

Foresters Meet to Discuss New Problems

On this page Frank Thone tells of some of the important papers presented at the meeting of the American Forestry Association at New Haven, Conn., January 28 and 29.

Economy and Forests

The present economy program of the government is proving an expensive and wasteful one when it comes to the protection of American forests from fire. It is resulting in losses to our resources far greater than the savings shown in the budget. This in substance is the charge made by George D. Pratt, president of the American Forestry Association in his address which opened their annual session at New Haven, Conn., last week.

"The forest law now in force recognizes that reforestation of our vast areas of cut-over land is the outstanding need in providing future forests, and that adequate fire prevention is the master key," Mr. Pratt said. "To encourage states and private individuals to protect their forests from fire, it authorizes an appropriation by the Government of two and a half million dollars annually. During the current fiscal year Congress and the Bureau of the Budget provided under this agreed program only \$710,000, while state and private agencies responded with expenditures for fire protection of almost \$4,000,000. I am glad to say that the new estimates provide for an increase of \$290,000, but we cannot escape the fact that the act is in danger so long as the federal government fails to occupy a position of leadership."

The various state governments are not making a creditable showing in their forestry programs, as compared with the federal government, in the opinion of F. W. Luening, Milwaukee editor, who addressed the meeting. Remiss though Washington has been in some respects, the central government has at least created great national forests and is doing active research in forest promotion and forest protection; but with two or three possible exceptions the state programs are of the "blueprint" variety. Mr. Luening believes that among other causes for this situation is the fact that business interests can exert pressure more effectively in their state capitals than they can in Washington, but he is of the opinion that when they come to see the advantages of having their supplies of future raw material grown on public land under government protection

they will change their policies radically.

Wood Wastes

Utilization of wood wastes by chemical manufactures was the topic of Carlile P. Winslow, director of the U. S. Forest Products Laboratory of Madison, Wis. Wood wastes are well suited for chemical exploitation, he said, but the trouble is that at present the supply far exceeds the demand, and it will continue to do so unless something radical happens to the industry. One-third of the wood grown on a given area is all that now finds its way to the market in any form, he said, and it is a big job to find uses for the other two-thirds. Even the rayon business, "baby giant" of timber industries, can grow to thirty times its present size before it will force a doubling of the present pulpwood production. The wood alcohol industry, now a large consumer of wood wastes, is threatened with stagnation and decline by the European synthetic methanol process. Grain alcohol can be made from wood much more cheaply than is possible at present by a new European process, and if the price of gasoline goes high enough to justify its manufacture on a large scale, a maximum of one and one-half billion gallons can be made annually from wood; but this possibility depends on an "if."

National Parks

National Parks are multiplying in number at the expense of quality, in the opinion of the association. The members of the association voted unanimously for a resolution condemning "the persistent efforts of many local neighborhoods to force into the National Park System inferior areas, to the inevitable lowering of the System's standards," and appealing to the people of the country to demand of Congress "laws which shall define and safeguard the National Parks System in its historic conception."

Resolutions were also passed urging the immediate enactment of the McNary-Woodruff bill to make possible the purchase of lands for national forest purposes in the eastern states, recommending that not mere acreage but also quality of the land and standing timber, and its usefulness as water protection be considered in acquiring such areas.

Airplanes and Forests

The Association went on record as regretting the withdrawal of Army airplanes which had been loaned for fire scouting, and recommended that the service be restored, or that Congress provide sufficient planes for this work. Fire protection in general is being badly neglected, it was claimed, and the folly of economizing on preventive measure and then spending money recklessly to stop fires once they get started was pointed out.

Water Supply

The importance of forests in the water supply of cities was discussed by William R. Copeland, sanitary engineer of the Connecticut State Water Commission. At the present time, he told his audience, our great cities will go great distances and spend vast sums of money to get forest water. He cited the instance of one New England city which, although it is located on the banks of a large river, spent \$7,000,000 on a tunnel through a mountain and under a good-sized lake, to carry water from a forested mountain watershed.

But even this willingness to spend huge sums for forest-purified and forest-conserved water will not in the end solve the whole water supply problem for the crowded urban areas of the East, Mr. Copeland insisted. The time will come when such supplies will be inadequate, and then we shall have to draw upon the present stream and lake supplies, now despised and feared as too polluted for human use. The problem of stream pollution is not beyond solution, he declared. Scientific engineering can even now reduce the amounts of mineral and organic impurities that get into our rivers, and progressive mill owners are ready to cooperate in applying modern methods if the municipalities will do their share. Forests also assist in keeping water pure, for water that drains into the streams from forested areas is cool, and cool water contains a larger percentage of oxygen to clean up the organic matter that gets into it. But as the stream becomes warmed by the addition of water from sun-beaten denuded areas, some of the oxygen leaves it, with the result that the pollution increases until the water is fit for neither man nor fish, nor any other decent living thing.

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Forestry Meeting

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Grass Conservation

"Should this harvest of grass fail for a single year, famine would depopulate the land." With this excerpt from a speech of the late Senator Inghalls as his text, Will Barnes of the U. S. Forest Service painted a vivid picture of the importance and romance of the grasslands in the history of the American nation.

The cow is the foster-mother of the race, and her sons have hauled the ponderous covered wagons of its migrations and pulled the plows that broke the pioneers' first furrows, Mr. Barnes reminded his hearers; and where cattle are to go, there must be grass. Many of the finest of the grasses in the older parts of the country are naturalized citizens: the brome grasses, orchard grass, even the famous Kentucky bluegrass; but out on America's real grasslands in the West there are none to equal the native gramagrass and curly mesquite and bunch grasses.

"No other country has such valuable winter ranges as we have throughout the arid regions of the far West, where the native grasses grow in regions of extremely limited rainfall," Mr. Barnes declared. "They cure on the ground equal to hay, furnishing feed for livestock during the winter months. Neither are there any other countries of which we know that can claim such areas of purely summer range as are found in our West in the high mountain regions, where the lush feed grows with astonishing rapidity in the spring. All this must be removed from these ranges each season or be lost forever.

"As with all of our resources, however, we Americans have been wanton destroyers of our grasslands, mainly through over-grazing. Today this

country has nearly 180 millions of acres of strictly grass lands—areas which under no known system of cultivation can ever be used for any purpose other than grazing livestock. This is an area larger than our largest state, Texas. Even at the low valuation of \$2 an acre it means over \$300,000,000 worth of public property lying idle and deteriorating in usefulness—a liability rather than an asset."

Mr. Barnes appealed for a scientific program of development for American grasslands. Conservation measures, he pointed out, are now effective in all the public domain except only in the grazing country, where they are of immediate and pressing importance.

New England

New England plans to recoup a part of her threatened prestige in industry by getting full value out of her "stern and rockbound coast" and the "murmuring pines and the hemlocks" of her forests as national recreation grounds; and she intends to tell the world about them, through a scientifically planned campaign of advertising.

The value to this picturesque and historic section of the country of what he termed its "intangibles" was discussed by Albert M. Turner, field secretary of the Connecticut State Park and Forest Commission. Mr. Turner announced that as an engineer he had always been used to dealing with things of strictly tangible value, but that like many of his fellow Yankees he has come to realize the "use" of beauty. Only he said, his section has lagged behind the rest of the country in providing areas for the specific purpose of recreation.

"New England has two per cent. of the land in the United States, seven per cent. of the people, and nine per cent. of the wealth," he stated, "yet of public land available for recreation we have now only one-half of one per cent. and this in spite of the fact that we have twenty-five million acres of land, or sixty per cent. of our total area, in wooded lands. The people of the United States have now set aside or acquired a hundred and forty-seven million acres of public park and forest, or almost eight per cent. of the land area of the forty-eight states; and they are steadily acquiring more."

The ratio of public land available for recreation, Mr. Turner admitted, is greater in the West, Idaho heading the list with thirty-three per cent. of her total area, while the percentage is "almost nothing in certain states that need not here be advertised." Yet the East is not wholly asleep, he point-

ed out, for "New York has seven per cent and is buying more, while New Hampshire has seven per cent. and seems to like it."

Mr. Turner disclaimed any intention to lay down details of a scheme for "parking" New England, but he recommended that "for the benefit of its own people, its own timber supply, and its own watersheds, the section should promptly begin to formulate plans for the acquisition of at least eight or ten per cent. of its land area, or three to four million acres."

Cutting Forests Faster

Conservation of timber does not necessarily consist in not cutting it; some of our forest areas would be more profitable to the nation as a whole if they were cut faster and replanted. This in brief was one of the claims advanced by Robert B. Goodman, forest economist.

"There is still a vast supply of mature standing timber that needs to be cut and used," Mr. Goodman said. "There is something like six hundred billion feet of standing timber that is no longer growing, more than half of it in the process of decay and subject to insect, fire and storm hazard, all of it occupying space in productive forests that should be devoted to growing timber. This mature timber, the most valuable portion of the forest, is frozen capital until it is cut and used."

Mr. Goodman also advocated tax adjustment that will make it profitable for land owners to let their trees grow to full size, instead of encouraging them to cut immature timber because the land bearing it is not paying its taxes. He cited a case in California where immediately after a tax reduction became effective a large lumber concern stopped cutting twelve-inch trees and made a twenty-inch diameter their minimum logging limit.

A feature of the meeting was a large display of posters used in the educational campaign against the fire hazard due to carelessness with tobacco and campfires. Three judges passed on the exhibit, and awarded first prize to one from the Province of Quebec, showing a French "habitant" and his refugee family gazing sadly at the ruins of their cabin destroyed by a forest fire. Posters in the exhibit were in English, French, two Indian languages, Russian and Chinese. One, which attracted much attention, stated tersely: "This is God's country. Don't set it on fire and make it look like Hell."

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