

Letters

Forest Planning

As a member of the President's Advisory Panel on Timber and the Environment, I was pleased to see the story by Constance Holden and Luther J. Carter concerning the completion of our report and its presentation to the President (News and Comment, 12 Oct., p. 144). However, Holden and Carter could have made a more informative and better-balanced presentation of the report both by indicating the President's charge to the panel and by taking account of the broad range of the panel's recommendations. For example, instead of mentioning the careful conditions we imposed on increasing the cut from the national forests, Holden and Carter treat increased cutting as if it were the only major recommendation in our report.

We recommended "generous withdrawals" of national forest lands in the West, to enable the wilderness system there to reach its ultimate area as soon as possible, and we recommended establishment of wilderness or quasi-wilderness areas in the East. We recommended that forest areas, whether publicly or privately owned, not be harvested where combinations of soils and slopes create a serious soil erosion problem. We recommended careful planning of roads to reduce soil erosion problems. We made numerous recommendations about wildlife (which is my special interest), about watershed management, about esthetic considerations in timber harvesting, and about many other matters which have concerned conservationists. We stated that "the protection of environmental quality over the long run should take precedence over all uses of forest resources." These recommendations constitute more than a token consideration of the environmental and conservation aspects of forestry in the United States.

The panel did recommend an acceleration of the harvesting of old-growth timber in national forests of the West.

We think there is an urgent need for forest products to meet housing goals established by Congress and endorsed by the President. An approximate doubling of lumber prices in the past year indicates that there is a serious timber shortage. Our recommendation for increased harvesting was contingent upon the availability of funds to carry out intensive forestry to sustain that level of harvest—"The panel recognizes that an accelerated harvest of old-growth timber in national forests should be undertaken only provided that adequate provision is made for financing whatever intensified timber management is needed to support the new level of harvest." Unless such financing is provided, the panel does not recommend accelerated harvesting.

The report is a consensus of its members. It was not 100 percent acceptable to any one of them. I personally think, if the historical background of forestry management, current forest conditions in the United States, the state of the art of forestry, countrywide environmental, social, and economic considerations, the world timber situation, and the panel charges are taken into account, that the right compromises have been made.

We expect that the "report will receive a tough going-over by environmentalists"—and by many others. We welcome all comments and discussion, as the last of our recommendations to the President makes clear. But we hope comment and discussion can proceed from what the report says, in all its various parts, and not merely from extracts that may have been taken out of context.

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The report by Holden and Carter, "Timber study reinforces Nixon policy," begins with the clause, "Since the U.S. Forest Service opened national

forests to private logging operations in 1950 . . . [*italics mine*]." This clause is in error regarding both procedure and date and thus gives a misleading slant to later portions of the report.

Except in minor operations, such as the construction of roads and trails, the establishment of camp and picnic areas, and certain silvicultural and hydrological experiments, the U.S. Forest Service does no logging of its own, and never has. It sells most timber by competitive bid to private loggers, in the form of standing trees to be cut by the purchaser. As far back as 1905, the year the old Bureau of Forestry was transformed into the present Forest Service, cuts from such sales in national forests totaled more than 68 million board feet. This practice, in fact, antedates the establishment of the Forest Service. Gifford Pinchot (1) notes the sale in 1898 of 15 million board feet of timber from national forest reserves to the Homestake Mining Company in the Black Hills of South Dakota for \$1 per 1000 board feet.

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References

1. G. Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground* (Harcourt Brace, New York, 1947), p. 174.

World Food Situation

I would like to draw attention to the fact that the time horizon for the Indicative World Plan of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations was 1985 and not 1980, as stated in Nicholas Wade's report "World food situation: Pessimism comes back into vogue" (News and Comment, 17 Aug., p. 634).

In Wade's report, Thomas T. Poleman is quoted as saying that "FAO . . . assume[s] that persons in tropical countries have about the same food requirements as overnourished Americans." This is not so. The figures issued by FAO for food requirements show differences of several hundred calories between different countries.

Also, Poleman describes FAO as being neo-Malthusian. We have recently gone on record (1) as believing that there has not been any permanent deterioration in the world food situation. In this respect, FAO's publications are in agreement with the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (2) and not