

Will a County Forest Pay?

By Harold Cahill Belyea

Graduate of the University of New Brunswick, at present Assistant Professor of Forest Engineering, New York State College of Forestry, Syracuse, New York.

WHY NOT county forests? Forest production is essentially a public enterprise just as forest use, whether in product or in actuality, is a community enjoyment. It must be remembered that forest production is not a short time proposition and as such is neither attractive to private investment nor capable of its highest development through private endeavour.

Forest production requires for its fulfillment a period of time compassing often in the period between the initiation of the forest crop and its harvest usually more than the allotted span of man's life. The results of forestry practice are indefinite and if the practice be on a basis of continuity, the results are permanent and sustained. Such results are both direct and indirect. Direct, in that the practice of forestry yields direct profit and revenue to the owner; indirect, in the economic benefits and advantages they give to the community at large. Forests designed for the production of timber, may be utilized for camping, hunting, fishing, public playgrounds and other forms of forest recreation long before the timber is large enough to cut. Nor, in a well managed forest, need the factor of cutting, occasion any check in the continuity of such recreational use.

The evil of private industrial development of forests has been the exploitation and abandonment of forested areas. Why shouldn't municipalities, counties, give permanence through public ownership to industries which through their existence add to the collective wealth and property of the community. Established forests, permanently established and managed forests mean established industries, established homes, established villages and communities. Who then is the chief benefactor other than the county in which they are located.

Location and Development.

According to definition, forests should primarily occupy lands not suited for agriculture. This may be stony, rocky hillsides too rough or too steep to plough. Soils which are too



A planted White Pine forest will yield approximately 7 per cent. per annum with maturity at 40-50 years. This picture shows a planted White Pine forest, 42 years old with a merchantable volume of 23,230 board feet per acre, a net sale value of between \$450.00 and \$500.00 per acre.

dry or too wet, too sandy or too heavy, too shallow or too rocky, upon which to grow a farm crop, may be considered as true forest soils. There are run down farms in every community, abandoned by their owners which answer this description. If a man is habitually lazy and idle, unable and unwilling to support himself or contribute to the support of others, we invoke the vagrancy law and put him to work. There are in every community abandoned farms. These lands which contribute nothing through taxation to the support of the community and its progress are true vagrants. Each and every acre is a loafer, since in its natural reversion from agricultural to forest condition is accomplished slothfully and wastefully. "Put the loafing acre to work" is a slogan that might be adopted by every municipality. If it cannot be farm land, make it a forest. If it isn't reverting to forest land in the way it should naturally, make it a forest artificially. If it is a forest, make it a better forest, capable of yielding the best re-

turns possible on the acre. Put the loafing acre to work and — make it work.

Whether it be a soft woods forest, Pines, Spruce, etc., or a hardwoods forest, depends on circumstances. The softwoods forest, on the whole all through Eastern Canada grows faster, is more easily managed and yields better returns to the acre than the hardwood forest. The easiest method of establishing such a forest is by planting the land to pine or spruce. If there is a good growth of hardwoods on the site, it is better to promote the best growth of the hardwoods and make a conversion to softwoods by degrees; planting up clear cut areas until the whole process is complete.

The public forest should neither be too large nor too small. It should be of such size to permit of the easy application of a full plan of management. To permit of an efficient application of such a plan, the area of a forest should rarely exceed 1,500 acres nor be less than 200 acres. While a general compactness is desirable for forest management, in a rural community it is believed that the best interests will be served by not having it too compact. Fully as good results will be gotten from a number of medium sized blocks of timber land as from the large block. It is not believed advisable that parcels smaller than 20-30 acres should be handled as part of a forest working unit. Such small parcels should be sold or an endeavor made to compact the area into larger blocks.

A point which must not be lost sight of in the location of public forests is that of their accessibility. It is to be remembered that the word "public" implies a community enterprise, one in which every member of the community has or should have an interest. The perpetuation of public forests as such, and the continuance of a good sound forest policy depends upon the sustaining of good live public interest. Place the public forest where it cannot be seen, put it in the back country where bad roads make the forest hard to get to, and the public interest will wane and die.

While the public forest is to be mainly devoted to the production of