

*Marjory Stoneman Douglas talks about the natural cycles of the Everglades and attempts to control them*

Interviewer: (37:55) We were talking before about the natural cycle, the cycle of flood and drought, and that the modifications of that system have changed that cycle to some extent. How has the cycle been changed and what is the significance of those changes to the animals and vegetation?

Marjory Stoneman Douglas: Well, I'm sorry, but the cycle hasn't changed. We still have wet and dry cycles. That's inevitable. That's why we're having all this rain; we're in a rainy cycle now. That has not changed. It's the effects of the land part that receives. That's the basis of the cycle; the reception of the cycle, you might say... I'm not phrasing it well. I don't know exactly how to say it. It's the way the land has been shaped in spite of the cycle that has been bad. That is why they have... You see, what they should do is recognize the cycle and act accordingly. Think out what they're going to do to take care of great surplus water at some times and no water at other times. But they've tried to do away, they've tried to correct, change the cycle. You cannot change the cycle. That's the world. You can't change the weather, you know; that's the one thing you cannot do. But they have, they've tried to do it without recognizing the cycle and without adapting to it. They haven't recognized the true nature of the geography of the country, both the weather and the geography and the geology and all that. They've been very stupid about it. They have refused to admit that it's important to pay attention to natural cycles, but the cycle itself has not changed.

Interviewer: Okay, let me see if I understand this: their changes have tried to even out...

MSD: Exactly. People don't like cycles, they want it all to be alike, and you can't do that. You see, they want it all to be one way. They want it all drained and they want just so much water and always to be the same way. Well, you can't do that. You've got to be, you've got to be adaptable. You've got to adapt your systems to the cycles.

Interviewer: I think that what's puzzling me is that there have been some claims that the droughts when they occur seem to be worse than they had been historically.

MSD: Well, I will take it back in one sense. By drying up that land they have decreased the amount of water. So they have increased the extent of the dry cycle. But you'll see by the present rains we've had, it isn't entirely the water from the Everglades that makes the difference. We have water from the west and from the sea. So at times like this in a wet zone, we still get a lot of water. You must understand that it doesn't all come from the Everglades, so it doesn't all dry up. But in the course of time, I don't know now what proportion of rainwater comes from the Everglades. I don't know whether anybody does. But in time, there would be less of that. We would have much less water, so there would be dryer times, and maybe there wouldn't be as much water in the wet times. But, there would still be the cycles. It's very difficult to explain because when you explain a system, you explain one thing, you see. And here we are explaining a fluctuation period. And it's difficult, that's why it's difficult to understand, I suppose.

Interviewer: I think you're right.

MSD: And I'm not sure I understand it entirely either.

Interviewer: I think it is. I think it's a difficult... It seems simple on its surface.

MSD: Oh yeah, but the more you understand it, the more you see that it's a changing picture. But it changes within limits. The limits are there.

Interviewer: What are those limits?

MSD: The limits of the dry... of the extreme dry and the extreme wet. Those are the limits.