

Forestry and the War

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Has the Public Opinion Yet Been Convinced That Forest Maintenance Is State Business ?

The relations of the war to forests and forestry are many; they can be discussed from a variety of points of view. There is a rôle which forests are playing in military evolutions—the consumption of materials for war uses, the destruction of forests in the war zone, the disturbance of regulated forest management where such existed, etc.

It is not my purpose to exhaust the theme, but to direct attention particularly to what I consider the most important and possibly most lasting effect, namely, upon the development of future forest policies in our country. I shall only briefly touch on other relationships.

The war has taught us, in the first place, new appreciation of the value of forests and forest products. We have been made aware of the fact that, as in olden times, forests play a not unimportant rôle in modern military tactics—important enough to pay particular attention to the maintenance of boundary forests as a matter of State policy. Indeed, the aeroplane development as a most efficient reconnoitering means imparts a particular, additional value to forest cover as a screen against observers.

Next, we have found that in modern warfare, forest products are needed in large quantities, and that home supplies are preferable to importations, not only because of the possible inability of securing such, but on account of transportation difficulties.

The average trench requires alone about one cubic foot of wood to 10 feet of trench—say, 60,000 feet, board measure, to the mile, or 15 billion to the French front, not to account for shelters, artillery screens, block-houses, etc., and fuel. Such structures consume on the French front

as much as \$500 to \$1,200 worth of wood apiece.

Again, forest industries which were on the decline or entirely abandoned have been revived by the war and new uses for wood products developed.

In Germany, cut off from the outside world, the long-abandoned naval-stores industry, based largely on spruce, and the tan-bark industry, based on oak coppice, have been revived, while in France the need of pine timber has made serious inroads in the turpentine woods of the Landes.

Wooden ships and aeroplanes call for special materials. The substitution of wood cellulose for cotton in the manufacture of explosives and the use of sawdust for cattle feed are among the new uses.

Moreover, we have learned to appreciate that certain classes of forest products are rare and of special value. Sitka spruce, once a despised material, is now found almost indispensable for aeroplane construction, furnishing long, clear, light, yet strong, material. The limited supply of such material suggests the propriety of Government control.

French Forests Destroyed

One of the first thoughts which the theme suggests leads us to the battle-fields in Flanders, where a wholesale destruction of forest cover has desolated the country. While the territory occupied by the enemy represents only a small fraction of the whole of France, it includes a proportionally large part of the French forest area; perhaps one-fifth to one-fourth of the total forest area—the most extensive and richest portion of French forests—is located in the war zone and much of it destroyed—a sad loss, which it will take many years to