CREATION OF A FOREST CONSCIOUSNESS— CANADA'S GREATEST NEED

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THE WHITE PINE BUREAU welcomes the opportunity of conveying to the Canadian Society of Forest Engineers in convention its greetings. It hopes that your deliberations may be fruitful of good to the Forest Products Industry and to Canada, and it hopes that in these deliberations you may devote a portion of your time to considering problems which affect the Pine and Hardwood Trade.

You will have noticed press references to an affiliation between the White Pine Bureau and the Canadian Hardwood Bureau. I am happy to say that arrangements are completed in this connection and await only the formal endorsement of the Canadian Lumbermen's Association at their annual meeting two weeks hence. These two bureaux have numerous problems on which they invite your co-operation. In return, they hope that you will use the facilities of these bureaux in solving the problems which confront your association and with which these bureaux may be able to help.

The Forest Engineer and Woods Official may be termed the Cinderellas of the Forest Products Industry. As Kipling would put it, they are the "Sons of Martha." Theirs is a constant struggle against the forces of nature, away from the plaudits of the crowd. So long as they are functioning efficiently and effectively, they are "Out of sight and out of mind." It is only when things are not running smoothly that those who sit on directorates and the general public even realize that there are men responsible for forest workings. Then, of course, these masters of yours are apt to be critical.

I have chosen the title of this talk deliberately. In recent years, not only have you Forest Engineers been lost sight of, but actually the whole Forest Products Industry has been overlooked in our development of national economy. It is the contention of the White Pine Bureau that the Forest Products Industry is the very keystone of the Arch of Canadian Prosperity. Yet in every sphere of public legislation—Dominion, Provincial, and Municipal—it is not only not getting its proper share of consideration; it is actually being neglected and even legislated against.

At your last convention, held in Ottawa in conjunction with the meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, I pointed out the utter futility of considering problems in silviculture and forest

regeneration unless some consideration is given to the preservation of markets for forest products. An almost criminal heresy has been preached for the past generation in Canada—that wood is an unsafe product of construction and a non-durable one. The preaching of such a doctrine in a country like Canada which is so absolutely dependent on the liquidation of its forest wealth is worthy of the demoniacal inspiration of imps from the nether pit. Practically 17% of Canada's whole employment of labour is provided by the Forest Products Industry. Over and above that, neither her agriculture nor her mining industry could survive without it. Of recent years, we have been deafened with references to the deficits of our railway companies. It was thought that a good crop in the West would solve our railway problem. Well, we had a good crop in the West last summer. We also had a reasonably good year in mining but our railway earnings have gone down. Why? In large measure because the traffic in Forest Products has declined. In the first 8 months of 1938 our exports to Great Britain fell off very perceptibly. There was a reduction of 10 million feet of pine, 15 million feet of birch and 59 million feet of spruce. During the same period, there was an even greater reduction in our lumber exports to U.S.A. Exports to that market in pine fell off 28 million feet, in birch 12 million feet and in spruce 81 million feet.

It is self-evident that a successful forest products industry is absolutely essential to the prosperity of Canada, but often it is the most evident truth that is most difficult to drive home. Lack of a forest consciousness on the part of the Canadian people has resulted in Canada having no forest policy to adequately protect the interests of posterity. Lack of a forest consciousness has resulted in many hundreds of millions of dollars being spent on relief without one cent of collateral return when much of it might have been spent on forest improvement and protection in a way which would have added enormously to Canada's potential wealth. Lack of a forest consciousness is permitting an insane competition in the marketing of lumber which is productive of no profit to the employer, only beggarly wages to the employee and a wholesale raping of the forest wealth of this country to the ultimate injury of everyone concerned.

Naturally, the White Pine Bureau's chief concern is White Pine. It has repeatedly preached the doctrine that means should be taken to preserve in perpetuity a production of that aristocrat of Softwoods. By that is not meant that restrictions should be placed on the cutting of mature pine. It does mean however that provision should be made to permit small pine to grow to maturity. It does mean also that adequate checks should be applied

to the various pest dangers which threaten young growth. And it does mean that an adequate fire-protection and reforestation programme should be followed. The Bureau takes the attitude that the responsibility for such measures rests with the Governments which in the main own the forests and regulate their cutting policy. It wishes to compliment the Government of Ontario on its recent application of a minimum diameter restriction on the cutting of White Pine. It wishes it could compliment it on a more positive policy towards combatting White Pine Blister Rust.

In this last connection, it is assailed by two opinions: one that Blister rust is an immediate menace which can be checked economically, the other that its menace is exaggerated and that to cope with it would be more costly than to ignore it. As the Bureau's representative, I would ask your association to give this problem your serious consideration. It would be a veritable national calamity if in the matter of three or four decades the most valuable of all Canadian Forest trees were to disappear as a great commercial species.

There is something about *Pinus strobus* which is woven into the warp and woof of this country. It is so intimately a part of the pioneering effort of Eastern Canada and the New England and Northeastern States that it is just inconceivable that our people will allow it to pass out of the national picture. It is a tradition dating back for over three centuries, and should be just as sacredly protected as our traditions of liberty and business integrity. Personally, I am a firm believer in the idea that White Pine lumbering and White Pine lumber itself played no small part in the shaping of our national character. After all, are we not all just creatures of environment?

A lumberman's Association would be the last organization on earth to advocate governmental restrictions on the cutting of mature pine. After all, the purpose of the Almighty Creator is not fulfilled until the fullest possible use is made of His Creations. There is nothing more silly in my opinion than the mawkish ideas of certain sections of the public that it is an act of vandalism to harvest mature forest stands. To my mind it would be an act of sacrilege if we neglected to do so. But, the government should safeguard its forest investment by exercising caution in permitting expansion of production efforts in years of depression. It seems ridiculous that there should be an increase in small operations, co-incident with a restriction in demand for lumber.

Now mind, I am not criticizing government departments. They are victims of public clamour. Some of their most foolish acts are often forced upon them in the name of public welfare. I am criticizing the people of

Canada for their lack of a forest consciousness. The people of Canada are the trustees for the Almighty of a great national heritage, and they are absolutely ignorant of what it all means. To my mind, that is the reason for your troubles, and lumbermen's troubles, and in large measure the whole economic failure of our country.

If we could educate the public to think intelligently about their forest wealth—to legislate in the interest of this basic industry, we would be accomplishing more for Canada and Canadians than the Canadian Corps did in France. Yes, as much as the Fathers of Confederation did in 1867. And this is where I feel that your association fits into the picture. I know a little about the history of your association and about its problems. If you will permit me as a well-wisher to give one word of advice, I would advise your association to dedicate itself to a national purpose, and I would say let that purpose be the determination to develop a national forest consciousness. In pursuing such a policy; do not be sectional or provincial in character; do not ride any pet species hobby, but determine to see perpetuated the species which are indigenous to Canada, and for which markets are established; above all do not favour any particular branch of the forest products industry to the detriment of another branch. In this great industry of the forest, we must "Hang together or we will hang separately."

In the pursuit of your purpose, do not make the mistake of giving the impression that the era of good lumber is past. In recent years, I have heard honest architects and engineers state that they could no longer get good genuine White Pine. Yet I could take them to yards which in the aggregate contain over 100 million feet of well-manufactured and well-graded White Pine.

Also, do not neglect to try to wean our Canadian public from the inferior complex idea that an imported product must be superior. We have here in Canada the very finest lumber species in the world both in softwood and hardwood. If we are going to develop a Canadian personality and maintain a Canadian standard of living of which we can be proud, we must provide home markets for our own forest products. God forbid that the war clouds which are piling up in awful blackness over the continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa may ever break, but whether they break or drift away, their very existence is making very precarious our overseas markets. There is a feverish frenzy on the part of most of the nations of the world to make each self-sufficient. We cannot ignore this trend. Whether or not we believe in the doctrine of self-sufficiency, we cannot force nations to buy from us. We have no alternative to developing our home market. That is

one of the chief purposes of the White Pine Bureau and the Canadian Hardwood Bureau. To succeed, we must seek first to remove the anti-wood complex of our Canadian people. On our success depends in large measure your future.

There is no better school than woods operations in which to study policies. The daily struggle against the stark realities of nature makes the woodsman an uncannily clear thinker. You know that all your plans and ideals can come to naught unless you can make your job pay a profit. You know that all our legislation whether it affects wages, or measurement or what not can only succeed if it allows operation at a profit. Idealism is commendable but it can lead to destruction unless it takes into consideration these basic realities.

The forest products industry to-day finds itself crushed between an uninformed idealism, and a public apathy. It is the duty of each of us and of our associations to preach realism—to educate our people into a forest consciousness.