

## Developing the Empire Forestry Association

In July, 1920, the Imperial Forestry Conference held a session in London, which was attended by delegates from various parts of the British Empire. The result of their deliberations was to confirm the view that, speaking generally, the Empire is dissipating the enormous natural resources which it possesses in its forests, without making provision for their renewal; while such vital matters as the yield and utilization of timbers, the management of forests, forest education and scientific research are being neglected. The members of the Conference were also convinced that the administration of all our forest departments must be strengthened if the desirable policy of conserving and regenerating the forests of the Empire is to be effectively pursued.

### **State of Forestry in the Empire**

A Special Committee of the Conference, appointed to outline a scheme for a British Forestry Bureau, drew pointed attention to the unsatisfactory position of forestry, and after explaining the scope and objects of such a Bureau, it concluded: — "We have not been able to ascertain precisely to what extent existing institutions in the United Kingdom and other parts of the Empire are attempting to deal with the problems of afforestation, but we do know definitely that these need to be tackled. The important matters with which the proposed Bureau would deal are at present in a chaotic state."

### **Recommendations of Conference**

Among the recommendations of the Imperial Forestry Conference are some which obviously fall within the province of government. Institutions for scientific research work, or for the training of forest officials, can only be undertaken by the State, and should not be left to private or non-official enterprise. But in other directions, indicated in the resolutions of the Conference, there is much to be done by voluntary agency, notably the work of publicity or propaganda.

Delegates to the Conference laid stress upon the need for a sustained effort to interest the community in forestry. This lies outside the purview of an official forestry department; and they pointed out the disadvantage of propaganda work being carried out by either the State or by a purely commercial association, interested, perhaps, financially in some particular forest industry.

In the former case the character or policy of Provincial or State Governments in the Dominions may debar Federal action, while, as regards the latter, information or exhortations emanating from an interested source would arouse suspicion.

### **Value of Forestry Associations**

On the other hand, there is direct evidence of the immense scope for voluntary forestry associations, which have no particular trade interests to foster, which are not officially subordinate to, or leagued with, any government, and are free to support or criticize, as the occasion may demand, the official forestry policy, or the lack of it, in the United Kingdom, Dominions or elsewhere. The great voluntary associations in Canada and Australia have greatly assisted in spreading correct knowledge as to the growth of trees, silvicultural methods, and the production of timber. While in the U. S. A. they have intervened with effect in controversies connected with "conservation" and forest reserves.

### **Need for Central Association**

The experts at the Conference were unanimously agreed that the time has come to establish a Central Forestry Association for the following purposes:

- (a) To serve as a link between the associations already existing in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and other parts of the Empire, and between individuals engaged in the work of forestry;
- (b) To foster public interest in forestry throughout the Empire;
- (c) To secure general recognition of the importance of forest management;
- (d) To collect and circulate information as to existing forest conditions, and as to the future timber requirements of the Empire;
- (e) To provide a clearing house for information and a centre for co-operation;
- (f) To organize meetings for the discussion of the problems connected with the growth of timber, and its utilization.