

A Canadian Observer in Norway

By Edward Beck.

CHRISTIANIA, Norway, July 2, 1921
—Norway has been in business of forest cultivation for more than sixty years. In 1907 the golden anniversary of the beginning of Norway's present efficient forestry system was officially celebrated. A volume containing a history of the development and progress of the forests was published. The lapse of sixty years, however, has, according to the leading Norwegian forest authorities, merely enabled them to make a fair start. Norwegian forests, they say, are still in their infancy; cultivation ought to have begun a century before it did. They are hoping to make up for lost time.

There are in Norway, as in Sweden and Finland, both State and private forests. The latter largely predominate. Altogether, the forest lands comprise about 28,000 square miles, or about 23 per cent of the country's total area which consists of about 124,450 square miles. Compared with Canada's forest area that of Norway appears almost insignificant, yet Norway regards her forest possessions as of the utmost importance and spares neither money nor effort to keep them in a state of constant production. Her national vitality depends upon them.

Norway's natural resources are strictly limited in extent. The surplus of timber ranks among the first and most important. It furnishes the main source of Norway's export trade and provides fuel, building material, and other wood necessities for home consumption. One-sixth of Norway's laborers find their employment in the wood-refining industries; one-tenth in the paper industry. Norwegian railways derive more than 12 per cent of their total traffic revenues from the pulpwood, cellulose and paper industries; some of the railways depend almost exclusively upon the revenues so derived. Appreciation of these facts has not only led Norway to the adoption of a policy of strict observation of her remaining forests, but also to employ all available means for the building up of a forest supply for the future. Today the country is not forest self-sustaining and is obliged to import considerable quantities of wood from Finland. Formerly wood was also freely imported from Russia.

The State Dominates in Forestry.

The productive timber lands of Norway consist of about 21,825 square miles, of which 11,500 are held by peasants and other small owners, 5,575 by incorporated companies, and 4,750 by the State, the latter including communal lands, parish and other endowments. The tendency at present is to discourage the further acquisition of forest lands by private owners.

Incorporated companies are, in fact, debarred by law from increasing their holdings by purchasing lands from peasants and other individual holders. Wherever possible and practicable the State is resuming ownership of these lands and using them to build up new forests.

Private ownership in the past, before the State established control of the forests, was charged with wasteful methods and irresponsible care, resulting in de-

pleted and sterile forest lands. These practices are what led to the present national forest policy. The private owners of today, however, need no restrictive laws to compel their lesson. The forest lands owned by the incorporated companies in Norway are the best kept of any, as well as the most prolific in their annual yield. The companies spend much more proportionately than does the State on their upkeep.

However, Norwegian forest laws do not

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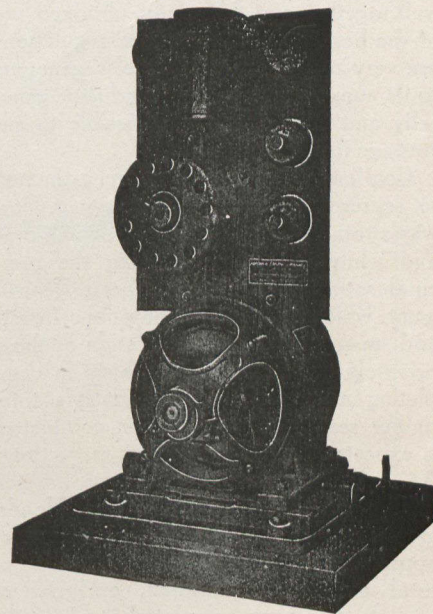
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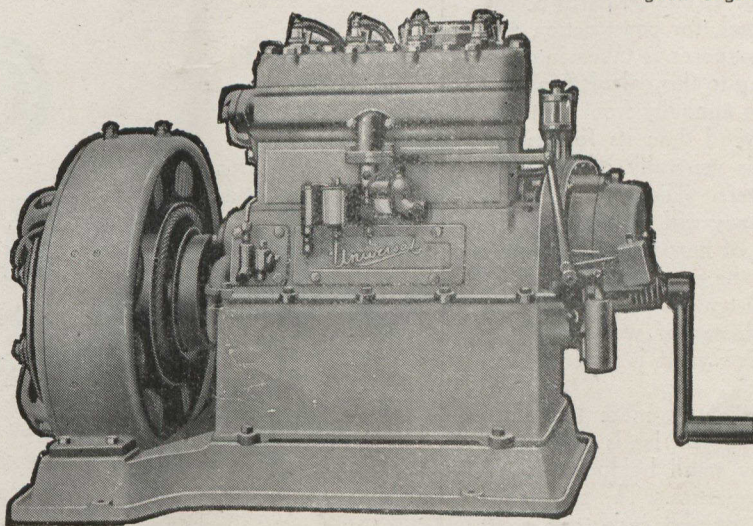
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