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State of the Department Address "From the Northwest Corner"

by George Thomson
Chairman, Department of Forestry

THANKS to planning put forth by department heads and architects 15 years gone, my desk looks out on a panorama from Old Botany to the southwest around to Lush auditorium and Animal Science to the northeast. In the arc in between I see views that have been familiar to me ever since 1939 when I first saw Iowa State College as a green farm boy from Pecatonica. Within view are Home Ec., where you can still buy cherry pies at VEISHEA and where the only girls we ever got to know had their classes; the big glacial erratic with the fine granite dikes in it that was brought onto campus in memory of Doc Gwynne because he always took students out in the woods to see it; the riding horse paddock by the railroad tracks which, even now, isn't far from the old ROTC cavalry horse "bull pen" where we all learned to ride, Artillery style, and found that after a hot afternoon with the horses no civilian would sit near us.

Why the reminiscing? Well, the Forestry Department has finished 75 good years and has now started down the back slope of the century and it comforts me that the physical world still retains bench-marks that I can recognize and that forests and institutions are not so ephemeral that one is always losing one's way. In the years to come forestry students still will dislike mathematics, Sophomores will still be expecting more from teachers than they are ever going to get, Pammel Court will house still another generation of students, and Charlie Gwynne's rock won't have changed a bit.

But that is stability in the long run—how are we doing now?

Despite the fact that we did not and do not wish to change to the semester system, the groundwork for the transition is essentially complete. Without the shepherding of Dr. Hopkins and endless hours of thought and work by faculty and student committees the switch couldn't have been accomplished at all. Starting in the Fall of 1981, the new system will be in effect. Exactly what the early starting date in August

will do to summer experience and what the reduced number of courses will do to professional preparation we cannot say. We only know that we will survive and continue to strive for excellence.

Faculty is at full strength with a search going on for additional staffing in the important and employment-rich arena of forest products. More dependence will be placed on sister departments for instruction in the recreation aspects of forestry—but with guidance and stimulation coming from our own faculty.

In April of 1979 we successfully passed intensive review of our research by a panel of forestry specialists under the auspices of CR/SEA (Cooperative Research/Science and Education Administration). In April of 1981 we will have an accreditation review conducted by the Society of American Foresters. As is the case of most events where one must put one's best foot forward, these reviews are somewhat nerve wracking but are helpful and stimulating and, not unlike any rite of initiation, tend to form a bond among the participants.

Extension has simply never been better. Drs. Prestemon and Wray are endlessly busy and continuously in demand. Fuel wood, forest management, energy-efficient housing, and urban forestry are just a few of the subjects that cry for undivided attention. With the hope that funding will be provided from Public Law 95-306, the Renewable Resources Extension Act, we look forward to adding another Extension Forester and broadening our services to the State.

With encouragement from the U.S. Forest Service Experiment Station we hope to expand our funding base through cooperative research centering on the management of the private non-industrial forest. Work in forest management and utilization could then expect to approach the emphasis that we have placed in the last ten years on intensive culture plantation work.

While this section focuses on

faculty it is obvious that faculty would not exist without students. Although enrollments all over the United States are beginning to decline at forestry schools there is no lessening in the number of responsibilities demanding attention if good graduates are to be produced. Advising will be tremendously important for the next five years as the present Freshmen and Sophomores and the students coming this Fall are brought through the quarter to semester transition. Equally important will be the advice offered by faculty and judgement exhibited by students while course selections are made from fewer offerings. Placement, too, demands the effort of all faculty members and all students. The recent study of the last five years of graduates showed that three-quarters of our recent alumni are employed in forestry so the record is excellent. Nonetheless it takes imagination and energy and dedication to parlay an education into a life's work. The department stands ready to offer all assistance.

Over the horizon come the next year, the next decade, and the next quarter century. Time will provide the challenge; faculty and students will provide the response as successfully in years to come as in the good years past. ■

