

A Defense of the "Predatory Lumberman"

Could forest wrecking have been avoided? Was America compensated by a century of cheap construction?

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FORESTRY which does not contemplate the use of the forest is not *practical* forestry, and will not appeal to sensible and practical men. There was a time when forestry was based largely on the theory that the man who cut a tree was an enemy of society; and no satisfactory solution of how the forest could be used and perpetuated at the same time was offered.

Scientific Methods

The evolution of economic conditions, surrounding the lumber industry in this country, is just beginning to make it possible to consider the application of so-called "scientific forestry methods" to lumbering operations with some prospect of success. These conditions have been brought about by the cutting of a considerable part of the nation's virgin forests, which former generations thought were inexhaustible. The time appears to be reached, in our national history, when further increases in the amount of lumber procured from our virgin timber cannot be expected. Lumbermen are, therefore, realizing that their business can be prolonged only by the growth of another crop of trees. They know that lumber is absolutely indispensable, and that it cannot continue to be manufactured and consumed in its present volume indefinitely.

Lumbermen also know that scientific forestry methods cannot be applied to practical logging operations until the value of the standing timber has reached a point which will make it financially and economically possible.

With further decrease of supply, lumbermen believe that the price of standing timber will advance to a point which will make possible the adoption of scientific forestry methods without loss.

The adoption of forestry in the manufacture of lumber involves an increase in costs which obviously must be borne in the end by the consumer. The public should, therefore, understand that forestry means increased

costs of products manufactured from the forests.

Lumbermen believe that the remarkable development of our country has been due in large measure to the sacrifice of much of our forests. Our forefathers found great areas of lands covered with magnificent growths of hardwood, which they were obliged to cut down in order that they might cultivate the soil. The Northern forests proved to be the nearest sources of lumber supply to the great agricultural states of the Mississippi Valley. They furnished the cheapest building material that the world has ever known. While these forests and portions of the Southern forests have been largely depleted, the lumbermen believe the results have justified the sacrifice.

As the peoples of Europe flocked to our shores by the millions, and made for themselves new homes in this land of the free, it became necessary to build our towns and cities in a comparatively few years, considering the life of a nation. Without lumber, this could not have been done; neither could the great agricultural areas have been made to produce the food upon which the world now depends for its very life. The agricultural sections of the country could not have been brought into cultivation had it not been for the production of the immense quantity of lumber utilized on the farms; indeed, the romance of business contains no more interesting chapter than that concerning the lumber industry. Lumber and its products are as indispensable to the livelihood and well-being of men as are any other products of the soil. The lumber business in all its phases, from first to last, has played a most important part in the up-building of America.

In the very nature of the occupation, the man who has gone into the trackless forests and converted them into lumber for the use of the people, has been a power in many sections of the country. He has been the advance agent of civilization, for there has followed in his wake farms, towns and railroads, and all sorts of devel-

opment incident to the growth of a sturdy people and a prosperous country.

Forests have been sacrificed, yes. How else could the great prairies have been won? With the cutting of the forests immense areas of land have been made available for the plow. Hundreds of thousands of acres, from which the lumbermen removed the trees, are now being successfully cultivated, adding to the agricultural wealth of America.

Public Shares Responsibility

The public must share with the lumbermen the full responsibility for the cutting of the forests. Citizens engaged in the making of lumber, to supply the demand which existed for it. The greater part of the forests which have been used have represented little, if any, profit to the men who cut them. Even today, many millions of feet of timber are being cut and sold for returns which do not represent the costs of operation and present values of stumpage.

The lumbermen feel keenly the criticisms which have been directed against them, charging them with the ruthless destruction of timber at the expense of future generations. They resent the charge that they have wasted the nation's timber resources, or that they have made fortunes by methods which are without economic or moral excuse.

No fair-minded citizen will deny that there has been, in the past, abundant excuse for the cutting of the forests. The statement has been made by men high in the councils of the Government that we face a lumber shortage because of the destructive methods of lumbermen. This charge has undoubtedly caused many people to infer that the lumbermen have been ruthless vandals of the forests, destroying the God-given heritage of the people without any regard whatever to financial or economic considerations. The lumbermen reply in their own defense that every part of forest material from which a profit could have been realized has been used. They have left nothing in the