

## FOREST SETTLEMENT—A NATIONAL NECESSITY<sup>1</sup>

By A. J. AUDEN

*Abitibi Power & Paper Co., Port Arthur, Ontario.*

THE SUBJECT for this afternoon's discussion is described as "Forest Management Through Establishment of a Permanent Population in the Forest". Now, it may be bad tactics to start out with a flat contradiction, but I can't let that phrasing stand without challenge—in fact, it requires a frontal assault.

The ease with which our subject title seems to have slipped by many of us, is to me really significant. Perhaps it may explain why we foresters find it so difficult to speed up the attainment of our own professional objectives of sound forest management. Surely this is a perfect example of "putting the cart before the horse." It should have been phrased the other way around—"Population of the Forest Through the Establishment of Forest Management".

Let us get down to fundamentals. Why do we want forest management of any kind? Is it not, in final analysis, for the primary purpose of building Canada into a great and prosperous nation? A prosperous nation, if you like, so that we, as individuals, may prosper and may raise happy, thriving families, but nevertheless forest management is definitely not an end. It is only one required means to a great and worthy end—public welfare.

We, as individual Canadians, as world citizens, are re-learning from these few years of struggle some of the simple truth that Mother Nature has for thousands of years demonstrated to those who have eyes to see and the ability to reason. Nothing—no one—is self-sufficient; interdependence is universal law. What has this, you may say, to do with forest settlement. Give me a little time and I will try to prove that it has a great deal to do with it.

How does anyone ever achieve a worthwhile end? The answer may be trite, but it is worth repeating five times a day, every day, for ever. Clearly define the ultimate goal; then head for it, step by step, with fixed determination.

For two generations or more, here in Canada, foresters have preached and pleaded for sound management of forest lands, but as yet we have barely made ourselves heard beyond the first row or two of our audience of business men and general public. Why? I suppose at least twenty plausible reasons (I almost said excuses) might be put forward—business cycles, markets, economic conditions—always economic conditions.

---

<sup>1</sup> Delivered at Annual Meeting of Society, Fort William, Ontario, January 30, 1945.

I submit that progress in sound forestry these past 40 to 50 years would have been much greater if we foresters had clearly defined to ourselves, as well as to all others, the true aim of forest land use. Our real aim, here in Canada, is, or should be, to procure from Canada's forest land the greatest obtainable benefits for the nation and, therefore, incidentally for you and me and our employers and for as many more millions like us as world society and Canada's forest land acreage can be made to support.

If we had laid more stress upon social benefits, instead of straining at the wayward gnat of economic benefits, we might have held the interest of our audience and carried them with us in enthusiastic action. To repeat, forest management is not an end but a means to an end. The real goal is public welfare. Public welfare always demands social values first. As social values are created, economic benefits for all concerned follow as a matter of course—to sum up the whole thing in one hackneyed word—evolution.

More specifically, in this case, if we set as our ultimate goal the establishment of a resident population in the forest, we will do far more for the cause of forestry, and do it more quickly, than if we set forest management as our goal, and bring in people just to practice forest management.

Perhaps all this sounds dogmatic. Perhaps it is another of those "hen-first-or-egg-first" arguments. I simply state the case for my belief that the cause of forestry must be built up from first principles and will only make progress to the extent that it is treated as one of the essential steps towards solving the social problems of the nation.

In support of this belief, I suggest that, in a democratic nation, Governments never, or hardly ever, take action for purely economic reasons but always for political reasons. That is to say, in theory, and usually in fact, no action is taken unless and until a sufficiently large group of people feel the need for better social conditions and believe they have the right solution.

This preamble, to which you have listened with such polite patience, is the base-line from which I am about to start out on a compass line towards the primary objective of populating the forest, by means of forest management.

You don't want a dose of statistics as well as philosophy, so I will skip all that and simply assume that any good doctor of sociology would diagnose Canada's present and prospective condition as a case of what might be termed urban undulant fever, aggravated by rural constipation. The worthy doctor would probably urge immediate treatment lest the patient become a chronic victim of locomotor ataxy. The fever needs a lighter diet, while exercise is always good for the other ailment.

Only a generation or so back, over fifty per cent of Canada's population lived in the country. Soon this will be twenty per cent, and we are told that no more than ten per cent, if properly equipped, trained and located, are needed to produce all the agricultural products we are likely to need or be able to sell abroad.

No nation can retain its vigour, or even its social sanity for long, if eighty or ninety per cent of its total population, for two or three generations of crowded city life, is grouped into huge mobs of restless, shifting, functionless mortals, sucked in and spewed out of the great urban factories—backwards and forwards in a sort of rhythmic tribal dance—The “Dance of the Business Cycles”, first in frenzy, then in hypnotic trance, aping their witch-doctors of the John L. Lewis or Huey Long variety.

Here is the foresters' opportunity! Here is our bounden duty! Let us strive, as never before, to bring about the means whereby a great multitude of these people can get established, with roots in the soil, with a sense of function, a sense of true values, a sense of responsibility to themselves and their country, an understanding of the brotherhood of man.

That universal law—interdependence—will be our ally, if we let it. The nation needs more rural population, and of a new non-agricultural type. This new rural population needs forest industries, which can only be maintained by properly managed forests. Managed forests require foresters, who, if they can see the writing on the wall, will see to it that the building up of a large rural population, supported by the products of forest land, is their first concern, and is the *foundation* of the structure, the *roof* of which is the sound management of forest lands.

I suggest, then, that we should be very much more concerned about what we are not doing with our forest land, than about what we *are* doing to our forests. Or, to put it differently, we have much more cause for reproaching ourselves for what we *are* doing to our forest workers and to the social structure of the nation, than for our failure to carry out forest management plans.

There may be two opinions about this. Perhaps the best case that can be made for our current practices is that the trend in agriculture is away from the small holding towards the vast, highly mechanized collective farm of Russian type. Similarly, it might be argued, our logging operations should become even more wholesale—mechanized into one vast conveyor belt and assembly line, with forest workers commuting to their jobs daily by aeroplane.

I am not one of those who hold this view. I think that there are certain natural laws, natural forces that will always be stronger than man, and that man must so conduct his affairs that these natural forces work with him and not against him.

The life of a tree far exceeds the productive years of man's allotted span. Two or three generations must live and die while a forest is brought to full fruition. Shall our forest families then be ever on the move, carting home and household ten to twenty miles every ten years or so; an endless circuit extending through the years, from the birth of the grandfather to the death of the grandson?

We have spent these past 250 years or so on this continent in restless movement, recklessly skimming off the cream of superabundant resources, but we have not used the land in the true sense of the word, nor have we done ourselves much permanent good. It's high time that we enlarged the family and settled down, not for a hundred years, but for a thousand, for ever, and there's no better country in the world in which to do so. Moreover, if we can't or won't do just that, our nearby neighbours on the other side of this very small world may some day think we need their unsolicited assistance.

In my view, therefore, everything points to thousands, if not a million or so, of small forest holdings, individually and intensively managed, passing from father to son, from son to grandson and so on.

I have tried to cover the chief "why" of forest settlement and, incidentally, to suggest that foresters may be well advised to set aside, as of secondary importance, their detailed plans, if any, for silvicultural treatment of forest stands and to concentrate instead almost exclusively upon helping to solve one of the nation's biggest sociological problems, by devising ways and means for establishing on a permanent basis an almost unlimited (for the time being) resident forest population.

There is, of course, another outstanding case to be made for resident forest population, namely, that forest operations, whether they be the crudest type of wholesale logging or the most intensive type of managed woodlot, need people to do the work. Since trees are not a city product, forest settlement is the only permanent solution. If proper forest settlement is effected, good forestry practice will absolutely inevitably follow as a matter of self-interest.

The next question is the "how" of forest settlement. To some this may seem to be the crux of the matter. Others will be less concerned, knowing that "where there is a will, there's a way" and that every day we see evidence that the difficult can be done immediately, while the "impossible" takes only a little longer.

Rather than take up a lot of the limited time available for this afternoon's discussion, I will try to list below, in subject heading form and in order of importance some of the principles that in my view should govern the "how" of forest settlement.

#### A. HUMAN OR SOCIAL PRINCIPLES

1. The forest residents must be carefully chosen.
2. They must have amenities and living conditions at least as good as the oldest and best established farming communities. This includes roads, electricity, telephone, running water, good houses, schools, churches, high standard of health and sanitary facilities, community life.
3. They must be able to obtain year-round employment and adequate income without leaving their homes and families for non-resident jobs far distant from their own village.

4. They must be given follow-up help and coaching and marketing service, in similar manner to that given by the state to farmers through agricultural representatives, and other advisory personnel of the civil service.
5. Freehold right to forest homesteads should be obtainable after a period of probation on a "use-value" basis.
6. Try to avoid the "Company town" type of community of tenant employees. Best results will almost certainly be obtained where every householder is a profit-sharing entrepreneur, with a stake in the community, and is sure of a reward in direct proportion to the amount of constructive contribution he makes to the group effort.

#### B. GEOGRAPHICAL PRINCIPLES

1. All natural resources found on the settlement area should be assigned for the benefit of the community residents.
2. Settlement areas should be allocated in such a way that the greatest possible number of diverse activities and sources of income from natural resources are obtainable. No community should depend exclusively upon one "egg-basket", although income from forest production will in most cases be of predominant importance, at least in the initial stages.
3. Topography, especially watershed boundaries, should govern the location of settlement project areas and also the sub-division into woodlots.
4. Choice of location should be influenced by actual and potential markets for goods and labour and should also endeavour to reduce expenses to a minimum by picking areas which, while satisfying the above three geographical requirements, are as close as possible to existing lines of communication, transportation and power.
5. Virgin forested lands will offer the best opportunities for successful forest settlement, provided other requirements are reasonably well met. Exploited areas that must be restored to productivity should be avoided if possible.

#### C. BUSINESS OR ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES

1. No other precept is more important than that the community and its activities should conform in type to what best suits the available resources. Too often efforts are made to force Nature to provide what man thinks will suit him best. Land-use failures nearly all begin this way.
2. Markets are all-important; market studies to develop new outlets for local resources and by-products; organized marketing by use of the Producer Co-op; sales promotion, particularly of home processed or semi-processed end-products rather than of raw material, thereby providing for community work-shops and home-craft employing all members of the family.

3. Annual harvesting of resources should be subordinate to the needs of perpetuation of all renewable resources, and of community interest.
4. While the community should be self-supporting and self-energizing when once established, it should not be forgotten that the average capital investment in industrial plants is often as high as \$15,000.00 to \$20,000.000 per employee. This is true of the pulp and paper mills, and probably also of the railways, steamships, elevators, steel industry, mining industry, and others. Even agriculture requires that each self-supporting farm involves a capitalized value, including land, buildings, implements and stock, of at least \$10,000.00, not including all the public investment in roads, school and hospital grants, power lines, etc., that combine to add value to the farm.

Thus the capital investment per family and, therefore, roughly per square mile of settlement area, should reasonably be expected to amount to about \$10,000.00 and perhaps more. This means about half a million dollars per forest colony of 50 families and the capital should be furnished partly in cash by the settler families, partly by long term loans and, perhaps, partly by public investment in such items as roads, power lines, etc.

5. Credit unions, or other means of group financing for individual family needs, should be encouraged for two reasons. Business training is thus obtained and financial stability is increased.
6. Cost of electric power and of transportation of goods to market should not exceed the average cost of similar facilities in neighbouring urban centres.
7. Forest Settlement projects should not be undertaken until intensive surveys of the project area have been made and incorporated into the detailed working plans—surveys of forest capital and forest growth, of soil, wild-life, water, geology, power sources, roads and, most particularly, of existing and potential markets for material and labour.

#### D. SPONSORSHIP PRINCIPLES

I don't see why the sponsorship of forest colonies should be confined or limited to any particular agency. Only one guiding principle should prevail. The objective of every project should be the same, whether sponsored by Government, by established industrial companies, by specially formed colonization companies and co-operatives, or by an individual. That single objective should be to establish a permanent population resident within forest lands, on a basis which permits each community of forest residents to build up, by and for themselves, out of the resources available, a stable, high-standard livelihood, sustained indefinitely by intelligent cultivation and husbandry.

Efforts to colonize for the purpose of exploiting people or resources cannot be tolerated. They always fail within a few years, anyway. We have "blue-sky" legislation to prevent the unscrupulous from defrauding the public in various ways and perhaps exploitation by colonization should be included.

Two other questions remain to be dealt with, namely, the "where" and the "when" of forest settlement.

"Where should resident forest communities be established?" seems almost a silly question. Statistics by the yard could be quoted, regarding the extent of Canada's absolute forest lands, the percentage of these which lies within the limits of so-called economic exploitation, present and prospective. But this isn't necessary, because the answer for the next hundred years or so is bound to be "almost anywhere from Labrador to the Queen Charlotte Islands, provided due consideration is given to the geographic and business principles listed above". The need is probably greatest where urban industries, particularly wood-using industries, and the "feast or famine" type such as steel, are most concentrated.

Objections based on existing encumbrances to forest land tenure or ownership are invalid, if it be granted that property rights need not exclude forest settlement, but merely prescribe the local sponsorship and type. It may be considered idealistic to say that whatever is good for the nation is good for the individual, including the forest concessionaire, but that doesn't prevent the statement from being a fact, nevertheless, and hard-headed business men respect facts.

The scope of this discussion excludes any long dissertation upon the subject of public versus private ownership of forest lands. I think there is a very strong case to be made out for a gradual transfer, under careful but constantly lessened control, from public to private ownership — not large chunks of forest land becoming outright corporation assets, but small, family-sized desmesnes, passed from father to son on a "use and occupation" basis, rather than by deed in fee simple, not unlike a type of tenure found in Iceland, and probably elsewhere. Or perhaps a specially modified application of the old English statute "for transferring uses into possession" might be worked out.

These observations on ownership seem to be pertinent when dealing with the "where" of forest settlement, chiefly because of possible opposition by a few short-sighted interests controlling large timber concessions. Any such opposition should be overcome easily, provided the alienation of forest lands and timber rights, for forest settlement purposes, is gradual, on a controlled use-value basis, and provided the former concessionaire still retains, for as long as may be necessary, the right of first refusal of the raw wood products harvested annually from the forest settlement area.

After all, there is only one reason for timber concessions, namely, that in no other way can a satisfactory supply of raw material be provided for existing or projected industries. Once forest settlement has been extended to the required proportions, a much larger, more stable, and in every way more satisfactory supply of raw material will have been developed and the need for vast timber concessions will have vanished. I think that every Province in Canada should make that desirable condition one of its long-term objectives when framing its land-use policies.

Next question is "when should forest settlement be started". "Immediately, if not sooner" is a phrase that comes to mind, but it is not quite as easy as that. Even granting that no better time and no more crucial need is likely to occur than during the first ten years of post-war rehabilitation, reconstruction and perhaps immigration, it still isn't quite as easy as that.

First, we have barely started to think about the practical application of the theories and principles involved. We have not developed any procedures, any enabling legislation, particularly regarding tenure of forest holdings set aside for forest settlement.

The importance of establishing legal tenure lies in the fact that funds are required, but neither public nor private funds will be forthcoming so long as there is any doubt about the continuity of tenure of the forest lands involved. This would doubtless apply in the case of the new Industrial Development Bank and of the Veterans' Land Settlement Act, just as surely as it most certainly does apply to private capital.

Secondly, we have no suitable surveys, or very few, since those we have are partial only—such as timber volume alone, or forest growth, or soil or geological, or wild-life or fish and so on. The surveys should embrace all these resources and, in addition, include road and power line locations, water supply, drainage, village sites, industrial markets, etc. Perhaps a fairly large survey party of foresters, engineers, biologists, geologists, agriculturalists and one or two more, could make the survey and compile the various reports, and draw up the various working plans, for one settlement project between June and December, but they would have to hustle to hold that schedule.

This brings up a third point—where can the needed technicians be found, first to do the surveys and draw up the working plans, and then to put those plans into practice? Undoubtedly, a few can be found now, but not enough, and we are not training enough yet, nor have we the facilities for doing so.

The time element seems, therefore, to be the most limiting and perhaps the most important factor in this whole problem. Presently, it is somewhat akin to that so-called impossible which in war takes only a little longer than the difficult.

All the more reason why it is high time that no more time be lost—so let's get going.