

Sociological Shackles on Forestry

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FEW people, even foresters, think of forestry as influenced by sociological knowledge, principles, or activity. Actually, the practice of forestry is not only for the development of society; it is also being retarded by a lack of sociological concepts which the sociologists, not foresters, should enunciate.

More than 55 years ago that keen observer, Rudyard Kipling, saw the condition and stated the case about as clearly as anyone has ever since done it. In 1889, Kipling took a cross-country look at our American way of life and wrote:

"The great American Nation—which individually never shuts a door behind its noble self—very seldom attempts to put back anything that it has taken from Nature's shelves. It grabs all it can and moves on. But the moving on is nearly finished and the grabbing must stop; and then the federal government will have to establish a Woods and Forests Department the like of which was never seen in the world before. And all the people who have been accustomed to hack, mangle, and burn timber as they please will object, with shouts and protestations, to those infringements of their 'rights'."

Obviously Kipling saw the dependence of our society upon our forests. He saw this clearly because he was already "forestry-wise." He saw too the future dependence of successful forestry on socio-political action, for he was socially and politically wise.

About 15 years later, in 1906, when Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson transferred the old Forest Reserves from a preservation status into National Forests on a use basis, he too saw the social significance of our forests. And he took political action to make those forests serve those social uses. In his transfer order he stated specifically that each of these National

Forests henceforth should be put to "its most productive use for the permanent good of the whole people and not for the temporary benefit of individuals or companies." Here was sociological and political action of the first order. More than 100 million acres of land were affected. Three times as much forest land, however, and the most productive by far, still remained outside the realm of this social order, in private ownership.

But about 10 years after Wilson's order and 25 years after Kipling foresaw this social development, Gifford Pinchot made a remarkable observation. He stated, in his book "The Training of a Forester," that in his opinion the entire profession of forestry had in reality adopted the definitely social axiom, "For the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run." He added, "Before the members of any other profession dealing with natural resources, the foresters acquired the long look ahead." That this was aimed directly and specifically at PEOPLE and not just things is clearly evident in an article published in 1916 by one of the District Foresters then serving under H. S. Graves who followed Pinchot as Chief. That District Forester, Coert DuBois, was perhaps the first to state the federal forestry objective with emphasis on the sociological benefit. In his article, "The Mountain Communities and the Forest Service" (Univ. of Cal. Jour. of Agriculture, Vol. IV, No. 3, Nov. 1916), DuBois used photographs and text to illustrate the fact that "The Forest Service works with FOLKS as well as with trees and trails" and "These are the people for whom the Forest Service is working." That was 27 years ago. The sociological objective has never changed.

But then came a long lag in new activities relating forestry to sociology. The advent of the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933, however, broke this lag. It broke it with a procedure which was a social as well as an economic measure. The relationship was exceptionally direct: life in the forests would be good for the boys; their work would be good for forests. After nine years of trial, both of these benefits are almost universally conceded.

During that nine-year period, other progress and one marked change also became evident. On privately owned forest lands the "Tree Farm" idea was born and began to be put into practice. While some of this may have resulted from certain pressures, most of it undoubtedly can be attributed to the firm belief by all professional foresters that forestry should be "for the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run."

Many lumbermen and private timberland owners know all the workable techniques of forestry. And they know the forester's maxim, perhaps ad nauseam. Nearly all the large owners and operators also have technically trained foresters in their employ, some of these men being in high executive positions. At least in the backs of their minds, and frequently in their forest management practices, these men inescapably felt and frequently showed their belief in the social maxim, "For the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run."

Some progress has been evident, but if in 1942 Kipling should have remade his trip and rewritten his book "From Sea to Sea," it is doubtful if he would have greatly changed his sociological observation of 53 years before. He would have seen that on at least one-half of our forest land, and probably more, "the great American nation" was still not succeeding in its attempt "to put back anything that it has taken from Nature's shelves."

If Kipling had reached this conclusion in 1942, he might have tossed another "rag and a bone and a hank of hair" at the sociologists and the great American Public. For without even a trip from sea to sea he would have observed almost anywhere in the United States the great change that has taken place in the familiarity of our sociologists and the people in general with our forest conditions and our forest problem. He would have wondered how they could see so much but do so little. As Ellison has pointed out in the August 1942 issue of the *Journal of Forestry*, the number of annual visitors to the National Forests now practically equals the total population of this country. While this does not mean that every member of the populace has a chance to see either what is being done to or for our forests, Kipling might have wondered how so many people could look and still not see enough to cause them to act. He might, with reason, have asked the sociologists what they DO with their knowledge of "the phenomena and development of society."

Obviously any social phenomenon involving a number of people equivalent to the total population of a country should constitute a development worth more than mere study. Kipling might have said, "I told you 50 years ago what was going to happen. Now practically all of you have seen it with your own eyes. What are you going to DO about it? Persist in those all-American attributes of 'passing the buck' and 'let George do it,' or buckle down and DO something?"

But these evidences of inertia are not the only shackles

hung on forestry and foresters by the students and leaders of the constitution and development of society. They, the leaders, definitely expect the forester to give "adequate protection" to their forests from fire, insects, and disease. But they give him no definition whatever of "adequate"! Engineers have a rule which they can follow: The cost of the dike, the cost of the storm sewers, must not greatly exceed the cost of the city structures which the dike and the sewers protect from flood damage. Such values can be approximated satisfactorily. But the forester may be protecting a recreational area heavily used by the public. That area has a social re-creational value by reason of its trees and brush, rocks and rills. Burn off the trees and brush and what is the social value remaining? Should the forester evaluate this social loss? Or is that the function of the sociologist who studies the phenomenon of 132 million visitors to the National Forests, nearly 500,000 annually to one National Park?

Out on the ground, the Forest or Park ranger is frankly spending all the money he can get to protect these forest values for the public. And in almost all cases he can show you that the funds available are not enough if you want to avoid large and recreationally ruinous fire scars on your favorite landscape following the next critical fire season. In a few cases (see Koch's "The Passing of the Lolo Trail" in the *Journal of Forestry*, February 1935), experienced foresters not only admit that enough money is available but claim that too much has been spent, considering the type of forest resource at stake. But Koch is a white pine silviculturist, a saw-log forester. Should he assess the value of that highly recreational, highly historical Lolo trail? Earl Loveridge, another experienced forester, says "No," the "costs of real protection in this country are justified by the true values." Should Loveridge therefore assess these values?

If the destructible forest benefits and values are primarily sociological, what do the sociologists say? So far—nothing, just nothing!

In the meantime the ranger and his supervisor, and all foresters in general, are trying their best to manage these forests for the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run. But they are forced to do this, shackled by a total lack of interpretation of the key word, "adequate." They dedicate their work and their lives to a sociological axiom, but when cases arise demanding specific interpretation, the sociologists

are conspicuous by their absence. They seem to say, "Let George, the forester, do it all."

Many other cases could be cited, such as the costs justifiable to develop the forests in those ways for which the American Youth Commission commended the Forest Service and the Park Service in its recent report "Youth and the Future." Other cases also could be anticipated which are certain to arise in the future, such as maintaining public support for *any* forestry measure if the Forest Service succeeds in its avowed objective of a philosophy of plenty. IF foresters should be successful in producing plenty of timber, livestock forage, wildlife, recreational settings, and clean forest waters, how long will it be before politicians and the public erroneously reason, "Well, if they are doing so well in their work, that is prima-facie evidence that they are getting too much money. We will reduce their appropriations until they don't do so well."

Present day students of both forestry and sociology might find in this problem and project a highly profitable field for productive specialization.

Supervisors of high school education also might well follow the lead of the High School Supervisor for the State of Montana who has recently recommended that a comprehensive forest conservation course be taught in conjunction with the present courses in "Sociology" or "Problems of American Democracy." Sociology and Forestry are inseparable. Either one can shackle the other.

But as long as foresters follow the maxim first stated by Wilson, refined by Silcox, pushed by Clapp, and most recently restated by the newest Chief of the Forest Service, Lyle F. Watts (Iowa, B.S.F. '13, M.S.F. '28), the sociologists do not need to fear social impediments imposed by the foresters. As Watts put it, in his first word of greetings to his organization, "You and I have a lot to do with trees in the forest and in the farm woods; with forage on open ranges and in pastures, with wildlife, and with soil erosion and the like . . . I am confident that we all think and work with these things because they are tools through which PEOPLE may be served . . . I know what happens to PEOPLE in forest communities after their timber has been liquidated improperly or too fast . . . forest land resources can bring reasonable security to PEOPLE who work in a given locality and who want to own HOMES and raise FAMILIES."

As is evident, Forestry has become one form of applied