

EDITORIAL

Calico and Lace

The policy of man-made forests the world over is efficient timber production. Gone are the days of romantic silviculture. Now it's logs on roadside as fast as possible. What business man can fault this ambition? Modern forest practice is rammed through with this tenet of stream-lining wood production to the degree that it would bring water to the eyes of the Great Impaler himself.

Silvicultural practice, in this modern sense, holds this commitment close to its heart. Such efficiency demands uniformity. It demands the removal of chance occurrence. It demands the reduction of 'forest' to the simpler term of 'timber crop'. Forest practice that does not directly contribute to quickness of growth is not efficient under this definition.

Modern artificial forests are therefore largely lacking in spontaneity. As a consequence they are visually impoverished. By contrast the complex tapestry of a natural forest with its rich variety of age classes and species differences is found interesting. That contrast is the public relations problem for modern forest management.

Society demands that state forests be efficient machines of wood production. Society then demands that forests contribute in a planned fashion to the beauty of the countryside. The question then arises — to what degree is the argument of "the common good" to be allowed to conflict with the objective of wealth generation through efficient timber production?

If society demands good forest landscapes — society must pay for what it wants. Larch, where spruce would grow better — is a cost against efficiency. Deplanting land to expose a fine view — is a cost against efficiency. Holding a crop beyond its financial rotation to retain a landscape — is a cost against efficiency. Plantations should not be asked to carry these expenses in hidden measure. All such costs should be spelt out, isolated and defended.

Good scenery is not an inevitable spin-off from forest activity. Landscape enhancement has a price tag. If townspeople want good country landscape, if hoteliers and the tourist trade apply pressure for such landscapes — the argument of cost — and who should pay — should be presented.