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Hagenstein Stresses Meaning of Society of American Foresters

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is the text of remarks made by Bill Hagenstein before the Siskiyou Chapter of the Society of American Foresters at Grants Pass, Oregon on February 7, 1964. To quote one prominent man, "Bill Hagenstein is a living example of the adage that you receive benefits according to your input into the Society of American Foresters. Few men have worked harder than Bill in the Society, and yet he remains one of its ardent boosters." We second that!

I don't see how any member of our profession who is interested in more than merely earning a living following our craft can fail to be a member of our Society. It is the vehicle for individual professional expression, development and growth. The sum total of its efforts can only make a contribution to people generally if the individuals who make up our Society are active professional participants.

Coming out of school in the mid-depression when job opportunities were almost totally limited to U.S. Civil Service employment and when entering salaries in forestry were higher than in many other professions, it was always a mystery to me why so many of my contemporaries were disinterested in the Society. I was eager to join, as soon as eligible, and did in the same year in which I was graduated from forest school. I immediately became active in my local Section and was soon busily engaged in proselyting my colleagues into becoming members.

Those were the days when money was hard to get but it would buy an awful lot. Nearly everyone who attended forest schools, which more properly could have been called Civil Service academies, looked forward upon graduation to passing the Junior Forester exam and getting an appointment, generally as a technical foreman, in a CCC camp. The CCC camps for awhile were political. To get an appointment one had to be endorsed by the patronage bosses of the major party unless, of course, he qualified through Civil Service. There were some trying experiences under these political appointments which obviously included some hopelessly incompetent professional pretenders, and our Society stepped in to make strong representations to the Federal Civil Service Commission and the Administration that forestry and employment in its professional aspects should be non-political.

On Taking Sides

Obviously with employment limited until 20 years ago largely to public service, our Society had a natural tendency to shy away from controversial public policy questions because of the mistaken impression on the part of a lot of our members that one couldn't take sides or have a professional view contrary to that of his employer. Such an attitude, of course, is completely contrary to the basic purpose



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of a professional society which is to advance the profession it represents through improving its educational standards, practices and procedures, all with an eye to helping the profession make a greater contribution to mankind. I have often maintained that just because a Forester's personal views on a question differ from the official position of his employer, he is not a disloyal employee. By this of course I don't mean that if, for example, you work for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and it has an established policy on a question that you can publicly disclaim it and advocate a contrary position. However, if your professional society gives you an opportunity to vote on a question, then its members have not only the sacred right of expressing their views in a secret ballot, but the professional obligation to do so.

This is why I have always been extremely proud of the leadership of our Society when it responded to the membership's desire by giving it the privilege of voting on the controversial question of whether private forests should be managed under Federal regulation in the early 1950's. Despite the fact that a majority of our members were then in public employ, the Society voted 7:3 to oppose the principle of Federal regulation. This was professional expression of what a majority of our members believed. While I am not naive enough to believe this is what persuaded Congress to reject all of the regulation proposals before it, the mere fact that SAF expressed itself on a leading public forestry question emphasized that it was acting in the highest tradition of a professional body.

Referendum of 1961

A more recent example is the referendum in 1961 on whether wilderness should be established by statute or by the administrative procedures which have been followed ever since members of our profession started the wilderness idea on the national forests 35 years ago. In the case of employees of the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Interior, their Secretaries had adopted and expressed before Committees of the Congress official positions supporting the then pending legislation which would have created a National Wilderness Preservation System. As a result of the referendum our members expressed themselves 71 per cent against any wilderness legislation by maintaining that professional judgments on land use should continue to be made by professional land managers. The vote was much larger than usual on such questions and could only be interpreted as having been supported heavily by employees of the Federal Government whose own professional judgment was that their leadership was wrong in responding to the tumultuous handclaps of the articulate outdoor organizations as indicative of the way to go.

Always Dynamic

One thing has always impressed me about our Society and that is its dynamic youthfulness. My life only spans three-quarters of our Society's existence, but I have had the rare privilege of knowing personally six of our seven charter members. It was a rare privilege indeed nearly 25 years ago to have the opportunity of personally discussing professional questions with Gifford Pinchot, Ralph Hosmer, E. T. Allen, W. L. (Billy) Hall, Tommy Sherrard and Henry S. Graves. The only reason I never met the seventh founder of our Society is that he was deceased before I was born. How young we are when you realize that just last summer Professor Hosmer, our last surviving charter member, passed over the Great Divide. Our Society has been in existence less than the average rotation of the timber we are now growing to provide a permanent economy for the Pacific Northwest.

Youth, of course, is wont to make mistakes and our Society has made its share. But it has never made the mistake of failing to recognize its responsibility in leading the forestry profession toward greater service to the American people.

Accreditation Program

One of the Society's outstanding contributions to our profession has been through its system of accreditation of forest schools to improve the foundation for professional forestry careers. There is no question but what the younger men who have been graduated since World War II are much better educated in a formal sense than we, your predecessors. A lot of this is due to

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HAGENSTEIN, (Cont. from Page 1) the stringent standards, and they weren't arrived at without plenty of internal controversy, by which the Society has raised the level of forestry education of our nation. Of course, along with this there is always the danger, particularly when enrollment begins to drop, that there might be a tendency on the part of the accredited schools to control the accreditation procedures so that it appears that they might be running a closed shop. Having had the privilege of serving on the Council for the last six years and therefore being responsible for casting one vote on the accreditation, refusal of accreditation, or deaccreditation of schools, I know personally of the great efforts by the Society's Committee on Accreditation, ponderously called "Committee for the Advancement of Forestry Education in America," in studying an institution carefully and then reporting to the Council for its ultimate decision on its accreditation status. This is one of the toughest problems Council members have. Particularly so when there has been a tendency in recent years for the membership to elect a majority of forestry educators to the Council and always from accredited schools. Someone always has to be the devil's advocate in such a circumstance and it fell my unhappy lot on several occasions to quiz heavily the accreditation committee on the reasons for a specific recommendation.

Professional Publications

Another outstanding contribution of our Society is in the field of professional publications. Despite the often expressed attitude of many of our members that the *Journal of Forestry* "ain't worth readin'," the fact is there is something every month for every member of our profession. No one watches all the acts of a circus, nor can anyone be intrigued by every article appearing in a professional journal. The editorial board of the *Journal*, which serves without pay and almost without recognition, does a workmanlike job of screening the contributions submitted for publication. Obviously the principal contributors to our professional literature are the researchers, part of whose job is to write. If research is concluded and left buried in the files it serves no useful purpose. Criticism that most of the articles in the *Journal of Forestry* are by researchers, in my opinion, is invalid. It is obvious that they are the ones who will and perhaps should do a major share of our professional writing. On the other hand, the rest of us who have points of view or who want to goad our Society into taking positions of leadership on public issues, have a professional obligation to write on those subjects and submit them to our *Journal*.

I can tell you that from seven years experience as an associate editor of the *Journal of Forestry* in the fields of private forestry and forest management and engineering, I tried in vain to get private foresters and field foresters in public service to write on significant things they were doing or to express their views on policy questions and met with almost complete failure. The opportunity to publish is there for all who would write, providing they do a workmanlike job and help is available from the Society staff and Editorial Board.

Letters to the Editor

In the last four years, the *Journal of Forestry* has been departmentalized a bit more with an eye to serving our members better through addition of a Letters to the Editor section and a National Outlook

column to cover current policy issues. Frankly I don't think our membership has taken advantage of Letters to the Editor or the long-established Points of View sections. I always urge everyone who complains to me about the Society's shortcomings to use such opportunities for expression. If you have a thing that has been bothering you, why don't you write a Point of View or at least a Letter to the Editor?

Incidentally, while talking about the *Journal of Forestry*, you may not know that it has the largest circulation of any forestry periodical of any language in the world. I think we are improving it continuously because of constructive suggestions made by the membership to the Editorial Board and to the Council.

Another important professional contribution of our Society is in the field of service to those practitioners among us who hang out their shingles as consultants. The frequent publication of a list of consultants by the Society has helped attract attention to and I am sure brought clients to those some 250 members of our profession who are not dependent upon anybody but their own initiative for sustenance for their families. A lot different from the rest of us who have a guaranteed public or private pay check every two weeks. The rest of us owe a lot to our confreres who have become consulting foresters because they lend a status to our profession similar to that of doctors, lawyers and others who live on the professional services they render to a client for a fee.

On Forest Policy

One field in which our Society has vacillated is that of forest policy. When we have had strong leadership the Society has faced up squarely to controversial issues, debated them, voted on them, and courageously expressed its position in appropriate places at the proper time. There was a period when a lot of our membership thought we had utterly failed in this field. Therefore, I am happy to report that in the last six years there has been a revived interest on the part of our membership, nation-wide, in the field of forest policy and the Council has responded. First, it authorized establishment of a Council Committee on Policy in May 1961 which has responsibility for suggesting policies to the Council for consideration. That body can either accept or, if it deems necessary, refer such suggestions to the membership for vote. Second, the Council Committee on Policy in January 1962 published a recap of Society policies in force and preceded it with a brief account on how policies are formulated. Having served on this Policy Committee from its inception and the last two years as Chairman, I know that we still have one weak link. Rather than depending on a committee of three men to take initiative for Society policy determination, the membership itself either individually or through the Sections and Chapters, should make known their views on policy matters they consider to be of nation-wide importance to our profession and Society. I am afraid it is a valid criticism of our membership to say that it sometimes enjoys carping more at the inaction of the Society's leadership rather than taking the initiative and suggesting avenues for leadership. Some feel that the Society's employees are not responsive to suggestions for activities in the policy field because they tend to shun controversy. Personally I don't believe this is true. In my

dealing with the employees in the Society's executive office I have always found them responsive to suggestions of the membership when such suggestions were in keeping with the Society's professional goals and in good taste. There is no question but what our employees often argue as to the merits of some suggestions, but this is a problem which your Council members should boldly face. If, in their opinion, the employees are wrong, the Council should adopt policies which straighten them out. This is a matter of dealing with personalities, of course, in part, but the higher professional considerations must prevail. I think in most of my experience as a Council member this was the case. I would also point out that except on items which were entirely non-controversial the Council has a tendency to have split votes which reflects the democratic process within our Society of hammering out policies after free and frank discussion.

Many Opportunities

Now that our profession offers much broader opportunities for employment than when I first became a member it is possible for us to function more nearly as our founders envisioned as a free and unfettered professional society for the advancement of forestry in all of its aspects.

Our SAF has a number of weaknesses yet. One is our natural tendency to be provincial because of the obvious interest of each of us in the things close at hand. For those items which are provincial the Chapters and the Sections should be active. If they involve policy matters they must be handled within current Society and Section policies. If such policies need changing, the channels are open for the membership to take the initiative to get action.

On matters of broad national interest the Council should always take the initiative, but in order to have these things brought to its attention individual members and the Sections and Chapters should express their views. To facilitate this the Council revived in 1959 the annual joint Section Delegate-Council meeting which offers opportunity for the Council to get, if it wants it, the grass root views on what the Society should be doing on the policy front to improve its service to the profession.

In 1964 we stand with more than 15,000 members. This is nearly six times as many as when I first became a member 25 years ago. Half our profession is privately employed, half in public service. We have arrived at a point in history when forestry is now an accepted practice on the land and when the future for forestry employment was never brighter. What we need now is more complete support of our professional society, vigorous professional leadership stemming from the grass roots, and a revived attitude that forestry is an honorable pursuit.

This requires that all eligible members of our profession become active members of our Society. Just paying dues isn't enough. We must all be participating members. If we don't, then our opportunities for advancing forestry still further for human benefit will go unrealized and the ambitions of our founders to have forestry play its rightful part in our country will have been thwarted. We owe them and the people of our country our best efforts at all times and this is the challenge that I see before us in expressing myself on what the Society of American Foresters means to me.