public sentiment. Perhaps it is not too much to expect that professional historians may sometimes hear about it and include instruction in this phase of our economic history." The *Political Science Quarterly* summarized the contents of Ise's book, saying he had "rendered a most noteworthy service to the cause of conservation by assembling and organizing a wealth of valuable information on the important topic of forestry." Writing in 1960, Dr. Marion Clauson said that Ise's *United States Forest Policy* "still stands as a classic example of federal policy analysis. . . ." <sup>18</sup>

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 363-367, 376-377.

18. *Times Literary Supplement*, London, July 29, 1920, p. 480; *Nation*, New York, February 2, 1921, p. 187; *Political Science Quarterly*, New York, v. 36, no. 2 (June, 1921), p. 349; Mary Katharine Reely et al., *Book Review Digest: Reviews of 1920 Books* (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1921), p. 280; John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), p. vii.

#### IV

SINCE John Ise was convinced that the conservation of all kinds of resources is really one problem, it was expected that he would move into related areas. In 1926 he published *The United States Oil Policy*, and after an interval of 35 years, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (1961). The latter book was written on a grant from Resources for the Future, Inc., to complete the series of natural resources policy studies begun 40 years before. Since his *United States Forest Policy* and *Our National Park Policy* have much in common, we will look at his *Park Policy* before sketching and assessing the importance of his *Oil Policy* work. Forests are obviously common features of the national forests and national parks. But whereas the national forests and public oil lands are areas of valuable resources which are owned and administered by the federal government, the national parks are areas of scenic beauty which are maintained in unimpaired form by the federal government for the enjoyment of present and future generations. Though they are mainly scenic, the parks represent other values such as wildlife, volcanic, archeological, and hot springs. In 1960 the United States had an extensive national park system comprising 180 areas covering nearly 23 million acres, and several other areas, under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service.<sup>19</sup>

John Ise visited the national parks before the establishment of the National Park Service in 1916. He continued these visits for many years, gathering first-hand knowledge of the areas he was examining. For example, he told of the time he first saw Bryce Canyon in 1922: "After some days of wandering about on bad desert roads he [Ise] and two companions drove up a slight incline, and there the delicately intricate and brilliantly colored canyon lay before them like a scene from another world. Not one of the party spoke for several minutes!" Ise was a frank and open friend of the parks. He drew heavily on his own experience as well as government documents and other records to describe and analyze the national parks as component parts and as a system. His book is divided into three parts. Part I traces the

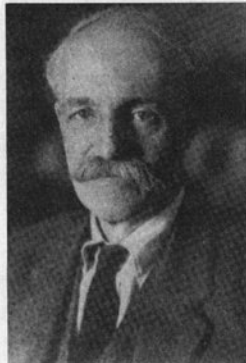
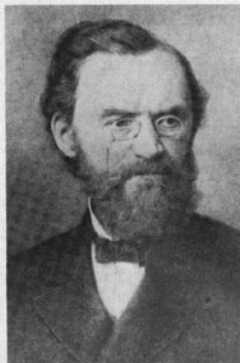
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.



John Ise's doctoral dissertation at Harvard University was written on the conservation of forests and later published in 1920 by Yale University Press under the title, the *United States Forest Policy*. Despite the concentrated ownership of timber lands, extravagant waste, and little effort to reforest cut-over lands, Ise believed it was not too late to adopt a rational policy with regard to the remainder of these natural resources. The above photograph shows woodcutters at work in Ellsworth county.

Below, men are cutting lumber on a Doniphan county farm.





In his book, *United States Forest Policy*, John Ise commended the conservationists who had raised protests against forest destruction at a time when the American people overwhelmingly believed in the myth of superabundance. Among those he singled out for special mention were, from left, above, Franklin B. Hough (1822-1885), appointed first forestry agent in the United States Department of Agriculture in 1876; Carl Schurz (1829-1906), the forest-minded secretary of the interior from 1877 to 1881; and Gifford Pinchot (1865-1946), chief forester for Pres. Theodore Roosevelt and a leader in the conservation movement. Photographs courtesy American Forestry Association, Washington, D.C.

development of the early parks in the period from 1872 to 1916. Part II extends over the long period from 1916 to 1959, discussing the various administrations of the National Park Service. Part III treats of some special park problems such as wildlife, national park concessions, financing the parks, wilderness areas, and national parks in other countries.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps the most significant statement that Ise makes in his study is this:

As we shall see from the record in this book, we have this great system of national parks, monuments, and other areas not as a result of a public demand but because a few farsighted, unselfish, and idealistic men and women foresaw the national need and got the areas established and protected in one way or another, fighting public inertia and selfish commercial interests at every step.

Ise devotes much attention to the struggles the park lovers have gone through to protect the parks from predatory and commercial interests. He tells of bareknuckled fights launched by stockmen to gain access to grazing lands, of miners and lumbermen who invaded the parks to steal the nation's resources. Demands were made for water for irrigation and power for municipal use. There were schemes

to "develop" or commercialize the parks and make them attractive to tourists. Ise railed at lumbermen who attacked the giant sequoias with saws, axes, and dynamite, destroying those "ancient and irreplaceable monuments—irreplaceable in any period of time that can easily be comprehended." He regretted that protection from livestock herders, poachers, and vandals was difficult because there were no adequate legal provisions for punishing offenders. He quotes with approval one park commissioner who declared, "No resources should be consumed or features destroyed through lumbering, grazing, mining, hunting, water-control developments or other industrial uses."<sup>21</sup>

In 1918 the secretary of the interior outlined the administrative policy that should govern the national parks. In the first place, the parks should be maintained in absolutely unimpaired form for the use of present and future generations. Second, they were set aside for the use, observation, health, and pleasure of the people. Although he was generally a democrat and egalitarian, Ise was not overly tolerant of the mobs of tourists who invaded the parks. He

20. *Ibid.*, p. 245.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 6, 76, 86, 99-100, 111, 302-303, 473-476.



observed crowds of people, cluttered campgrounds, lines of cars, and insufficient parking places. Some tourists came because they enjoyed "pumping the accelerator and going somewhere, and the parks are a place to go, getting little good from their visits but looking forward to telling their friends that they have seen the wonders, like the woman the writer overheard at the rim of Grand Canyon: 'Hell of a ditch! Let's go and get something to eat.'" <sup>22</sup>

Ise contrasts the destructive action of greedy, grasping businessmen and politicians with the constructive role played by a few good and conscientious officials and scientists. He tells of John Muir who drove the money changers out of the temple of the Yosemite valley in California, of William Gladstone Steel who devoted much of his adult life to creating a national park at Crater lake in Oregon, of Stephen Mather, director of the National Park Service from 1917 to 1928, whose efficient, loyal, and devoted service matched that of Gifford Pinchot as director of the U.S. Forest Service. Ise says that most of the park superintendents were dedicated men, as indeed were most of the rangers. Among the numerous park lovers Ise singles out certain congressmen, interior secretaries, park directors, and civilians. He says that most of the presidents were

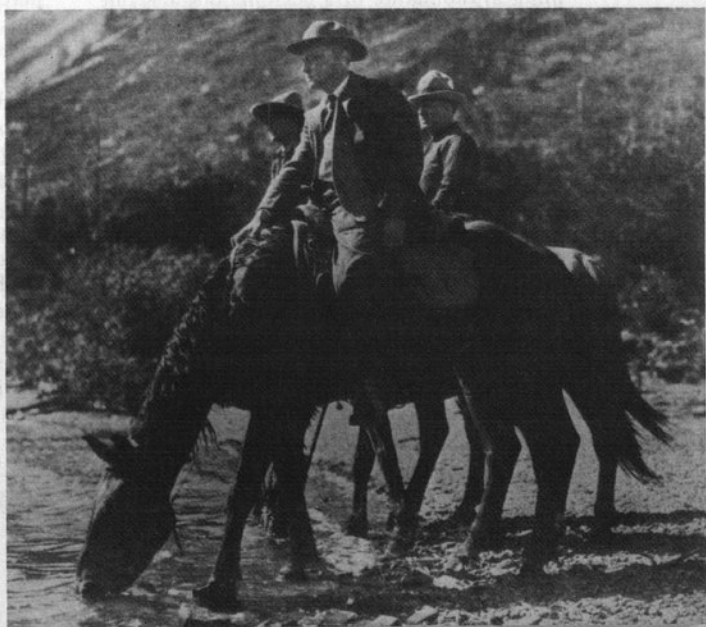
interested in the national parks, of whom Franklin Roosevelt probably did more for the parks than any other president. <sup>23</sup>

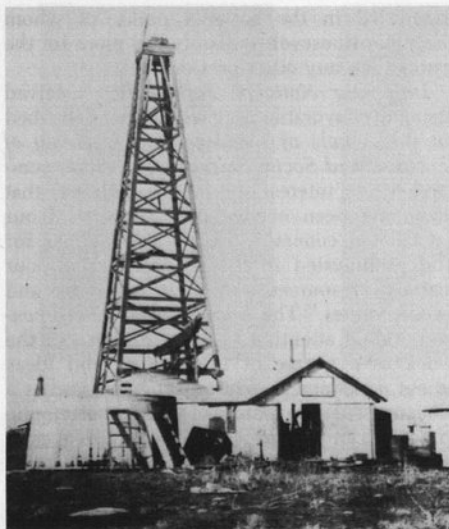
Ise's *Our National Park Policy* received generally favorable reviews. It was described in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* as a "large, comprehensive, interestingly written volume" that had long been needed by "students of our social and economic history, as well as for those interested in the conservation of our national resources and their economic and scenic values." The *Journal of Political Economy* called attention to the usefulness of the book as a source of information and ideas about parks and recreation programs and as a documented case history of political-economic processes in federal land policy. Moreover, it said that Ise wrote as a partisan of the parks and sometimes tended "to describe the conflicting interests in park development as though the protagonists were clearly identifiable as being either 'for' or 'against' the parks." The *American Economic Review* said that Ise's comprehensive study probably came "as close to a definitive work as is possible in a field of resource utilization that is so subject to change in techniques and where information on reserves and future practices is at best partially

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8, 194-195.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-4, 56-88, 128-135, 323.

John Ise's book, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History*, published in 1961, was written on a grant from Resources for the Future, Inc. In it he discusses the development of the early parks, the various administrations of the National Park Service, and special park problems. He also devotes much attention to the struggles park lovers have had to protect the parks from predatory and commercial interests. In the photograph Stephen T. Mather (1867-1930), the first director of the National Park Service who served from 1917 to 1928, is shown on an inspection trip in Glacier National Park, Montana. Photograph courtesy American Forestry Association, Washington, D.C.





incomplete." The *American Historical Review* said that although the text carried a heavy burden of detail which was redundant in places, "the concentration of important material within its compass makes this a definitive work." Ise was described in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* as "a man for massive detail, for the weighing of pros and cons, for ideas and economic analysis—followed frequently by subjective judgments, or something in the nature of a personal outburst; he has quite an interesting change of pace."<sup>24</sup>

## V

**OIL AND GAS** constitute the life blood of our industrial civilization, supplying energy to produce food and heat and fuel for cars. Moreover, the petrochemical industry uses huge amounts of oil and gas to supply our needs for medicines, plastics, fertilizers, and thousands of chemical products. Compared with coal, oil burns cleaner and is easier to handle once it reaches the surface. It has be-

come the dominant fuel of industrial societies. From one of the world's leading petroleum exporters, the United States in 1948 became for the first time a permanent net importer. Peak U.S. oil production was reached in 1970, after which the level of output began to decline. But as the demand continued to grow in the face of declining production, more and more oil was imported from abroad. Indeed, imports as a percentage of consumption increased from 19 percent in 1960 to 40 percent in 1980. Oil has thus shifted from an abundant and cheap source of energy to one that is not only scarce and dear but also dominated by a cartel of oil producing nations that arbitrarily raises world oil prices. The upshot is that the end of the era of cheap oil has left us frantically searching for a way out.<sup>25</sup>

Much insight into the causes and consequences of the rapid exploitation of America's petroleum resources and predictions of future oil famine is afforded by Dr. Ise's *United States Oil Policy*. After a brief account of petroleum in ancient and medieval times, he deals in some depth with the early history of the industry in Pennsylvania. He then pro-

come the dominant fuel of industrial societies. From one of the world's leading petroleum exporters, the United States in 1948 became for the first time a permanent net importer. Peak U.S. oil production was reached in 1970, after which the level of output began to decline. But as the demand continued to grow in the face of declining production, more and more oil was imported from abroad. Indeed, imports as a percentage of consumption increased from 19 percent in 1960 to 40 percent in 1980. Oil has thus shifted from an abundant and cheap source of energy to one that is not only scarce and dear but also dominated by a cartel of oil producing nations that arbitrarily raises world oil prices. The upshot is that the end of the era of cheap oil has left us frantically searching for a way out.<sup>25</sup>

24. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Philadelphia, v. 337 (September, 1961), p. 189; *Journal of Political Economy*, Chicago, v. 70, no. 3 (June, 1962), p. 302; *American Economic Review*, Ithaca, N.Y., v. 51, no. 5 (December, 1961) pp. 1117-1118; *American Historical Review*, Washington, v. 67, no. 1 (October, 1961), pp. 159-160; *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Cedar Rapids, Ia., v. 48, no. 2 (September, 1961), pp. 326-327.

25. Robert Stobaugh and Daniel Yergin, *Energy Future: Report of the Energy Project at the Harvard Business School* (New York: Random House, 1979), pp. 16-32; Stewart Udall et al., *The Energy Balloon* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1974), pp. 81-102.

ceeds to the exploitation of other fields in the United States in order of their discovery. Following the historical survey are several chapters dealing with waste in the oil industry. Over-rapid exploitation led to waste and glutted and depressed markets which, in turn, led to curtailment campaigns and monopolistic conditions which are discussed in great detail. Ise next turns to the development of conservation sentiment, the public oil lands, Teapot Dome scandal, and Indian oil lands. In subsequent chapters he looks at the results of our laissez-faire oil policy, the question of substitutes for oil products, and the question of foreign supplies of oil. In his concluding chapter Ise proposes policies to conserve oil and seeks to inculcate an attitude of stewardship among the American populace that would provide a basis for a more equitable sharing of this irreplaceable resource among present and future generations.

Ise tells the history of the early Pennsylvania oil field, with its sudden discoveries, feverish exploitation, drilling of far too many wells, oil running into streams for lack of storage facilities, speculation and fraud, great variations in price, and recurring epochs of development and decline. The unfortunate features of the oil history of Pennsylvania were repeated in the later history of almost every other region.

There has been the same instability in the industry, the same recurrent or chronic over-production, the same wide fluctuations in prices, with consequent curtailment agreements, the same waste of oil, of capital, and of energy, the same fraudulent promotion, wild and senseless speculation, aimless drilling by green hands, the same unearned fortunes, the same "newly rich," with their ostentatious display of wealth, the same monopolistic tendencies, the same unhealthy conditions, economic and social.

While not all regions showed all these characteristics, they all showed most of them. Operators rapidly and wastefully appropriated the most accessible deposits and when decline set in passed on to other fields to repeat the process. "It was the spirit of 'American enterprise' to 'develop,'" Ise wrote, "'development' being generally synonymous with wasteful exploitation and despoliation, and that man being most 'enterprising' who could seize and waste the most oil in the shortest time."<sup>26</sup>

Dr. Ise defined waste as "*any loss or use which fails to afford the maximum social utility or want satisfaction, for the present and for future generations.*" He believed that competition, private ownership, and individual initiative had made for over-rapid exploitation of oil; over-rapid exploitation had made for cheap oil; cheap oil had encouraged wasteful methods of exploitation and utilization. It was paradoxical, he thought, that the efficiency of oil producers in the exploitation of our resources had contributed to the tremendous waste of oil. Oil was wasted at all stages of production and consumption. The drilling of closely spaced wells let the gas escape so that a very large proportion of the oil was left in the ground. There were wastes in bringing new wells under control, in storage, transportation, refining, and consumption of oil. Moreover, there were wastes of capital and energy which stemmed from speculation and fraud, from overproduction which necessitated the building of immense amounts of storage, from the drilling of too many wells, from the overdevelopment of refineries and service stations.<sup>27</sup>

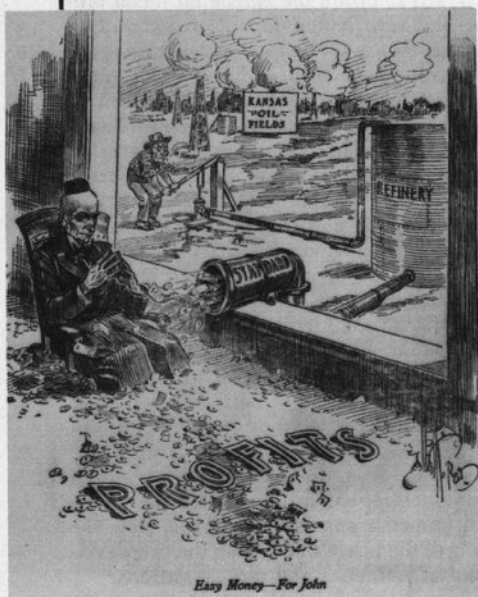
The greatest and most unpardonable waste of oil, Ise asserted, was its consumption for all kinds of low or unimportant uses. In particular, he condemned the use of oil as fuel in place of coal, and its use for all sorts of unessential automobile purposes. From 3,700 passenger and commercial cars in 1899, automobile production in the United States increased to over 4,000,000 motor vehicles in 1923. Similarly, the consumption of oil products by automobiles increased prodigiously, accounting for approximately 25 percent by volume and 49 percent by value of the output of the American oil industry. To Ise the benefits arising from the wide use of automobiles were not to be disregarded. On the other hand, he castigated automobile owners for their prodigal ways. He deplored the fact that

Vast amounts of our irreplaceable reserves of oil are being used—we may well say wasted—by fat-bellied bankers and *bourgeoisie* riding back and forth, to and from their business, when they need nothing so much as a walk; . . . by youthful, and by mature, smart Alecks, who find here an exceptionally flashy and effective way of flaunting their wealth before those not so fortunate as themselves; and by all manner of men and women, who

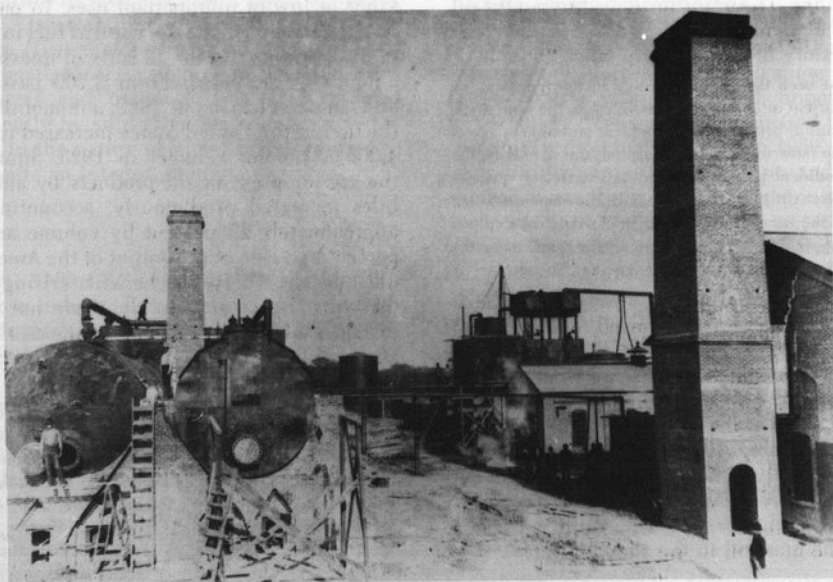
26. John Ise, *United States Oil Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), p. 123.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 142-145, 176, 180.





Two chapters in Ise's book, *United States Oil Policy*, discuss monopolistic conditions in the oil industry, including the Standard Oil Company fight in Kansas in 1905. Oil production in the state had reached such proportions by that time that prices of crude oil dropped, and Standard Oil put into operation some of its unfair practices. Discontent from Kansas oilmen, stockholders, landowners, and consumers resulted in action by the state legislature and investigations of the company by federal agencies. The cartoon, *left*, showing Kansas oil field profits being piped by Standard Oil into John D. Rockefeller's coffers, is reproduced from *The Kansas Derrick*, Humboldt, February 20, 1905. The photograph *below* is of the Standard Oil refinery at Neodesha about 1900.



ride about upon our roads and streets in stupid, thoughtless, aimless, pointless diversion, the essential element of which diversion is the entire absence of any serious tax upon the mind, when they might be improving their minds with good books or with anything that might tend to mental enlightenment.

Perhaps the greatest waste or extravagance arose from "the use of automobiles which consume three or four times as much gasoline and oil as are necessary for comfortable traveling."<sup>28</sup>

Anticipating many of the problems of automobiles in an age of oil scarcity, Ise proposed solutions that were in many ways prophetic. He observed that alcohol, which had practically all the essential qualities of gasoline, could be produced from vegetable sources if the price of gasoline rose high enough to justify such production. He thought that electric cars might improve in efficiency and fall in price. He thought it entirely possible that in coming decades automobile engines would be far more economical of fuel and of lubricants than the engines of his time. However, Ise was wrong to predict that within 10 to 20 years "Dobbin" would be recalled to the harness, that there would be an important displacement of gasoline by horse power.<sup>29</sup>

Dr. Ise was concerned to find out where our

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 156, 164-171.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 437-445.

laissez-faire oil policy had left us, where the oil would come from to satisfy our mounting requirements, and how long we could keep up the pace. He set out in his typical methodical and thorough manner to review the findings of some 25 geologists, oil men, and others who had published estimates of our original and remaining supplies and how long it would take to deplete our oil reserves. One geologist declared that the petroleum production of the United States was already at its peak and would probably begin to decline within three years. At the other extreme was a congressman from an oil state who declared that the nation had well-defined oil areas already prospected, tested, and exploited that would supply world demand for at least 5,000 years. Many oil men and oil journalists made light of all predictions of exhaustion and sought to discredit the geologists' predictions of oil scarcity. Coming to the defense of the geologists, Ise pointed out that

In constantly bringing before the people the certainty of approaching scarcity, and the necessity of conserving remaining supplies, geologists have performed a service which will be better appreciated as the future brings to us a clearer realization of the problems involved. The only unfortunate circumstance seems to be, not that geologists should have made predictions of scarcity, but rather than their predictions have received less attention than they merited.

John Ise foresaw a time of oil scarcity, and although he could see some benefits arising from the wide use of automobiles, he decried the prodigal use of gasoline by drivers who could just as well walk or who rode about the country in aimless diversion when they could be improving their minds with good books. The photograph is of a Skelly station in Topeka about 1929 when gasoline was considerably cheaper than it is today.



Much of the mutual distrust between practical oil men and geologists could be explained, Ise thought, by the individualistic and short-term view of human affairs of the former, and the social and long-term view of the latter.<sup>30</sup>

Ever cautious in matters of natural resource exploitation, Dr. Ise's own prediction conformed quite closely to those of the geologists he admired.

As to the future of oil, it may safely be assumed that sometime, probably within the next few years, production will reach its peak and begin to decline. Perhaps it has already done so, in the summer of 1923. How rapid this decline will be, it is impossible to predict. There are too many unknown and unpredictable factors in the problem: the actual reserves of oil still in the ground; the work and expense necessary to its extraction; the cost of extracting oil from shale; the availability of substitutes; the cost of oil imports; and many other factors that could not even be named at this time.<sup>31</sup>

Contrary to conventional wisdom was Ise's assertion that our oil would never be finally exhausted. Production would reach its peak and decline through years and through centuries, he said, but oil would always be available, in smaller and smaller quantities and used for higher and more important purposes as its price continued to rise. As the supply of oil shrank and its price increased, methods of extraction would be improved and refining processes perfected. Moreover, it would become profitable to develop substitutes for conventional sources of oil. Observing that the extraction of oil from shale had been a commercial industry for many years in parts of Europe and elsewhere, Ise predicted that the extensive oil shales in the Rocky mountain region would be developed as a supplement to our oil supplies. However, he cautioned that the extraction of oil from these shales would be a very expensive business, that securing adequate and reliable water supplies and disposing of spent shales would be tremendous problems.<sup>32</sup>

Dr. Ise was concerned that the American people were not only squandering their most precious fossil fuel but also exporting this vital substance at a price that would be multiplied many times when oil famine set in and imported supplies were essential. He deplored

the rapid growth of oil exports, pointing out that

From the strictly nationalistic point of view, these exports will have to be regarded as mostly waste, for they represent a large deduction from an exhaustible and irreplaceable natural resource, a resource which is absolutely essential and always will be absolutely essential, not only to our national defense but even to our economic life.

Believing that the United States must become an oil-importing nation, Ise thought that day might be postponed if exports could be checked by means of artificial measures to raise the domestic price of oil. In the meantime, he thought it might be good policy to try and use present exports to secure promises of reciprocal treatment when we would later need to import. But on second thought, he realized that political difficulties would increase as world oil hunger developed, and that

... when the United States, in the role of the rich idiot child, shall have squandered her inheritance, there is no reason to believe that other producing countries will adopt a more generous attitude. On the contrary, there are many reasons to believe that they will be less generous than they have been in the past.

Ise saw "many reasons for believing that oil will never be left entirely to unfettered economic sale and purchase." He concluded that there would have to be a systematic arrangement for rationing raw materials among the nations, if there was to be a society of nations resting on a basis of fairness.<sup>33</sup>

In his concluding chapter Dr. Ise called for the development of a conservation ethic and proposed measures to safeguard our oil resources for future generations.

The great problem is that of conserving our oil resources. The time for greedy indulgence of our every unimportant want, while ignoring the needs of the future, is long since past. . . . It ought to be clear to any mind above that of an orang-outang that the people of the present generation are only life tenants on the earth, and that they have no right to waste and destroy that which, as far as we can see, will be essential to the happiness of future generations as to our own. Yet it is almost impossible to get the average American to see that there is anything but his own immediate wants, however trivial and unimportant, to be considered.<sup>34</sup>

Ise said there were in general two ways of conserving our oil resources: "first, through higher prices, brought about by the unfettered

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 402-419.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 419.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 420-450.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 172-173, 483-485, 506.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 489.



action of economic law; and second, by government intervention. Government intervention might aim at regulating uses directly, or it might aim at conserving merely by making oil more expensive." He believed that high prices were the best means of conserving our oil resources, unless we wished to adopt a drastic scheme of government rationing. Furthermore, he believed that oil prices had always been too low because of the unfettered action of economic law. He asserted that, as a general principle, oil and gas should sell at a price that was approximately equal to the cost of producing adequate and satisfactory substitutes, if substitutes could be assumed to be a reasonable possibility. Ideally, Ise thought that the substitute should be a renewable resource, but he doubted if such a product could be produced for less than \$20 a barrel. From 1921 to 1930 the average well-head price of crude petroleum in the United States ranged between \$1.17 and \$1.88 per barrel of 42 gallons, the annual average being \$1.46. Oil at \$20 per barrel would have been nearly 14 times the average well-head price. Since this was unreasonably high, Ise settled for oil made from shale which would cost approximately \$5.00 a barrel. Raising the price of crude petroleum to \$5.00 per barrel would thus stimulate the development of substitutes.<sup>35</sup>

After stating his pricing principle, Ise asked how the price of petroleum could be made higher in order that consumption might be reduced. The problem was to postpone the exhaustion of oil, and this goal he believed could be achieved only through government intervention. He proposed that the government intervene on both the supply and demand side of the oil industry. On the supply side, federal and state governments should expand their holdings of oil lands and limit the production of oil on public lands. Moreover, Ise favored taxes on oil royalty payments and on the excess profits of oil companies. Another way to curtail output and raise prices was to levy a tax on crude oil production, otherwise known as a "gross production tax" or "severance tax." Ise believed that the severance tax was sound in principle since it was levied on exploitation rather upon the mere ownership of the re-

source. On the demand side Ise recommended that the gasoline tax be made far heavier than had been imposed in any state—"at least 10 cents a gallon, and perhaps more." Taken together, these taxes "should be high enough to bring the price of oil products up to a point approximating the cost of producing substitutes, where substitutes are available, even if some of the revenues have to be used for other purposes than road building."<sup>36</sup>

A doubtful note was sounded in the summing up, for Professor Ise wrote: "On the whole, there is little ground for hope that a rational policy will very soon be adopted in dealing with our oil resources. All the weight of human selfishness and shortsightedness is against it." He regarded it as "unfortunate that public interest in the conservation of our oil resources cannot be roused until the resources are largely gone."<sup>37</sup>

## VI

PROFESSOR Ise's *United States Oil Policy* was reviewed in learned journals, magazines, newspapers, and petroleum trade journals. The reviewer in the *Economic Journal* said that, although somewhat loosely constructed, the book was packed with incidents that made it valuable for the study of private enterprise, especially in relation to monopolistic business corporations. Praising the book as a real contribution to the literature on conservation, the reviewer in the *American Economic Review* thought it too large and too expensive at a price of \$7.50 to have the wide influence it deserved. Ise was praised by the reviewer in the *Journal of Political Economy* for marshaling a vast array of facts and setting forth in detail a chronicle of the development of the petroleum industry of America. On the other hand, he was faulted for omitting certain technical points and for his frequent recourse to sermonizing and being primarily homiletical rather than scientific in the interpretation of his facts. The *Outlook* magazine said that Ise had evidently lived laborious days at his task. He had garnered from a wide field and presented his facts and conclusions with simplicity and clearness. An editorial on oil con-

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 493-495, 513-514; *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970. Part I.* (Washington: U.S. Bureau of Census, 1970), p. 593.

36. Ise, *United States Oil Policy*, pp. 495-524.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 525.

servation in the New York *Times* quoted Ise as saying, "The motto on our coins should not be made our national policy in providing a future oil supply." The book received lengthy reviews in the Boston *Evening Transcript* and the New York *Herald Tribune*. The former newspaper said that Ise's book "opens up the whole subject in masterly fashion with the aid of abounding detail and constant references to the pertinent literature." In the latter paper the book was reviewed by Louis Fischer, a prominent journalist. He said that "American oildom must read this accusation and bow its head in shame." Ise was described by the same reviewer as "a missionary with a message, but his feet are on the earth and he deals with hard, sledge-hammer facts."<sup>38</sup>

William Allen White, the sage of Emporia, read Ise's *Oil Policy* and found it so controversial that he penned a letter that is a near classic in its defense of the principle of academic freedom. White wrote to Ernest Lindley, chancellor of the University of Kansas on October 27, 1926, saying that Ise had sent him a copy of his book which he "read and read for three hours at odd times during a busy day." White went on to say,

Here is a fine piece of academic research; but also it is research into dynamite. I should not be surprised to find the oil interests of this part of the country making a secret drive on Ise. His views on conservation which I think are well buttressed by facts, will offend the more predatory and less thoughtful element of the oil industry, particularly that part that goes out west. I should not be surprised to find that Young John D. Rockefeller, whom I know well, is more or less in agreement with Mr. Ise, but the drilling companies, the big refining companies, and their political attorneys are liable to land on you and the University.

Although he admitted that he might be borrowing trouble, White thought his letter would better prepare Lindley for trouble if and when it came. White assured Lindley that the better element of the Kansas press would stand by him "in any gesture of academic freedom that might be required by the situation."<sup>39</sup>

38. *Economic Journal*, Cambridge, Eng., v. 38 (March, 1928), p. 113; *American Economic Review*, v. 17, no. 1 (March, 1927), pp. 81-83; *Journal of Political Economy*, v. 35, no. 4 (August, 1927), pp. 707-710; *Outlook*, New York, v. 144, no. 5 (September 29, 1926), p. 157; *New York Times*, September 7, 1926, p. 20; *Boston Evening Transcript*, September 8, 1926, p. 4; *New York Herald Tribune*, January 9, 1927, sec. 7, p. 16; Marion A. Knight and Mertice M. James, *Book Review Digest: Books of 1926* (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1927), p. 362.

39. William Allen White to Ernest Lindley, October 27, 1926, "Correspondence of Chancellor Ernest Lindley," general, 1926, box no. 1, University of Kansas Archives; Griffin, *The University of Kansas: A History*, p. 447.

## WASTE IS LARGE

### K. U. Professor Points To Growing Scarcity of Natural Resources

If John Ise, K.U.'s dismal economist, is stumped by anything it is by the propensity of people to waste natural resources that can not be replaced.

Speaking on the prospects of mankind for the future, he told members of the Kiwanis club at their weekly luncheon yesterday, "We have wasted nine-tenths of the natural gas and half of the oil resources of the country. The strange thing is, that now we see actual scarcity or both at hand, we go on wasting them the same as ever."

One of the greatest wastes of natural gas is brought about, Ise said, by its sale for one-fiftieth of what it is worth.

"Consequently it is burned under huge boilers where coal should be used," he asserted. "A supply of coal is in sight for possibly 500 years. Not only are we using natural gas prodigally as well as wasting it, but we are shipping a lot of it outside of the state, where it will be put to purposes for which coal should be used."

Ise confided to his audience that his prophecies of lumber and oil shortages, made 20 years ago, are now coming true. And that isn't all.

"Mankind is gradually destroying the planet which is his home," said Ise. "Soil is going down the rivers at the rate of 200,000 farms a year. Lead and zinc are nearly gone. We are importing as well as producing copper. For iron we are having to turn to the lower grades of ore. Wild life is being destroyed and the balance of nature disturbed. The water supply is becoming a problem. There is an insufficient amount for irrigation. The ground water level is lower."

These things said Ise, have an unmistakable meaning of scarcity in the future, even if "we can feed people well for a time in spite of the increase in population, and there will be housing for some time to come and an adequate supply of clothing. In the matter of food Americans will even have the problem of the surplus to deal with."

The economist left his audience with the impression that there is worse waiting around the corner.

In his career as a conservationist, John Ise spoke frequently to groups not always sympathetic to his views. In 1948 he told a Lawrence Kiwanis club that Americans had already wasted half of the country's oil resources, and even when scarcity was at hand, went on wasting them the same as ever. The Lawrence *Journal-World*, November 5, 1948, reported on the "dismal economist's" speech in an article headed "Waste Is Large." "Man and the Other Animals" was Ise's topic for a talk in 1960 to the K.U. philosophy club. In its report on the speech the *University Daily Kansan*, January 7, 1960, said the "perennial prophet of doom" criticized man, his religion and his life. By that time the pensive looking Ise, right, was professor emeritus and was described by the student newspaper as K.U.'s "famous and outspoken liberal."



## Ise Not Confident About Humans

John Ise, professor emeritus of economics, told of an "unfortunate wretch" in Peking, China, who was disembowelled on a street by a honey cart. The persons standing nearby laughed.

"I'm not as confident about this human animal as many people are," Prof. Ise said. He sat on a table last night at the Philosophy Club meeting in the Kansas Union and talked about compassion, kindness, and judgment in men.

"Anyone who sees suffering all the time, and suffers himself, is not going to be very kind," he reasoned.

Prof. Ise puffed on his habitually present, straight-stemmed pipe during his speech, "Man and the Other Animals." He answered questions from the 50-person audience.

**Man is a Nitwit**

"I've got to say that animals aren't very good judges. A dog will love a master he ought to chew up. But a man who never judges things is a nitwit," he said.

The famous and outspoken liberal—sometimes termed K.U.'s perennial prophet of doom—criticized man, his religion, his life. Speaking with the mellowness of his youthful 74 years (he refused a ride home after the

speech, insisting on walking with the aid of his stout cane), Prof. Ise emphasized that he was not a pacifist, but detested needless cruelty and senseless pain.

He said:

"Man is not so superior to animals, but can be either better or worse than animals.

"Man is supposed to have brains, reasoning power—whatever that means—yet he believes business and political advertisements, he reads the pulp magazines and books, he buys hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of patent medicines; he perhaps adored Joseph McCarthy. He may stop his car when a black cat crosses the street—may begin no journey on the 13th.

"What shall we say of the man in Alabama who is a Democrat because his grandfather was, or of the Kansan who is a Republican for the same reason?"

**Zeal Orgies Are Common**

Prof. Ise said some men seem capable of thinking, but most show only a "readiness to indulge in orgies of religious zeal for some cause or hysterical anger at some real or fancied threat or danger.

"The McCarthy insanity illustrated

the latter. Frank Knight believes that only a few men can think, the rest can only become excited—throw up their hands and forget to use their brains."

He said that birds and animals probably have more mental powers than man gives them credit for: "We have no way of looking at them from their own point of view. We rate them by our own standards."

He reviewed birds' unerring migrational habits.

"We may call it 'instinct,' a word that covers a large total of ignorance, but the truth is that with all our cunning we cannot understand that kind of intelligence."

**Dogs Have Dignity**

He mentioned the persistence of coyotes in spite of heavy hunting pressure and told of the raccoon who stole bait from a dozen traps. He said that a dog has a sense of dignity and shame.

Man's large brain enables him to create, and it also makes him in some ways the most destructive of the animals.

Prof. Ise said man spread across America 100 years ago "like a devouring horde of locusts or Japanese beetles, destroying everything that

they found which was destructible. He did create cities—about the ugliest in the world. He also built roads and railroads so that he could so farther and destroy more in a process called 'development.'

"I wonder where another century of creative development will leave us."

He said that men have a number of crazy customs, but that many men do their worst in the realm of the supernatural. He talked of the religious fear of New Guinea savages and the beliefs of American Puritans.

**Deer Is Sensible**

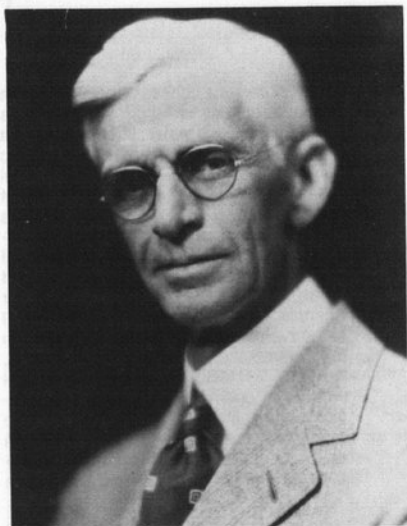
"Looking at a deer or antelope from the outside, I get the impression that his life, short as it is, is rather preferable to that of a Puritan. He (deer or antelope) doesn't invent the things he is afraid of—which seems sensible."

Prof. Ise said that man is a creative and aspiring animal, but that only about one man in 10 million creates great art, music, or literature—"which is a slightly larger proportion than we find in baboons, none of which create these things. One ten-millionth is only a little more than none, is it not?"

(Continued on Page 8)



William Allen White (1868-1944), below, the sage of Emporia, read John Ise's *Oil Policy* and found it so controversial that he penned a letter that is a near classic in its defense of the principle of academic freedom. White wrote to Ernest Lindley (1869-1940), right, chancellor of the University of Kansas on October 27, 1926, calling the book "academic research . . . into dynamite" and expressing the concern that oilmen and their attorneys would "land on you and the University." White may have borrowed trouble, for no written complaints against Ise and his book were deposited in the K.U. archives.



White apparently did borrow trouble, for although Kansas oilmen may have been outraged, no written complaints against Ise and his book are deposited in the archives of the University of Kansas. At least one American petroleum trade journal published a brief and uncritical account of Ise's *Oil Policy*. But the most critical trade journal notice known to the writer appeared in the *Petroleum Times* of London. The anonymous author of this notice classed Professor Ise as "a conservationist of the most extreme type" who had charged the leaders of the oil industry with "all kinds of unworthy motives" and who believed there was "an evilly designed plot on the part of the oil industry to exploit, and use as extravagantly as possible, the oil resources of the United States." In advocating a "policy of excessive taxation and rigid restrictions," the professor was said "to have overlooked the fact that it would be possible only by a despotic Government which the United States has not yet got, nor shows any indication of getting." Ise and other conservationists who believed that natural resources should be used sparingly in order to provide for future generations were said to be "blind to the fact that while the generation of to-day may make a liberal use of natural resources, they give a *quid pro quo* in the rich heritage of accumulated experience and knowledge which is made available for the next generation." It was argued that although future generations would be less generously endowed with natural resources, the knowledge they inherited would enable them to enjoy higher material standards than the present generation. This is the belief in the prospect of indefinite material abundance—an article of faith of the cornucopians—which founders on the law of diminishing returns.<sup>40</sup>

## VII

JUST HOW much influence Dr. Ise's three resource books exerted on policy makers in government and business is difficult to say. One reviewer of *Oil Policy* said it should be on the shelves of every library and on the desk of every oil man. Even if this ideal situation had

been achieved, there is no telling how widely Ise was read or whether many people took him seriously or even knew of his writings. It was unfortunate that Ise published his first two books in the decade of the 1920's, for this decade saw a waning of enthusiasm for resource conservation and a return to business as usual after the Populist and Progressive reforms of the prewar decades. One exception to this generalization was the fear of an impending oil shortage after World War I. In fact, many officials in both government and business were convinced that the United States was rapidly using up its oil supplies. Ise's book repeated these pessimistic forecasts. However, the book's credibility was impaired in the late 1920's and 1930's when, as a result of the discovery of new fields, the oil industry's major problem shifted from expected shortage to unexpected glut. By the mid-1930's oil conservation had taken the form of production restrictions under the joint auspices of state and national governments, with the primary goal of limiting output and raising prices to a level commensurate with normal profit expectations.<sup>41</sup>

The fact that 35 years elapsed between the publication of Dr. Ise's second and third resource books is suggestive of the disappointment he may have felt regarding the impact of his works on policy. During this long interval he turned to the writing of *Sod and Stubble*. In gathering material for this study of pioneer history and life of a small community in Osborne county, he discovered the letters of a Kansas homesteader, Howard Ruede, which he proceeded to edit. These letters were published under the title of *Sod-House Days: Letters From a Kansas Homesteader, 1877-1878*. The decade of the 1930's also saw Ise at work on his *Economics* textbook. In June, 1938, he told a reporter for the *Kansas City Times* that he hoped to complete his book on economics in the next two years. "He refers to the book as 'a compromise with the devil,' because it is the only thing he has written with the hope of making money. The book will systematize my own ideas, but it won't be much of a book. Previously I've always known that what I was writing wouldn't make money. Now I'm be-

40. "High Prices to Conserve Petroleum," *Petroleum Times*, London, v. 16, no. 405 (October 16, 1926), pp. 687-688. See, also, the brief notice of Ise's *United States Oil Policy* in *Oil and Gas Journal*, Tulsa, Okla. (October 7, 1926), p. 83.

41. Gerald D. Nash, *United States Oil Policy 1890-1964: Business and Government in Twentieth Century America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1968), pp. 43-46, 244-248.



Doris Fleeson (1901-1970), syndicated columnist and former student of John Ise, wrote the foreword to a volume, *The American Way*, published by the faculty of the K.U. department of economics at the time of Ise's retirement in 1955. The book is a collection of his most famous satirical speeches and letters.

ginning to think too much about royalties and that's pernicious."<sup>42</sup>

But not all of Dr. Ise's time was taken up with projects that took him away from his primary interest in resource conservation. Three years after his *Oil Policy* book appeared he wrote *Our Vanishing Oil Resources* for the League for Industrial Democracy. Published in the form of a 10-cent pamphlet, it summarizes the findings in his *Oil Policy* and is intended to arouse the American electorate to "a genuine attempt to conserve this and other natural resources in the interest of all." Ise served as a consultant in the settlement of the Mexican oil nationalization controversy, and he testified in a court case relating to the oil proration scheme. In the investigation of the oil industry by the Temporary National Economic Committee in 1939, Ise was employed by the committee as expert to represent the government, and he wrote the report. Moreover, Ise's *Economics* textbook includes

lengthy discussions of the waste of resources, public ownership and conservation of natural resources, irrational consumption patterns, and the impact of the machine age upon irreplaceable fossil fuels.<sup>43</sup>

Despite the appearance of energy and resource abundance, Ise did not relent in his predictions of future scarcity. In February, 1945, he commented on a paper which was prepared and read by Dr. Harold F. Williamson at the annual meeting of the American Economic Association on the topic, "Prophecies of Scarcity or Exhaustion of Natural Resources in the United States." Ise agreed with the author that prophets in the resource field had often been inaccurate, but he did not think we should stop estimating and predicting just because we could not be more accurate.

We must look ahead, we must base our national policies on some theory as to future reserves, and we have not generally weighted future interests too heavily, or indeed heavily enough. The time of scarcity, if not as immediate as some of the prophets have believed, is coming, too soon. If the prophets of abundance are correct, for a few years or a few decades, the prophets of scarcity, at any rate with regard to some of our resources, will surely be correct for the ensuing thousand years. However long such resources as timber, oil, gas, lead, copper, zinc, and iron ore last, they will be gone too soon.

In his seminal article, "The Theory of Value as Applied to Natural Resources," Ise in 1925 had tackled the problem of weighing future interests. He proposed the principle of pricing nonrenewable resources at the same level as the cost of producing adequate and satisfactory renewable substitutes and thus encourage conservation and the development of substitutes by means of high prices.<sup>44</sup>

Honor and recognition came to Professor Ise in his mature years. He was elected president of the Mid-West Economic Association and vice-president of the American Economic Association, of which organization he was also a member of the executive committee and board

43. John Ise, *Our Vanishing Oil Resources* (New York: League for Industrial Democracy, 1929), pp. 1-20; testimony of Dr. John Ise, "John Ise Papers," oil case in district court, circa 1948; testimony of Prof. John Ise, *Hearings Before the Temporary National Economic Committee, Congress of the United States*, 76th Cong. 2d Sess., pt. 14, Petroleum Industry, Sec. 1, September 25-30, 1939 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1940), pp. 7100-7112; John Ise, *Economics* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946), pp. 34-36, 174-178, 190-193, 452-455, 525.

44. Comment by John Ise, *American Economic Review*, v. 35, no. 2 (May, 1945), pp. 133-134; John Ise, "The Theory of Value as Applied to Natural Resources," *ibid.*, v. 15, no. 2 (June, 1925), pp. 284-291.

42. J.D.W., "John Ise, the Downs, Kas., Singer," *Kansas City Times*, June 1, 1938.



of editors. Upon his retirement in 1955, Ise's colleagues in the department of economics and the school of business at the University of Kansas published a collection of his most famous satirical speeches and letters under the title, *The American Way*. Doris Fleeson, a syndicated columnist and former student of Dr. Ise, wrote in the foreword to this volume, "John Ise has spent a lifetime trying to drag his native Kansas into the twentieth century. Nobody can say Kansas hasn't put up a fight. There were moments when it almost seemed that John was winning—with an assist from the depression. But farm prices went up and Kansans turned back happily to singing—strictly to each other, of course—John's favorite song: *The More We Get Together, the Happier We'll Be*."<sup>45</sup>

Perhaps John Ise's posthumous fame will in time exceed that achieved during his lifetime, insofar as his published writings are concerned. Renewed interest in Ise's work can be attributed to the shrinking availability of natural resources for continued material well being

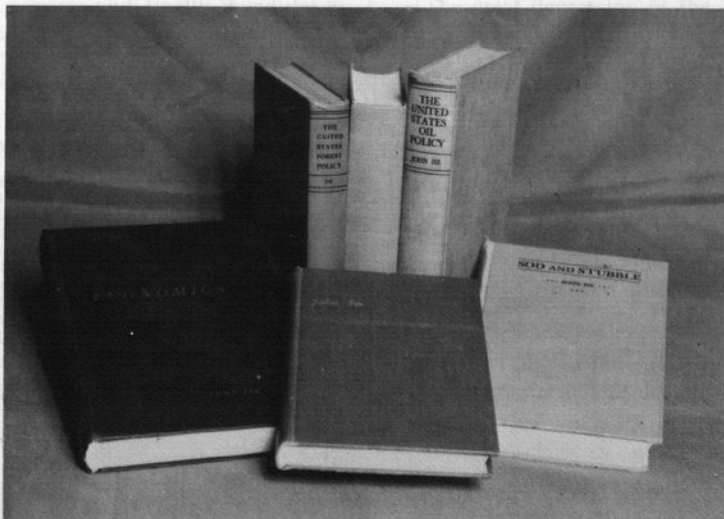
and economic growth, sharply rising energy costs, environmental degradation, and the impact of new technology. Ise's books and his 1925 article in the *American Economic Review* have been cited by 37 authors of periodical literature during the past decade. One reason for the increased citation is the ready availability of Ise's books. In 1972 his *Forest Policy* and *Oil Policy* were reprinted by Arno Press, and in 1979 the same publisher reprinted his *Park Policy*. Dr. C. Sharp Cook quotes extensively from Ise's *Oil Policy* in an article dealing with early writers who warned that sooner or later our fossil fuels would run out. He says "we can now look in retrospect at the statements of Ise and have a greater understanding of his concerns."<sup>46</sup>

Prominent among the economists who have rediscovered John Ise are Dr. Herman Daly and his former graduate student and colleague, Dr. Gerald Alonzo Smith. Smith describes Ise's *U.S. Oil Policy* "as a socio-economic classic, much ahead of his time," his article on the pricing of irreplaceable natural resources as "a remarkable study," and his discussion of such

45. John Ise, *The American Way* (Lawrence: Department of Economics & School of Business, University of Kansas, 1955), pp. v-vi; Clare D. Kinsman, ed., "John Ise (1885-1969)," *Contemporary Authors. Permanent Series* (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1975), v. 1, p. 318.

46. C. Sharp Cook, "Don't Say We Weren't Warned," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Chicago, v. 32, no. 7 (September, 1976), pp. 21-24.

John Ise's posthumous fame may in time exceed that achieved in his lifetime. Renewed interest in his published writings has resulted from the shrinking availability of natural resources and sharply rising energy costs which he predicted. His books published in the period from 1920 to 1946 are being rediscovered by economists who are now grappling with problems that he alone in his time dealt with extensively. Pictured are his three volumes on natural resources, his economics textbook, the biography of his parents and the collection of his letters and speeches. Taken together they are a legacy and a testimony to his career as America's first natural resource economist.



topics as conservation and wasteful consumption in his *Economics* as "going against the drift of current economic thinking." Smith submits that

John Ise's writings in the period from 1920-1946 justify him to be called America's first natural resource economist and that his incorporation of the physical coordinates of value into his analysis as well as his critical questioning of modern man's consumption of the products derived from our exhaustible resources are still valid and deserve to be studied by modern economists who now in increasing numbers grapple with the problems that he alone in his time dealt with extensively.<sup>47</sup>

This writer, as a former student, junior col-

47. Gerald Alonzo Smith, "A Historical and Methodological Study of Ends and Means in Economic Theory" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1979); Herman E. Daly, *The Steady-State Economy: The Economics of Biophysical Equilibrium and Moral Growth* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman & Co., 1977).

league, and friend of John Ise, is proud to have had the opportunity to know this great man. Possibly the key to Dr. Ise's character and achievement is to be found in his perception of his mother. "She usually planned for the worst that could possibly happen," Ise wrote. "Then if fortune frowned, she was prepared for its worst blows; and if the future proved better than she had expected, it was easy to become adjusted to happier circumstances."<sup>48</sup> Rosa Ise planned for the worst in order to have a margin of safety for the survival of her family on a frontier homestead; her son John, too, prepared for the worst by waging a crusade against waste and exhorting the American people to use their remaining resources wisely and economically.

48. Ise, *Sod and Stubble*, p. 148.