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A Message to the Student Forester

By KENNETH W. SAUER,
National Gypsum Company

MANY times during his four years of academic life the average student forester is confronted with the problem of choosing between the subjects of forest management, forest utilization, or any one of the other allied subjects offered in this course. Whether he desires to work for private industry, or some governmental agency, any decision he makes will place him in one of these three categories. A student preparing for one type of work may be required to study subjects that are foreign to the other branches. However, the fundamental duties, the accompanying responsibilities, and the essential requirements of each after graduation, are practically the same.

All are faced with the problems relative to handling men, materials, and machines. These tasks may appear very trivial and simple in black and white, and in fact they are if only the latter two items are considered. Handling materials and machines is something that can be engineered by anyone qualified for such a position, and a man of this type is not difficult to find. The plans for handling materials and machines on any job have the same fundamental characteristics. The ideas are first presented on paper, whether they be blueprints, graphs, charts, tabulations, or in some other form. These ideas are later applied in the field where the job reaches its point of culmination. If all details have been properly worked out and if the calculations are correct and all other office work completed accurately, the machines will function exactly as planned. The same reasoning may be applied to the handling of materials.

THE problem of managing men is of an entirely different nature. To illustrate this point, consider the example used by an Ames Forester, graduate of the Class of 1930, who is employed in an administrative capacity by a large company. "You can install a 100-horsepower motor that is rated at 200 r.p.m., and when the power is on that piece of equipment will turn over 200 times every minute it is operated. Compare this machine with an employee who is expected to produce a certain quan-
tity of work (of specific quality) in a given length of time. He has proven his ability by past performance, but his actual production for any certain day depends on an innumerable amount of variables. For example, he came to work the same time today that he did yesterday, but he does not feel the same toward the people around him. Maybe his private life has caused this indifferent attitude. Here are some possibilities. Assume that he has quarreled with his wife, or that he was not fortunate enough to avoid an automobile accident, or the furniture installments are overdue, or maybe Junior shot the baby with his new air rifle. These and many similar factors, which apparently are not related to the business world in which he is engaged, have a definite and direct effect on the quantity and quality of work he will produce." The foreman, supervisor, or superintendent who knows his men and is able to judge human reactions, will be the first to realize any unnatural actions among his employees. This type of leader will act quickly and correct, or at least alleviate the trouble. He knows that the human element is one of the largest indirect factors of production.

This illustration may be equally applied to men that work with their hands, or those who work only above the shoulders. We cannot all be personnel directors or public relations workers, nor would we all be content with such work. Yet, if we expect to make a success in life, and this does not mean financially or politically, we must remember that one of the essentials is the ability to "get along" with men. This characteristic is partially inherent, but those who possess and value it most highly, because of their approach to perfection, have usually obtained it through years of practice.

William S. Knudsen, President of General Motors Corporation, once said: "The young man who has the combination of the learning of books with the learning which comes of doing things with the hands need not worry about getting along in the world today or at any time." The business world of today would have considerably more material from which to choose if the majority of young men were endowed with the two faculties listed in Mr. Knudsen's statement.

There is one more quality that is beneficial to any man, especially a young man, which should be mentioned here, and that is the willingness to learn from others. Whether the suggestions and bits of information come from a superior or from someone else, they should all be given sufficient considera-
Foresters are faced with problems relative to handling men, materials, and machines.

Pity the fellow who rejects suggestions and ideas from his employees and business associates without first placing them in the analytical balance of his own mind.

One test that many employers use during interviews and sometimes for several months after an employee is working might be called "the check for the employee's egoism." It can be summed up in the following paragraph.

A person who feels that he isn't so much would seem likely, given a fair quota of backbone, to strive fiercely to overcome that not-so-muchness. There is an old saying about he who knows not and knows that he knows not is better equipped to learn something eventually than he who knows not and knows not that he knows not. (That vocabulary jitterbug is worth taking a little time to figure out.) Putting the same thought in an entirely different cloak, one might say, "He who has the courage to take advice from anyone and is able to differentiate good advice from that which is not so good, will find the road much smoother than he who lends a deaf ear."

Ames Forester
It cannot be too sternly impressed on the young forester's mind that his profession has rapidly become more complex. Almost daily new positions of individuals create new conditions, new problems, new desires, and we find ourselves exposed to new pressures, new restrictions and new responsibilities. In a society so highly stratified as the one in which we live, the interests of different sections collide with the interests of others. Such conditions make it increasingly difficult for the individual to find his way. No man escapes the puzzling, and sometimes very baffling, confusion of it all; the normal act of living necessitates the adoption of an attitude of pliability, if he expects to survive pleasantly. If one must follow the path through this field, as well as many others, he must first learn to adopt and adjust, to accept and reject, to concede and recede, and to give way in order to make way.

A FEW short generations ago a man—any man—could carve his fortune independently of his fellowmen. But those days have passed. Personal initiative is an admirable possession even today where it is surrounded with social restrictions which have a tendency to retard its complete utilization. There is no better place to develop personal initiative in the average youth than on the college campus. Even though the majority of things in life remain to be learned and accomplished after graduation, the mould should be shaped before commencement day.

The contacts made in various clubs, student organizations, societies and other social bodies might well be called goods purchased at unknown prices. Grades are only one scale of ability, and often a very misleading one. The student's examination papers which were price-marked "A" by the professor have a much lower purchasing power than the student's personality, initiative, engenuity, ability to lead men, or any other enviable personal quality that is so common no one ever places a numerical value thereon. This does not necessarily imply that fixed prices should be set for varying degrees of these characteristics. It is mentioned only to remind us that many business men have their individual listings for those qualities when they employ men. The applicant today is seldom questioned regarding his scholastic record, provided it is average or above. This fact is of minor importance to the modern employer. One of the more frequent questions is, "What experience have you had managing men?" This may seem an unfair question to the young man
applying for his first job, yet, if he has applied himself in school with a constant endeavor to improve his status and thereby having attained some of the qualities of a leader, his answer will not be in the negative form. What will your answer be?

A PRAYER

Father, help my life to be
Deeply rooted, like a tree,
Which, beset by wind and rain—
Bent to earth, can stand again.

Like a limpid, crystal pool,
For within whose depth lie cool
Visions from the world above,
Let my life reflect Thy love.

Patient stars, unhurried still,
Climb, each night, up Heaven's hill;
Unheard harmonies they bring.
Teach me their song—let my life sing!
—Peggy Kniskern James

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