PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS¹

BY R. M. BROWN

THERE come moments in the lives of all of us when we take time to look back over the way we have come and to look ahead to the way we shall have to go. Behind us is the background of vivid memory and before us the prospect of stern responsibility. Every thoughtful person, coming to such moment, will be moved to serious consideration. The thirty-eighth Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society of Forest Engineers marks, in many ways, a turning point in our experience, and the time has come to take stock of our position.

Looking back over the past year it is certain that 1945 will take its place in history as one of the most decisive years in the long story of mankind. The end of World War II, with its dark threat to the freedom-loving peoples of the world, victory in Europe followed quickly by victory in the Far East, made 1945 a notable year. This Dominion played a worthy part in the struggle and contributed much to final victory. The men of the Armed Forces are returning home now—many of them members of this Society—and we welcome them back to civil life. We mourn those honoured few who will not come back, and our hearts go out to those many members who have lost loved ones in the fight for freedom.

Looking back over the past thirty-eight years since this Society has been in operation we can scarcely be satisfied with the progress of forestry in Canada during that time. Something of value has been accomplished, certainly. The training of foresters has not been in vain, but in large measure true forestry has been visionary rather than real. Let us be thankful that the vision has not faded but has been kept bright by those few idealists who now are being justified for their faith in the future by more hopeful evidence of early changes to come through enlightened public opinion. Foresters in Canada will still be given a worthwhile job to perform. Vision without a task is only a dream; a task without a vision is drudgery; but vision and a task—therein lies the hope of forestry in Canada.

Looking backward into the affairs of the Society for the past year it is a pleasure to note that Vice-Pres. *Eric Druce* has been of the greatest assistance as experienced counsel. The Chairman of the Editorial Board, *K. G. Fensom*, is to be congratulated in his first year of office for maintaining the standard of the "Forestry Chronicle", while the Secretary-Treasurer, *Clarence Cooper*, has carried on his duties ably under rather difficult circumstances. The Society is indebted to Past-President *J. D. B. Harrison* for his conscientious representation in connection with collective bargaining and on the newly formed Council of Professional Engineers and Scientists. His report thereon will be received with considerable interest. Each Section has been active and it is believed that more members are now engaged, through committee work and otherwise, in Society affairs than has been the case heretofore.

¹ Delivered to the thirty-eighth Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society of Forest Engineers at Regina, Saskatchewan, January 30-31, 1946.

So let this backward glance suffice for the present. When we turn eyes front we recognize that we are entering a new era in this post-war period, and what we require now is a new mind, a new spirit, new leaders with new visions and expectations, coupled with a fresh enthusiasm. If tomorrow is to be better than yesterday it will be because we have put something better into it.

Looking forward we find that leaders of thought are placing stress on the responsibility of each individual citizen in the shaping of things to come. We are urged to broaden our circles of interest to the point where we can look beyond provincial boundaries and even national boundaries into the sphere of international relations. We are asked to realize that each one of us has a part to play in this wider concept of world citizenship, and that, in fact, our individual security and prosperity is dependent upon the successful outcome of international planning now in progress. Too many people fear a future different from the past. They want things to remain as they are—unaltered—what is called normalcy—but which is really the dead end of all hope for a better way of living. The importance of an active spirit of expectancy in continued progress can scarcely be exaggerated. Let us have some audacity in our expectations—where there is no vision the people perish.

Looking forward then we find encouragement for progress in Canadian forestry. One of the prerequisites of improved forest practice is a prosperous industry. While certain deterrents to prosperity are recognized the fact remains that there is at present an unprecedented demand for forest products. The lumber industry has contributed nobly to the war effort, providing one of the most important sinews of war, and will continue to provide throughout the reconversion period that most essential and versatile of all construction materials, namely, wood, in its various forms of utility. It may be that critical labour-management relationships, irksome controls and high taxation, will be only temporary drawbacks to that prosperity which is indicated by favourable market demand during the post-war period. Good domestic and export markets for forest products are recognized as a permanent necessity.

Looking forward we find a growing public opinion made manifest in forest enquiries leading to long-term forest policies, such as that concluded recently in British Columbia and that now in progress in Saskatchewan. The Society extends its best wishes to the Saskatchewan Forest Commission for a successful conclusion of the enquiry in this province. The two West Coast sections were diligent in presenting evidence to the Royal Commission on Forestry in British Columbia and were ably represented throughout the enquiry by our fellow member, *F. D. Mulholland*, a past-president of the Society. It is not too much to say that the various foresters' representations affected the whole trend of the proceedings and influenced the final result. The Commissioner, *Mr. Justice Sloan*, recently made his report to the provincial government and, looking forward into 1946, it may well be that this year will see some of the most important forest legislation in British Col-

umbia that has been enacted to date in Canada. Such action would undoubtedly advance forestry thinking throughout the country.

Looking forward, then, there are many reasons to believe that the practice of forestry in Canada will be given an impetus in the immediate future. Your General Executive had this in mind in choosing the broad topic for discussion at this Annual Meeting as "Planning for Managed Forests". It is recognized that when the opportunity affords there are many serious considerations to practical forest management. We lack so much essential information due to the fact that although research in protection, silviculture and utilization has been of high calibre, the amount of money invested in such research undertaken in Canada by either government or industry has been pitifully small with relation to the importance of the resource or the size of the industry. If they be given even a reasonable opportunity, however, Canadian foresters will undertake the task of scientific forest management with the ultimate objective of sustained yield and will render a good account of themselves. There is some reason to believe that in this first post-war decade there will be greater advances in forestry in this country than in any similar period to date in our history. Let us realize, moreover, that if Canadians miss this opportunity for forestry progress it is doubtful that we will have any second chance within the lifetime of most of us now present.

A great Scottish preacher once said that the kind of folk who get things done and through whom the world moves forward are the folk who live in a "qui vive" of expectancy, always standing on tiptoe, always sure that something big may happen at any time. Let us foresters capture this expectant spirit, and in the changing world of this post-war era we might echo the sentiment expressed in the first few lines of *John Oxenham's* poem:—

"We break new seas today—our eager
keels quest unaccustomed waters,
And from the vast, uncharted waste in
front the mystic circles leap
To greet our prow with mightiest possibilities."

Perhaps in these uncertain times we are unable to see ahead very clearly but we must go forward. We know that as foresters we will have opportunities for service to our country. We realize now more generally than heretofore that our own organization, the Canadian Society of Forest Engineers, holds an important place as the medium of expression of professional viewpoints and policies, and that it has a definite responsibility in leading public opinion in forestry thinking along scientific lines. Let us then, as a Society, renew our convictions, give expression to our expectations, and proceed with confidence to the important task which awaits us.