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United State Forestry Service

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Salesmanship Part of Foresters’ Job

H. N. Wheeler - Chief Lecturer, U. S. F. S.

Forestry practice should become as completely a part of our state and national life as the public school system and the Post Office Department are. The United States Forest Service established in 1905 now has more than 158,000,000 acres of Government land under its direction; is cooperating with many states under the Clark-McNary Act; has charge of a number of experiment stations, and is doing intensive research and investigative work in the Madison Laboratory; forty states have Forestry Departments and thirty states have Extension Foresters, and yet, the people in general have very little idea of what is being done or what is supposed to be done along forestry lines. They know in a vague way that something is being done here and there but have little conception of the whole problem nor realize that they, themselves, have a part in it. Progress is sure to be slow and even stopped entirely in places so long as this condition exists. If the people at large realized as thoroughly as some of our foresters do, that the very future welfare of our country depends upon our forestry practice there would be a forward movement in forestry that would soon eclipse all other Government and state activities. But unless the people are informed on the subject and realize the need, there will be little advancement and the evils resulting from wholesale forest destruction will be upon us. These evils are already being felt. There are a number of avenues open by which the public may become informed, and all of them should be used. Forestry should be taught, in some form, in every school in the land, newspaper and magazine articles might well be increased ten fold, and all clubs and organizations should be reached not once, but repeatedly, until the mass of the people become forest minded. The most forceful way of reaching people is by the spoken word, illustrated by pictures. Just the enumeration of facts and showing slides is not necessarily effective, in fact, may be very tiresome. The whole story must be made attractive to the non-technical mind or an audience cannot be secured nor held throughout the discourse. This little sketch need not enumerate the requisites of an effective speaker but
there are a great many people making public addresses who are not putting over their messages. Slides to be most effective should be properly colored and kept in good repair and at all times thoroughly clean. The lenses and lamp of the machine, projecting them must also be clean, and the lamp and reflector kept in proper position. Those are mere details but some speakers are not observing them. First, the lecturer must be thoroughly in earnest and not be afraid to let his audience realize it. But just an earnest man who makes a poor presentation will not be effective.

The subject must be made attractive. No one cares to listen to a mere recital of facts, no matter how astounding they are, and long lists of statistics are particularly uninteresting. It is also of little interest to the average audience as to how a woodlot should be handled. The most attractive phases of the subject must be said in the most attractive manner possible, if the public is to be interested.

It may be said that public speaking is not the province of the trained forester. And yet the trained forester will have no use for his training unless there is forestry to practice. There will be little or no forestry to practice unless the people want it, and the people will not want it unless they understand its importance. Who is to inform them of this importance except the foresters themselves. So it all comes back to the point that foresters should be salesmen and be prepared to sell the forestry idea in season and out of season. A red hot campaign such as a political campaign would be the most effective way of enlightening the people. Very few people in a state these days that are not fairly familiar with the issues of the campaign before election day. A forestry campaign put on in that manner would advance the cause of forestry twenty years. If the country were in the throes of a war as was the case a few years ago everybody would be alive to the situation and everybody would be talking about it. Is the forestry situation any less important than a great war? It is doubtful. This year, for the first time in the history of the country, conservation has played a big part in the political campaigns of two great states and conservation won. As the leaders become convinced of the needs for forestry they in turn are convincing others. The various service (luncheon) clubs are placing forestry on their state and national programs and calling for speakers. Women's Clubs are everywhere discussing forestry and it is due to them that such great progress has been made in several states. The Chautauqua platform is an untouched field, so far, in forestry discussion.
There is a broad field for foresters in this educational program, in the schools and before all sorts of Clubs but before National conventions of lumbermen, and in the directors' rooms of big lumber companies, and concerns owning large land areas, suited only to the raising of timber; and in the committee rooms of state legislatures. Just now there is a call for foresters as counsellors in boys' summer camps. These camps are primarily outdoor schools and already forestry students are employed in a few of them. These boys in time will become the leaders of the country and the training they get in the subject will bear fruit in later years. The enforcement of law has suffered greatly in some places where the popular mind was not ready for the law. So forestry practice has been abandoned in some states where the people as a whole, did not understand it. Laws are obeyed and enforced in accordance with public sentiment. It is our job as foresters to see that the people are thoroughly informed, so the whole problem may be solved in an intelligent manner. In the mean time we are still burning millions of acres of timberland each year, and are holding back from establishing state and county nurseries, and from planting trees by the millions. A start along this line is being made here and there but the progress is slow. There are idle acres on practically every farm, even in the best farming regions and these acres will raise the timber that is so much needed by every farmer. Where there is no knowledge on forestry there will be little or no forestry practice. It is up to the foresters to supply the information; to create the enthusiasm for forestry; to cause the people to become forest minded. Such an attitude of mind is desirable even among the farmers of the great prairie State of Iowa, who ship in from without the state from $6,000,000 to $10,000,000 worth of fence post each year. There is waste and worn out land on almost every farm sufficient to raise these posts. Salesman foresters are needed to acquaint the people with this situation and solve the problem. The man who can solve the problem of conservation as it relates to forestry in his state and put over an effective working plan is the biggest man in that state.