



More Than Trees Die

➤ MORE THAN TREES die when a forest is burned. Loss of the lumber and other tree products is grievous enough, but even so it is only one item in the sum of the disaster. Many of the rest are tangible items, assessable in dollar damages. Others are not so easily itemized, but their value will be recognized none the less, even by the most utilitarian.

Forests are inhabited places, shelters for all manner of beasts and birds. The fate of these, in a major forest fire, is dreadful: terrified flight until limbs or wings will no longer carry them, then agonized death in the flames. Afterwards—no sport for the hunter with either gun or camera, over that blackened area, perhaps for several human lifetimes.

Fish, too, are sufferers. Forest streams are typically cool and swift—the kind of water that trout delight in. In the worst forest conflagrations, the fish are often killed outright by the sheer heating of the water; but even where the fire is not severe enough for that, the after-consequences are just as fatal to the fish. Polluted with poisons from roasted plants and dead flesh, befouled with charred fragments of destruction, mud-

died by soil exposed to erosion, heated by the beating sun with no more leafy canopy to intercept it, the streams become totally unfit to support the kind of life they once contained. They become slum waters, or even dwindle to mere trickling remnants of their former selves.

The very soil itself becomes the victim of a forest fire. The forest floor is a complex always in a delicate state of balance. Roots of trees and lesser plants, burrows of mice and moles, myriads of insects and worms and other creeping things, and unseen hosts of microorganisms are all essential parts of it. Their

death leaves the soil mere carrion, no more a soil than a charred trunk is a tree, or a live-roasted carcass a deer or a grouse.

Fire season in the western forests is approaching its height. With the CCC out of action, and many of the best men in the Forest Service away on war duty, this becomes a critical year indeed for our forests, now needed as never before. It is to be hoped that all Americans who have occasion to be in our national forests this year will observe very carefully the order of the day: "Hold your fire!"

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MEDICINE

New Medical Society

First meeting is held in Chicago of organization devoted to getting treatment to low income groups at few cents per month prepaid.

➤ THE FIRST meeting of a new organization devoted to getting good medical care to low income groups for a few cents a month on a voluntary, pre-payment basis was held in Chicago as a curtain raiser to the meeting of the American Medical Association.

The new organization is the Medical Service Plans Council of America. Its purpose is "one of cooperation and mutually constructive aid" for the various medical service plans sponsored by state and county medical societies which are components of the American Medical Association.

President of the new organization is Dr. James C. McCann, of Worcester, Mass., and Dr. F. L. Feierabend, of Kansas City, Mo., is secretary-treasurer. Both Canada and the United States will be represented.

The growing demand by the public for protection against the catastrophic illness costs has convinced American physicians that they must take the lead in supplying plans to meet this demand in a way that will insure the public good medical care on a prepayment basis. Medical society sponsorship and control, the members of the new group believe, is essential to this.

This thought was reflected in the address of Brig. Gen. Fred W. Rankin, president of the American Medical Association, at the opening meeting of the Association's House of Delegates.

"We cannot disregard," he said, "the growing interest of the public, the government and various lay groups in the

administration of medical care; nor can we afford to engage in a struggle for domination."

He called, instead, for immediate establishment by the Association of "suitable agencies" to investigate this and other pressing problems confronting the medical profession.

The American Medical Association took what appears to be a big forward step on this problem of the economics of medical care when its house of delegates in their final session of the meeting voted to establish a Council on Medical Service and Public Relations.

The first duty with which the new council is charged is "to make available facts, data and medical opinions with respect to timely and adequate rendition of medical care to the American people." It is also charged with studying and suggesting "means for the distribution of medical services to the public consistent with the principles adopted by the house of delegates."

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