FARM WOODLOTS IN EASTERN ONTARIO

By W. E. STEELE¹

During the last year there has been an extra heavy cut of sawlogs in this area. This is attributed in part to higher prices, and partly to the heavy wind-throw caused by a north-easterly gale in November, 1950. A great many mature trees were uprooted or broken and it appears that the majority of these were salvaged during the winter. Country sawmills report far more business than in any past year. Veneer log buyers report a vast increase in business also, and summer logging operations were more numerous than formerly. "Inferior" species such as American elm and white cedar made up a higher percentage of the sawlogs at local mills. Second growth white cedar posts 8' long 6" or larger at the top end were usually sawn into 2" x 4" scantling for local building and sold at \$70.00 to \$80.00 per thousand, dressed and delivered. Smaller cedar poles were purchased for export to New York State where they were used for patent fences and for rustic furniture. The minimum size was 6' long with a 2" top diameter which brings about 5 cents; and practically every larger size was saleable. One man reported buying three acres of second growth cedar for \$100.00, and selling \$2,700.00 worth of cedar posts and poles, besides having enough cedar firewood to last three years. American elm was utilized in barn construction, as planks nailed green or partly dry. Pine and spruce logs were generally worth \$45.00 per M. at the roadside, and the green lumber sold at the sawmill at \$65.00 to \$80.00 per M.

The Lanark Forest Co-op under the management of Herb Paul grew steadily in membership. Sixty-five members have been accepted, each of whom owns from 20 to 1,000 acres of woodland. The Co-op has been finding markets for special items such as veneer logs, pulpwood and cedar posts, but has not been dealing much with sawlogs which usually go to the local sawmills for manufacture. Although the owners pledge themselves to good forest management, this has not resulted in many calls for advice from the Zone Forester. The Co-op staged a Forest Management Field Day in co-operation with the Department of Lands and Forests in Lanark Township last fall, which was attended by about 175 persons. Mr. Borrowman, the owner of the pine woodlot in which the event was held, outlined his methods of selection, which were tempered by expediency to some degree, and other owners, buyers, foresters and interested persons presented their points of view to make an interesting day.

The effort to have municipal authorities accept the principle that they will protect woodlands from fire has met with considerable success. About two-thirds of the townships in nine counties have given someone authority to act in case of fire. A very few have purchased special equipment, and some have assigned forest fire protection duties to a municipal fire brigade equipped to handle building fires. The action of rural organizations, such as the Junior Farmers', the Federation of Agriculture, the Womens' Institutes, and the Fish and Game Clubs, have helped immeasurably in swinging public opinion behind this move, which was organized through the Conservation Coordinating Committee of Zone 5, Ontario Conservation and Reforestation

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Association, under the chairmanship of Albert Wilson, reeve of Pakenham township.

The same committee is now studying a means of attack on the problem of pasturing of woodlots. They plan an educational campaign with movies, posters, speeches, radio talks and, most important, newspaper material. They will enlist the aid of all conservation clubs in an effort to reach the owners of pastured woodlots by personal contacts. Apparently the water conservation appeal is stronger than that of timber values in most parts of this district and this point will be stressed, particularly with farmers and fishermen. An effort will be made to amend the provincial statute which declares that trees are part of the land and, therefore, subject to assessment and repeated taxation throughout the life of the forest. It seems probable that, when the injustice of this law is generally understood, there will be strong backing for its amendment.

The most encouraging statement that can be made is that the public is showing a steadily increasing interest in the management of private woodlands. This is reflected in the attitude of newspaper editors who devote a good deal of space to such conservation topics, and in that of the radio station operators who offer full co-operation. Service clubs, teachers and others are requesting speakers and films on the subject, and the woodland owners are glad to talk about this subject although they are usually rather reticent about demanding advice. If it were possible for an extension forester to devote his full time to this work, he would probably be kept more than busy in even one or two townships.

A great deal of potential pulpwood is going to waste because the prices offered will not permit the owner to cut the wood at a profit. Although prices have been increased somewhat, they have scarcely kept pace with increasing wage rates. Labourers who are satisfied with 40 cents an hour in 1945 are now getting double that rate or more. Even firewood prices usually compete favourably with pulpwood prices for deciduous trees except in areas that are very close to the mills. A good market price for pulpwood species—and that includes hardwoods—would be the greatest impetus for improving the woodlots which are now cluttered with defective trees.

The maple syrup industry shows little change. The declining rural population supplies fewer labourers for this strenuous harvest, and the high cost of evaporators, buckets and gathering tanks has caused a few to stop tapping their maples; others have slashed them down for a cash return, notably in Glengarry county. Few are interested in planting a sugar bush.

Farmers in this district are generally prosperous, and have plenty of opportunities to make money. They look with scorn on the idea of cutting wood for a low return, so that under present conditions it seems likely that they will try to log in quantity only the paying items—cedar posts and poles, sawlogs and veneer logs. Firewood and pulpwood production are subsistence items, except under special conditions, so most woodlots will continue to carry the defectives and to supply a low yield of good products. Firewood consumption is decreasing, and new paying markets for the inferior wood are urgently required.