The Management of Pulp Lands in Eastern Canada

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THE time has arrived when cut-over pulpwood lands have a recognized potential value. This fact is so obvious that it has given rise to inquiry by the owners of such land as to the best method of handling for a second cutting. I would suggest to the owner of these lands as the first step, that he should put his land holdings on the same business basis as he now considers his mills and logging operations. If then the owner considers his capital as invested for a period of years only and does not look to the future to yield him continuous crops of timber, I would further advise that he be sure in discarding cut-over land that he is not throwing away a growing asset.

Since proximity to manufacturing centers is a prominent factor in the woods business and the accessible supply of wild forest is a known and acute element to many established operators, the operator should make intelligent inquiry into the character and value of his cut-over lands, put the whole mass of facts on a simple balance sheet and decide whether his business can proceed continuously on his present holdings or whether, if unable to add to these holdings, he must face a cessation of that business after a period of years.

There is no secret formula for the recreation of our forest resources, and if it were possible to prescribe to-day a simple method which would cover Canada with a growing forest, the state would profit but the individual would not. It is a fact known to all of us that large profits have been made for the fortunate few who have possessed timber when the general supply has waned. The truth about forest conditions will inflict the same penalty or reward on one operator as on another and success will be achieved by business insight operating in the light of complete information as to assets and liabilities.

The First Inquiry.

The first step, therefore, is a careful inquiry into the character of timber land holdings. This must be made for the individual tract. Growth in the forests of white spruce will vary from that in the red and black spruce mixtures. The mixture of tolerant hardwoods with the most desirable softwoods creates a different and more difficult problem than that presented in mixtures of softwood with aspen and paper birch. Climate, soil, insects and disease, fire risk, proximity to market and even social conditions are all dominant factors in the establishment of a forest business, and any one may cause the success or failure of the enterprise.

Many of these are easily calculated and in others, causes and effects are unknown. We are rather too prone to ask why the forest fails or succeeds rather than to limit ourselves to the simple determination of how a specific area of forest will act when cut over. Cut-over land is a mystery to many of us, and even more so to the average operator who never sees it close up after the timber crop has been removed, and if he does find cause to traverse cut-over land, sees a given area but once, and because he has not a mental picture of its original condition he has no measure by which to judge what has taken place there.

Casual observation from a train, an automobile or even a travelled tote road gives a poor average impression of the general character of cut-over land, because along these roads conditions have been established which are usually different from the average character of the logged area. Cut-over land must be investigated intelligently and systematically at the expense of considerable effort and much torn clothing, if the history of the area is to be thoroughly understood. A study carefully made, systematically covering logged-over land by some well known method such as our strip method, can be made to yield accurate information of the following character and extent:

Exact Information Needed.

(1) The live growing capital stock of timber, young advanced growth and reproduction.

(2) The loss of capital stock by cutting.

(3) The loss of capital stock by wind and other natural agencies.

(4) The net volume increment since the cutting and probable net increment for the immediate future.

(5) The fire risk and natural conditions controlling it.

(6) The period of years to the next cut and amount of that next cut.

(7) The acreage that is productive and that which is not, thereby allowing for adjustment.

In addition this study will show what material now exists on the land, which is not now of value to the industry, but has potential value for other purposes; this constitutes the by-product of the industry and calls for market development.