REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FORESTERS, WASHINGTON, D.C., JAN. 28, 29 and 30, 1935.

BY ELLWOOD WILSON

THIS was one of the most largely attended meetings of the Society, members coming from all parts of the country and taking the most intense interest in the proceedings.

The highlight of the meeting was a paper read by F. A. Silcox, Head of the United States Forest Service, entitled "Foresters Must Choose." He said that we were at the parting of the ways, and that we had to come out and declare ourselves one way or the other. He spoke of the devastation of the forests by the private timber land owners, the once prosperous towns now abandoned and their people scattered, of the constant moving on from one region to another as the timber was cut out, until now there are no more virgin stands to exploit. He told of the dying out of local wood-using industries through lack of raw material, of the flooding of eastern markets with cheap Pacific coast timber. He said that there were ten millions of unemployed in the United States and that the forests offered the best and most healthful kind of work for them. The time has come when the forests must be brought back, when local wood industries must flourish again to furnish employment to stable populations. Since the private owner had exploited forests which had been taken out of the public domain, often for a mere song, had speculated in timber lands and now found themselves overstocked with wood, overwhelmed with carrying charges which they tried to meet by flooding the market and had grossly mismanaged their affairs, the time had come when the Federal Government must step in and take back the lands and operate them properly even if it had to cut and market the timber. He said there was no middle ground for foresters and that they had a duty not only to the forests but to the people as a whole and must take a leading part in the rehabilitation of the nation and its economic system.

Prof. H. H. Chapman, of Yale, read a most interesting paper, taking somewhat the opposite side of the picture and trying to defend the present system. He did not think the issue so clear cut as Silcox painted it, and felt that we might be able to get on by doing away with the most glaring abuses of our present system and by trying a more intensive program of education for the private owner.

It was evident that the majority of the members took Chapman's viewpoint, but it is also evident that Silcox's point of view has much to commend it.

It seems to the writer that ever since forestry in the United States began under Fernow, Roth, Pinchot and others, the foresters' attitude toward the private owner has been rather intolerant. They saw the light so clearly, realized the necessity for better methods, for sustained yield and good management, that they could not understand why everyone else did not. They were, as they are to-day, imbued with the spirit of public service rather than of private gain. Since seventy-five per cent. of the forested areas, at least, were in private hands they had to look for jobs with the wood-using industries. Here they found men who had but one aim, making money. Anything that interfered with that was anathema and any change in methods or even suggestion of change was a red rag to a bull. The early foresters were either the professional type, or men who had college educations and enough to live on. They did not understand the mentality of the lumberman and it was only natural that the two types should get on each others' nerves. While there has been some change in thirty years, progress has been slow and very disappointing. The forester has never been able to show the private timber land owner definitely, where forestry could help him to earn an extra dollar.

Not wishing to draw any invidious comparisons, the contrast with Canada is interesting—

While it is true that foresters in this country have not found employment in the lumber industry, except in fire protection work, they have found it in the pulp and paper industry and have reached positions of equal responsibility with other technical and executive employees. I think this has been due to two things, first the sympathetic and continuous educational program directed to the higher executives and directors and through the Forest Fire Protective Associations and the Canadian Forestry Association, to the public at large, as investors, and to the banks, insurance companies and other industries. Second, the foresters have tried to see how they could best help the industry, through fire protection, improvement in woods operations and in wood utilization. They have tried to solve the more important of the operators' problems, fire protection, logging, transportation, road building, surveying and estimating, while all the time preaching the necessity for silvicultural measures. It may be said that this is not forestry, but I cannot agree. The forester has shown that he has a knowledge of business and economics and I do not hesitate to predict that in the future the forester will be more and more in demand in the higher executive positions. He has the long time viewpoint, so necessary in the economic and industrial life of a nation. We may laugh at Soviet Russia, with its five and ten year plans, but it is only by having something to aim at that one gets the game. Simply to be content to pay

dividends for a short period is not enough, continuous payments for generations is the dream of the investor. We still suffer in the paper business for failure to make long-time, well-thought-out plans, especially in the woods end of the affair.

A whole afternoon was devoted to papers on the operation of the lumber code of the N.R.A., and especially Article X, which covers conservation methods and practices. This seems to be difficult to carry out and, since it only relates to the cutting of lumber, pulpwood, acid wood, fuel wood and farmers' wood lots, all being unaffected, it applies conservation principles to only a very small proportion of the forest acreage.

The meeting of the Division of Forest Education was very interesting and dealt with standards which must be met by forest schools in order to be accredited by the Society. One very profitable discussion was on the deficiencies in forest education as viewed by the forester and his employer.

The morning session of the second day was taken up by discussion of the Society's affairs and editorial policies of the Journal. There is a sharp division between what are conversationally called "The Lily-White" foresters, followers of Gifford Pinchot, who believe in laying out state and nation-wide policies and forcing them on the private owner, and "The Dirt Foresters" who believe in educating the private owner and trying to win him to forest practices by showing him how he will benefit. The former are now in the saddle and are directing Federal Government forest activities. They do not think the Journal is devoting enough space to social and economic theories, and want it to feature articles on unemployment relief and measures for forest management along socialistic lines. Their position may best be shown by a quotation from a circular sent out by the left wing to the members. "There is a growing feeling among a considerable group of our members that the Society and the *Journal* are not taking the firm stand on forest matters which is vital for the future of our forests and our profession. There has been a tendency even to ridicule and brand as propaganda any attempt at an effective development and management of the country's forests. Foresters who exert themselves on behalf of stopping forest devastation and bringing exploitation of forests under some form of public supervision, foresters who express their belief in forests as moderators of climate and regulators of stream flow, foresters who regard forest management as a basis of permanent communities and a means of social welfare, foresters who hold the view that scientific research is essential for effective forest management, have been classed as Utopians, cranks, and impractical dreamers. Those of our members who regard the forests primarily as a source of private profit to their owners,

and those who devote their energies to seeking profitable markets for the products of the forest, have been extolled as the true leaders of the profession. It is particularly unfortunate that these tendencies should develop at a time when forestry has its greatest opportunity for real social service."

This sums up the position very clearly and, as usual, neither party has a monopoly of truth. Every forester believes in the above, but many of us differ as to the best means of attaining our ends. Policies enforced from above, as in Soviet Russia and Italy, may accomplish their ends rapidly, but often at terrible cost, compare prohibition. The pendulum which swings to the right must always swing back to the left, and true progress lies in a steady forward movement along as straight a line as possible. Just now forestry in the United States is the white-haired child of the professions, there are practically no unemployed foresters and they are the favorites of the administration. For this reason they should be "as wise as serpents and harmless as doves," not lacking in courage but in being courageous rather than foolhardy or cowardly.

The meeting closed with a most enjoyable dinner and show presented by the Moscow (Idaho) Players, under the direction of Comrade Springoff, (Sam Spring), where all serious affairs were forgotten and fun reigned supreme.