

SCIENCE

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THE PRESENT SITUATION IN FORESTRY, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO STATE FORESTRY¹

No nation can prosper or even exist in comfort without wood, without a considerable supply of relatively inexpensive timber. Three years ago our per capita annual consumption of wood was about 300 board feet, exclusive of large quantities used for fuel, paper and a multitude of other purposes. It is extremely difficult for our minds to picture what this means in total volume or amount when multiplied by 110 million, our present population. Each year we remove from our forests or destroy through forest fires about 56 billion board feet of timber large enough to saw into lumber. This almost incomprehensible amount of wood disappears from our forests every year. Much of it we need and use, and can not very well get along without. On the other hand much of it is destroyed by fire. The latter is not only a great immediate economic loss and waste, but also an encroachment on supplies that will be very much needed in the immediate future.

As a nation we have grown to our present stature on a lavish diet of wood. We use more wood than any other nation on earth. Our industries would stop, our very civilization stagnate were we suddenly deprived of our wood supply. Wood the world over is a basic resource. It is almost the first resource to be exploited and utilized in the development of a new country. Moreover, it is the resource that makes possible the utilization of other resources. There is scarcely an industry that can prosper without wood. Agriculture, transportation and commerce as we know them to-day are inconceivable without wood. All of us are daily in contact with wood wrought into some form for our comfort or necessity. From

¹ An address delivered in the School of Citizenship, Yale University, Wednesday, October 26.