

CANADA'S FORESTS - A RICH RESOURCE

Addressing the North Western Ontario Municipal Association at Fort William on September 18, Mr. John R. Nicholson, the Minister of Forestry, expressed doubt that Canadians were giving "an appropriate degree of attention to the fact that a most serious criterion for judging the ultimate success in our national evolution will always be largely economic". He suggested, in fact, that the management of the country's vast resources was as great a challenge as "those faced in the more social and cultural areas".

Turning from these more general considerations, Mr. Nicholson proceeded to discuss as follows the problems of Canada's vital forest industries:

...Since my appointment as federal Minister of Forestry, I have used every opportunity to see as much of this part of Canada as possible, always with a special interest, of course, in the forestry community wherever I go. Over the last few months, I have visited operations in my native New Brunswick several times; spent a number of days in north-central Ontario, in Newfoundland, in Quebec, and now I am here in western Ontario in the great forested country of the Lakehead. As past president of the Council of Forest Industries of British Columbia, I feel I am reasonably familiar with that really great forest province of my adoption....

The six most westerly forest districts of Ontario... contain some 37.5 million acres of productive forest, or more than one-third of the entire accessible and potentially accessible productive forest land of Ontario.

The great forest industries here harvest nearly 40 per cent of the total volume of wood cut in this province and approximately one-sixth of all the pulp-wood cut in Canada is produced in this general area....

UNAWAWARENESS OF CANADIANS

...Everywhere I have gone in Canada, I have been impressed with the tremendous degree to which Canadians depend for employment and economic stability on their forests and the vast industries they support. At the same time, I am continually shocked by various manifestations indicating to me that millions of these same citizens are actually unaware of this fact of life. Possibly it could be that Canada's population is now mostly urban and personal contact with the forests is generally restricted to camping, hunting, fishing and other such recreational pursuits. Also, the forest community is not a nationally homogeneous one but rather made up of numerous but scattered regional communities across the country. Whatever the reasons may be, this general lack of appreciation outside the involved forest communities themselves is a most serious deficiency in society's basic information about their greatest renewable natural resource.

Without this information at hand, it is difficult for Canadians to make balanced, well-reasoned, and integrated judgments and decisions for comprehensive programmes of resource development and maintenance.

A FOREST NATION

Canada is indeed a forest nation. Consider these facts for a moment in the light of how they affect your own prime interest of municipal affairs:

The forest industries of Canada directly employ more than 300,000 persons; they have an annual payroll of some \$1.2 billion. The forest industries are first in the nation in terms of employment and wages paid, in the value of freight loaded, in the attraction of new capital investment, and in the net value of the output product in dollars.

In the terribly vital economic field of domestic exports, forest products account for approximately 30 per cent of Canada's total export value and have consistently throughout the years been our leading earner of foreign exchange.

To a large extent, then, the continued success of our forest industries is absolutely essential to the future economic welfare of the country, and with all that this implies.

Two of the great economic problems facing Canada today are regional unemployment and an imbalance of international payments. Although there is a heartening improvement in the payments picture, these remain firmly interlocking problems of the most serious dimension.

SECONDARY INDUSTRIES AND MARKETS

Surely one of the keys to the solution here must be in the development of more and more secondary industries to provide employment for more Canadians in the production of goods for Canadians and for exports to the market-places of the world. Many of these secondary industries must naturally be associated with the forest industries.

To expect success, however, we must expend every possible effort to discover, analyze and develop more and more new marketing areas for our goods. We must make every effort to diversify our markets for forest products so as to reduce the dangers attendant upon having too many of our eggs in one basket. To be overly dependent upon one market, particularly a market over which we can exercise no control, is fraught with real elements of potential disaster.

I am fully aware that good work - very good work - is being done by some segments of the forest industries and by government to develop new markets and thus reduce our dependence on any one market, but a re-doubling of all efforts in this connection is essential....

INTENSITY OF WORLD COMPETITION

World competition in forest products has never been tougher than it is today. All indications are that it is going to get even more intense before it gets better. Not only are forest products being challenged by heavily promoted substitute materials, but hitherto undeveloped but massive forest reserves throughout the world are now coming into production and head-on world competition with increasing rapidity and impact.

Nothing must be permitted to reduce our forest industry's competitive ability in the export markets.

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