Foresters as managers of woodlands

**for the production of forest products,
wildlife and recreation**

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L'ingénieur forestier en tant que responsable des forêts dans la mise oeuvre de ses produits, de la faune et de la récréation. *La responsabilité de l'ingénieur forestier évolue car son milieu de travail a changé. Il en est rendu à un point tel qu'il requiert une certaine aide de son école, de sa profession et de son employeur. Il a besoin d'un renouveau qui s'établira par l'intermédiaire d'une technologie perfectionnée.*

Qualitativement parlant, toutes les parties de la forêt ne sont pas les mêmes. Il est primordial de distinguer entre une foresterie professionnelle et un aménagement polyvalent de la forêt d'une part, en s'attribuant le mérite d'un réel aménagement forestier et d'autre part, en séparant le temps utilisé en tant que responsable de la récréation. Plus important encore, faut-il graver ces deux différences dans l'esprit du public en les simplifiant et non en les compliquant.

Un aménagement forestier doit conserver son statut propre et son importance; ainsi notre profession pourra atteindre pleinement ses buts en produisant une marchandise compétitive, en rendant de justes services entraînant alors un retour suffisant de l'investissement du propriétaire.

L'ingénieur forestier est le responsable du patrimoine forestier pour tout ce qui touche les produits de la forêt, la faune et la récréation.

Notre tâche consiste à bien cadrer et à revendiquer le rôle professionnel dans l'aménagement du territoire. Il convient également de ne pas perdre de vue le point de vue fortement économique de notre profession. En agissant ainsi, il sera possible alors d'accomplir non seulement une tâche vitale qui s'impose en tant que responsable de cette richesse naturelle, mais en plus, il nous sera donné de mettre davantage notre profession en valeur.

The author (far left) on one of his infrequent visits to the woods, and (right) as the corporate image.

Professional foresters are managers of woodlands for the production of forest products, wildlife and recreation. This seems self evident; further, we were educated in that frame of reference and our experience has taught us that wildlife and certain recreational pursuits are not only compatible with timber management, but impossible to separate from it.

My purpose here is not to belabor the obvious, but rather to delve deeper into our profession as it is being practised and as it should be practised. I want to explore both the forests we are managing and the way we are managing them. My practice of forestry has been limited to the United States, so you can judge for yourselves whether or not what I say is applicable to professional forestry in Canada. Let's look at our profession first.

What is forestry?

Forestry represents a marvelous blend of widely diversified tasks and responsibilities that add up to a most rewarding occupation. Consequently, forestry is unusually demanding upon the professional when it comes to education, training and experience. The professional forester must be competent or knowledgeable in a number of other disciplines. Unfortunately, the profession in the United States is not always highly regarded, nor does it offer the highest salaries. **Therefore, forestry attracts and holds an unusual type of individual who is extremely dedicated and often quite willing to rationalize his status in a second-class profession with a corresponding second-class career.** During the 20 years I've been in the field, I have witnessed considerable improvement in career development, but we still have a long way to go.

The forester's job has changed materially because his environment has changed. By environment I mean the entire world in which he must live and practise. It isn't as neat and orderly as it used to be. Again, I must fall back on my own experience and speak primarily as an industrial forester. Industrial forestry has become a part of total corporate management and subject to the same demands and scrutiny as other disciplines within the corporate family.

On the corporate headquarters level and often on the plant operating level, foresters serve on staffs and compete with engineers, business majors, accountants, lawyers, chemists and others. Some of us in industry are exposed, for the first time, to labor negotiations, scheduling, budgeting, sales and the other headaches associated with keeping a 24-hours a day, 7-days a week production operation in motion. Believe me, it requires a different outlook and philosophy.

I feel that the experience of being integrated into the corporate family has been good for me, good for my department and the corporation, because we've developed an entirely new perspective and forestry has taken on a much broader meaning. I am convinced that modern forestry and modern foresters can and will meet the challenge of the seventies, and

beyond, because of the requirements of modern industry and not in spite of them. The adjustment won't come automatically and it will require a lot of work and a lot of self-examination. But, at least part of the forester's ability to survive must be attributed to his adaptability.

Adaptability, however, will take us just so far and must be accompanied by knowledge, experience and basic intelligence.

Modern forest industries, especially pulp and paper, are marvels of sophistication on the manufacturing end. But, too often, on the woodlands end they are throwbacks to the lumberjack era.

Sylvan life of sub-professionalism

Too many foresters are content to let the current technological and industrial revolutions pass them by. Whether we like it or not, the computer age is here with all its good and all its evils. **We can't afford to retreat to the quiet of the forest. If our profession is to prosper and develop, we must learn, master and help develop the new knowledge and all its machines.** We must welcome this challenge rather than develop means of avoiding it.

One of the first things I did when appointed woodlands manager, was to literally take our experienced professional foresters out of the woods and replace them with technicians and young foresters who require seasoning in the field. This was traumatic for some, but I'm convinced we can no longer enjoy the luxury of having professional foresters with years of experience scale wood, mark trees, lay out roads, run lines, cruise timber or fight fires. They belong in management positions where they can apply their experience and test their judgment as they prepare and analyze data, train and manage technicians, solve problems and plan for the future. I have nothing against those foresters who chose the sylvan life of sub-professionalism; I just can't afford them on my staff.

Crises to face

Forestry, at least in the States, is facing a real crisis because our products continue to lose strength in the world market place, while our costs are rising and the return on investment is declining. The solutions to these problems are largely the responsibility of our profession. If we don't find ways of keeping our products competitive, other nations with forest resources will supply American needs or substitute products will supersede forest products.

Canadian and American forest industries are facing another crisis precipitated by the concern for a cleaner environment. Tremendous capital investments are being made solely for pollution abatement. These investments contribute little or nothing to increased production and the increased cost of doing business cannot be passed along to the consumer without aggravating the already poor market conditions.

The stock market provides us with an indication of the success of forest based industries. Our stocks aren't the most popular because our return in investment isn't what it should be.

If we can't keep logging and transportation costs in line, imported and substitute products will prevail, or purchasing and manufacturing departments will take over wood procurement with the associated disastrous effects on long-term forest management. The solution to the problem of relatively declining stumpage returns is directly associated with the problem of increasing logging and transportation costs.

It disturbs me to hear some foresters laud high **stumpage prices as the sole criterion of a successful forestry enterprise.** All of my effort is directed toward increasing efficiency of timber production so that stumpage returns can be increased while overall raw material costs can be kept in line. Efficient production methods got the U.S. and Canada where they are in the world economic structure. Maintaining and improving our efficiency is the only way we can hope to maintain that position.

Educational deficiencies

A portion of our deficiency as professionals can be attributed to our education. Many — make that most — of the forestry schools in the United States have lost touch with the American forest industry. Consequently, few students seem adequately prepared for the challenges presented by employment in industry.

Many of our members have made it to the top in major corporations and in so doing, have made outstanding contributions to professional forestry. I think it's high time the students hear from them on a regular and planned basis. **Industry, too, must accept the challenge of contributing talent to the educational effort.** It means time, money and preparation, but it must be done. This is not a new concept; other professions — law and medicine specifically — have intimate teaching relationships with colleges and universities.

Too few professional foresters take the time and spend the money to stay current on new developments and new technology. None of us, I'm sure, has as his physician or dentist, a professional who has not updated himself since his undergraduate or apprentice days; yet, many of our fellow professional foresters expect the public and employers to treat them as first-class practitioners when they are practicing by obsolete standards. I'm always reassured when I climb on a commercial airliner by the fact that the captain and co-pilot have undergone recent retraining and testing. I feel that our clients and employers are entitled to the same assurance when they hire a professional forester.

I said that I would discuss both the way we are managing the forests and the forests themselves. So far, I have confined my remarks to the profession. I have some equally irreverent thoughts concerning the basic resource under our control.

In speaking of the practice of forestry, I mentioned that the forester's environment had changed. I'm not sure that our concept of the forest has changed, but I'm positive that the public's concept

of the forest has changed drastically. I started by saying that it's self-evident to foresters that foresters are the managers of woodlands for the production of forest products, wildlife and recreation. Therein lies the problem; we tend to think of each acre or each compartment of the forest in terms of producing forest products, wildlife and recreation.

If we cling to this belief, we may find ourselves relieved of the task of managing the forest for any of the various forest uses. I am not being critical of our own Forest Service, but it is a fact that the U.S. Forest Service is even now fighting for its life, having already suffered the loss of effective power to manage substantial portions of their dedicated lands for timber production according to traditional management methods. **The professional competency of Forest Service personnel is being challenged not only by new and established environmental and preservationist groups, but by such unimpeachable groups as the Girl Scouts.** Worse yet, the Congressional appropriations committees are listening to the amateurs.

In my own State of Michigan, the Department of Natural Resources, staffed by highly competent professional foresters and wildlife biologists, has seen its prerogative of managing the deer herd usurped by politicians.

The way to lose

Everywhere, we see evidence of land managers attempting to meet recreational pressure by dedicating more and more productive forestland to recreational development in the name of multiple use. Meanwhile, we see foresters clinging to marginal or submarginal forestland for dear life just because it is geographically situated within their forest region or company ownership. **I can remember hearing forestry defined as the management of non-agricultural land. The professor whose definition it was, helped foster the professional climate in which such reasoning is common.**

What landowner can become excited about the investment possibilities of forestry when our literature is so replete with negative values or extremely small rates of growth?

We must begin to subject forestland to qualitative analysis and be ready to abide by the facts as they are developed. Let's face it, some of what we call commercial forestland just isn't. Yes, I've heard about the population explosion and I've read the projections of lumber and fiber needs in the year 2000 and beyond. I just don't believe that the scrubby, non-productive forestland is going to contribute any more significantly to future timber requirements than it does to present needs. Too often foresters are preoccupied with gross acres or square miles as the measure of job rank or importance.

The Westell Rule of Thirds

You are about to be exposed to what some of my colleagues call "The Westell Rule of Thirds". It may never find a place in the literature of forestry, but it serves to illustrate the type of qualitative analysis

we must apply to forestland. A portion of the forestland — call it a third — is actually range land, timberline country, marsh land, mountain tops or whatever, but it isn't commercially operable timberland. There is some timber on this land, but it is not worthy of all the effort that is being expended to make it more productive. This land can no longer be called economic.

Physicians don't handle bedpans or spend their time applying band-aids. **Neither should we spend our time practising "bedpan" forestry.** This poorest third of the forestland is an albatross around our neck and the activities carried out on this land shouldn't even be called forestry.

The second "third" is extensive forestry land, the true multiple use forest. It supports commercially operable timber and may be excellent forestland, but it is highly desirable and heavily used for other purposes. This land should be subject to trade-offs, with certain areas managed primarily for wildlife cover or recreation and others primarily for timber production. Foresters must accommodate other uses on the multiple use forestland and spend time developing snowmobile trails, picnic areas and other bits of civilization the public demands in "wild" areas. However, this isn't forestry and the progress or identity of our profession should not be keyed to our performance as recreational technicians any more than professional medicine is tied to the maintenance of office accounts and clinical housekeeping.

The final third of the forest can be to forestry what the corn belt is to agriculture or the actual practice of medicine is to the medical profession. It is on the land under intensive forest management that mechanized harvesting will finally pay off. Here is where genetically superior trees, fertilization, irrigation, spacing and all the other optimizing practices will become practicable. And, this is the third on which we should be judged as professional forestland managers. **These are the lands on which we can demonstrate that "forestry pays". Defend these lands at all costs, because the future of our profession depends on them!**

Ripe virgin fields

Two areas, intensive forestry and utilization of fiber presently wasted, are virgin territories ripe for exploration and exploitation. If foresters don't enter these fields and develop bodies of knowledge concerning them before we are pushed back from the areas in which we presently operate, we will truly face a critical shortage of forest products one day soon.

Intensive forestry and more complete utilization bring with them awesome challenges and responsibilities for the forester. We are in a totally new environment of short rotations, high capital inputs, high rates of interest, complex technology, labor management, new methods and even a new philosophy. But, if we meet the challenges, we will be able to produce goods and services that are significant in their own right. We are now presented with

an opportunity to practise forestry without the crutch of public subsidy or the benevolence of vast areas dedicated to the haphazard growing of trees.

Simplify, not complicate

In conclusion, the new technology is upon us and we must accept and learn to use it to maintain our competitive position.

The forester's job is changing because his environment has changed. He is about at his limit of adaptability and needs help from his school, his profession and his employer. He needs the upgrading that will come with accomplishment using the new technology.

Qualitatively speaking, all parts of the forest aren't the same. We must learn to recognize the difference between professional forestry and multiple use forestland management, taking credit for true

forest management and trading off the time we spend as recreational managers. And, most importantly, we must impress these differences on the public. We must simplify, not complicate these distinctions!

Intensive forest management must assume its rightful status and importance so that our profession can accomplish the goals of producing competitively priced goods and services and produce adequate returns on investment for the landowners.

Foresters are the managers of woodlands for the production of forest products, wildlife and recreation. Our task is to locate and assert our proper professional role in land management, never losing sight of the solid economic base of our profession. In so doing, we will not only perform a needed and vital service as stewards of the resource, but we will enhance our chosen profession.

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