PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS¹

by K. G. FENSOM

This is my last report to members in my capacity as president of the Institute. It is probably my last report as a member of the national executive, on which I have served continuously since 1945—a period of eight years. Therefore, as far as I am concerned, this is in the nature of a last chance, and at the risk of being banal and boring you inordinately, I have decided to make this report a more personal one than is perhaps customary.

It is natural that, in any organization, those who are charged with executive direction are bound to have more knowledge of administrative detail and more contact with day to day developments than individual members. The Institute is no exception, and there has been considerable thought as to how to get this story to members in the form of permanent liaison. In order to at least partially meet this need, the procedure of having the president report to members throughout the year through the medium of mimeographs was inaugurated in 1950. Six such reports were distributed in this past year—in December, 1952, and in February, April, May, August and September, 1953. Since most of the essential detail of Institute operation was reported, it would appear to be unnecessary to duplicate this detail in this present report.

During my years of office, it has been my privilege to be a member of three sections—the Quebec Section, the Ottawa Valley Section and the Vancouver Section—and to be the guest speaker at other section meetings across Canada. My opportunity has been my gain in that I have been able to acquire some understanding of the special problems of foresters in various parts of Canada, to note the differences between sections in activity and outlook, though so similar in motivation, and to visualize each unit of forestry activity, no matter how seemingly isolated, as part of the whole. This being so, I think that members are entitled to know how these valued contacts and experiences have molded my thinking about the relationships between our national professional body and the individual members of it whose collective interests it is supposed to advance.

I must apologize for this first person reporting, but I cannot commit my colleagues, who may or may not have similar ideas, and I must make it clear that my following comments are personal reflections only.

When I took over as editor of "The Forestry Chronicle" in 1945 we averaged about 50 pages per issue, the cost of publishing was less than \$1,000, and our membership was 550. Today we average over 100 pages per issue, the cost of publishing annually is over \$5,000, and our membership totals 1,364. Both the Chronicle and membership of the national body have more than doubled in size. These are indices of professional growth and expansion, of increased enrollments at forest schools, and more opportunities for forestry employment than at any time in the past. Whatever the qualitative comparisons, the fact of growth itself has posed new problems for the C.I.F. Both

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the profession and the professional society have matured, but the latter perhaps at a less rapid rate of progression than the former.

Forestry has come of age. It is a ranking profession, made so by high endeavour, and one to which the public is becoming constantly more intelligently responsive. Forestry has made its mark on Canada, and foresters cannot afford other than the best kind of professional representation in the task of consolidation and further progress which lies ahead. A forestry profession without a strong national society would be unthinkable. Equally unthinkable would be one just good enough to get by. We have a strong national body—strong enough to have met on equal terms last year in Montreal with the Society of American Foresters—but it should be stronger. It should be numerically as strong as to be completely representative, financially so strong that it can support salaried personnel working at full-time jobs, and qualitatively so strong that it can create professional pride, accomplish reform and thrive on controversy.

Greatness through the attainment of these objectives cannot be achieved except through the greatness of the individual member—his willingness to serve in office and on committees, his enthusiasm in the cause of forestry, his eagerness to co-operate in and contribute to joint undertakings and group effort, and perhaps, above all, by his firm conviction that his individual membership in the national body is an essential element of overall professional progress. Whether he understands it that way or not, however he classifies the national society in his thinking, I believe that a forester who does not participate in the affairs of the Institute is doing a disservice both to himself and to his profession.

A forester is not in a sufficiently strategic position to offer constructive criticisms of Institute affairs excepting from within the Institute itself, and it is surprising how effective something worthwhile, well said by an individual, can be. Not infrequently a single strong voice can be the dominating influence both at the sectional level at council and section meetings and at the national level at directors meetings and general sessions. The Institute exists today because so many have given so unselfishly of their time and effort, but we need still more members to help make the whole go round, and to add strength to representations made on behalf of the profession.

Last year at our Board of Directors meeting in Montreal, the question of an Institute badge and certificate was discussed. It was my impression that the Board as a whole was not in favor of these procedures, but the one or two members who liked the idea argued so strongly that it was decided to prepare a questionnaire for distribution to all members. This questionnaire was distributed in July of this year, and the result was a decisive affirmative vote for both badge and certificate. I mention this for two reasons; first, because it illustrates how effective one or two strong voices can be, and, second, because it also shows that the collective opinions of a small Board of Directors do not necessarily coincide with those of membership at large.

It is my conviction that the C.I.F. could not have had better representatives than the Boards of Directors with whom I have had the privilege to be

associated. Last year in Montreal, and again yesterday in this hotel, the chief purposes of our discussions were realized; namely, to find common ground for agreement, to think disinterestedly, and to act in accordance with majority opinion to the extent that such opinion can be judged. The machinery set up for this appraisal of opinion is that the secretary-treasurer prepares an agenda in consultation with the president. He then summarizes the main issues under each item, and these summaries are forwarded to the directors well in advance of the board meeting. This gives the directors time to discuss each item on the agenda in their respective sections, and to obtain majority opinions of section membership. Because of this system of briefing in advance, I believe that in most cases the joint decisions of the Board of Directors reflect majority opinion throughout the Institute. Nevertheless, all eventualities cannot be foreseen, since new ideas are frequently born and new angles presented in any type of spontaneous discussion. Realizing this, your directors have tried to maintain balance between probability and possibility, and when there is uncertainty as to what would be the attitude of membership, or when an issue is both sharply controversial and important, the practice of referring it in questionnaire or ballot form to membership is followed. These procedures bring the individual more into the picture. This is good for the Institute and good for the member.

The briefing of directors by sections prior to board meetings is an excellent practice, but it can be overdone. A director who has explicit instructions to hold rigidly to certain views irrespective of what suggestions are made during the course of discussion cannot contribute to any kind of compromise. Having said his piece, he has no flexibility in debate. I believe that all directors should, generally speaking, be permitted by their sections to exercise their judgment and to form their conclusions on the basis of the evidence which is presented. Otherwise a board cannot function properly as a melting pot in the national interest.

Perhaps at this point I should say a word about continuity in policies. Too frequent changes in policy direction are illogical. They suggest either that there has been insufficient or careless consideration of an issue at some stage in the discussion, that there is less than adequate definition of exactly what are the policies of the Institute, or that too little attention is given by executives at both section and national levels to the arguments and findings of their predecessors in office. Some years ago an analysis was made through the kindness of Dr. Malcolm Prebble of resolutions adopted over a period of years. It was found that many of these resolutions were contradictory. Since these resolutions are passed by small minorities which are almost entirely different at successive annual meetings, it is apparent that conflicting resolutions are expressions of different reactions as between one group of foresters and another. We have endeavoured to minimize these conflictions by having resolutions screened by a special committee well in advance of annual meetings, but it is a question whether small minority groups (at annual meetings) should be permitted to commit the Institute to policies which may or may not express the wishes of the majority. Because of its unpredictable effect on continuity of policy, the Society of American Foresters has no place for resolutions on

its annual meeting program. It is suggested that the incoming executive discuss this problem with a view towards possible revision.

The formation of sections in 1929 by constitutional amendment was a landmark in Institute affairs. Until and unless some better form of organization is indicated, I am thoroughly in favor of this type of decentralization. Section meetings provide a means of contact between members in a locality that cannot be provided by the national body, and it is right and proper that a section should be particularly interested in the forestry problems of the area which it serves. However, as these problems are no less important so are they no more important than those classifiable as national problems. If sections exist to dominate, to force and to pressure in the strictly local sense, then they do not contribute to professional unity, understanding and purpose on a nationwide basis. Considering the wide divergences in forestry organization, personnel and opportunities in different sections, it is surprising that there has been so little deviation in thinking as regards the fundamentals. This willingness of sections to give and take, to acquiesce to the will of the majority in the affairs of the national body, encourages us to feel that section organization fulfils both the local and the national need. Yet we would be wise to keep it in mind that quick and decisive action should be taken in the eventuality that this Institute should ever be in danger of being dominated by some form of sectionalism. Wherever we live, we are Canadian foresters first and foremost, and the development of the profession in each part of Canada without detriment to any other part must always be the principal Institute aim.

Any suggested policies or decisions which are good for only one or two sections and bad for the rest are not good enough, and deserve to be rejected by membership.

Winnipeg was the venue of the annual meeting of the Canadian Society of Forest Engineers in 1929. In the interim between then and now forestry in Canada has fulfilled much of its early promise. Many objectives have been attained through better understanding of what forestry has to offer as an integrated part of the national economy. The statement of forest policy issued by the C.S.F.E. in 1943, after much travail, was the first of its kind in Canada, and has since been followed by various industry and government pronouncements along similar lines. Certain aspects of the Canadian Forestry Act of 1949 were modelled on the C.S.F.E. Statement of Policy, as were certain features of the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association's statement of forest policy of 1945.

In the years immediately following World War II, enrollments at all forest schools across Canada reached unprecedented heights, and forestry personnel has percolated into many new work channels, both in provincial and federal government employment and in the field of private industry. This increased numerical strength of the profession at large is reflected in the larger membership of the Institute—now 1,364 as compared with 445 in 1942.

Today, as we meet in this great prairie centre of Winnipeg, we can feel pride in the accomplishments of foresters. We can feel that a great deal of spade-work has been done; that we have helped to create an aroused and intelligent public opinion in respect to ruthless or careless exploitation; that there

has been accumulation of considerable knowledge through applied research; and that methods, techniques and administrative detail are constantly being developed to meet changing conditions of forest ownership and management, fire protection, control of forest insects and diseases, and production of forest products.

It does not follow, however, that because we are pleased with our achievements we are also satisfied. There is a suggestion of smug complacency about satisfaction that the profession can well do without. The Institute, like most other organizations, has faults and defects. So has the profession. This is a healthy and normal condition so long as correctives are continually being developed from objective self-appraisals, and it is to be hoped that at least some of these deficiencies will be noted during the course of discussion at this annual meeting on "The Forest Situation in Canada, Present and Future". This is a significant and timely theme, and I would like to thank S. W. Schortinghuis, Chairman of the Annual Meeting Committee, and all members of his hard-working and able sub-committees, for the excellent program which they have arranged, and for the keenness which has always been evident in their planning.

I also want to thank W. A. E. Pepler, Vice-President of the Institute, for his valued assistance and advice during my term of office, and especially for his work as Chairman of the Annual Meeting Committee last year. Those of us who were able to attend the annual meeting in Montreal will always have fond memories of it.

I want to pay special tribute to our secretary-treasurer, D. V. Love, and to K. F. Harris, editor of "The Forestry Chronicle". Both these officers have discharged their duties in the best traditions of public service. Ever since he was appointed secretary-treasurer in 1948, Dave has carried a heavy load. His work has been characterized by efficiency, dispatch and enthusiasm, and I feel that we are all very much in his debt for what he has so willingly and generously given us. Kingsley Harris was appointed editor of "The Forestry Chronicle" at the beginning of 1952. Though young in years, he is already an old hand in the publishing game. His work on the Chronicle is, therefore, something in the nature of a "busman's holiday". I can report from intimate personal experience that he has become absorbed in the Chronicle, and it is with pleasure that I acknowledge the high calibre of his contribution.

I have already mentioned my pleasant associations with the Board of Directors. Our discussions have not only been profitable, but thoroughly enjoyable, and I am happy to express my appreciation of their efforts and understanding.

Not least to be remembered are the committees, both standing and special. These are too many to be named specifically, but to all chairmen, secretaries and members of Institute committees I say—as much as anything your contributions have kept the wheels turning. During my term of office—and I believe my predecessors had similar experiences—there was never any difficulty in getting committees organized, and those many who have given their time so freely in this type of service are deserving of the warm thanks of the Institute.

Finally, I want to thank members for having given me the opportunity to serve as president of the Institute. It has been a rewarding term of office, and I am most grateful for having had this experience. In return, I have worked hard, made plenty of mistakes, and perhaps have been occasionally responsible for some improvement.

I am certain that the future of the Institute and that of the profession will be one of steady advance, and to each one of you may I say—best wishes, success and happiness in your various undertakings.