

According to the sixth paragraph in the Private Forestry Law the Forest Conservation Boards, besides the supervision of the stipulations concerning tree-felling, are expected to promote private forestry by means of spreading knowledge of rational forestry, guiding and assisting forest work, encouraging and supporting collaboration in forestry, and adopting other measures for developing forestry. During the recent years this aspect has become very prominent. Instead the cases of forest closing are becoming more and more rare.

It would take too much time to describe all the measures taken by the Forest Conservation Boards for fulfilling the obligations set out in paragraph 6. The most important form is the marking of trees for cutting, and the personal guidance given to the forest owners in that connection. Assistance is given in other forest management work, too, in planting and seeding, and in preparation of regeneration areas. Among young people instructive and propaganda work is carried out.

In the sixth paragraph it is provided that the Forest Conservation Boards also promote collaboration between forest owners. This order was included because over the period of fifty years special Forest Owners' Associations have been established and they have become very significant. As a rule, they cover a commune area each, and they employ one middle school educated forester at the disposal of members. The costs are divided among members in proportion to the forest area. The private forest owners adopted this way voluntarily and with great success. At present there are 330 Forest Owners' Associations and they employ about 360 middle school educated foresters. The weight of the instructive field work is going over to the side of these associations, and it is intended to establish their activity firmly by new legislation. Nowadays these associations get state assistance up to 20 per cent. of their income. In the new law it is proposed that every forest owner should be obliged to pay a so-called forest management fee, which would fall to the local association.

Now it is time to take the Law on Forest Improvement in Finland into discussion. This law provides that during a five-year period certain sums will be put at disposal for draining swamp lands, for forest growing, planting, and putting devastated areas into productive state as well as for building forest roads. This law entered into force in 1929, and up to 1939, when the war interrupted the work, nice results had been won. During ten years 279,000 hectares land was drained and different kinds of seeding, planting, and other silvicultural work was carried out on 198,000 hectares. Altogether 477,000 hectares were thus treated.

The interruption caused by the war was a great loss to the work that was proceeding so well. It has meant effective progress in silvicultural work. The forest owners were most interested in the draining work, but other improvement work also gained more and more significance.

The State support based on the Forest Improvement Law is given either as assistance or as loans at a low rate of interest. The amount of support depends on the financial standing of the forest owner in question. A small farm owner can get a quite considerable support, while a big farm gets less. In all improvement work assistance is given in the form of planning, foremen, tools, and seeds and plants—free of charge. It has proved that particularly the drainage work requires a specially trained staff to be successfully carried out. The winter, when it is impossible to perform field work, is well used for the pretentious planning work, for estimating costs, and for settling the accounts.

In short, we can say that the organization for promoting private forestry work in Finland has proved very successful in our circumstances. Perhaps its most essential feature is that the responsibility is left to forest owners themselves. There are strict stipulations in the Private Forestry Law, but when the application of the law is entrusted to men who know forest work and feel it their own, matters can be run more smoothly. The Finnish farmer values his freedom high, he has never submitted to strange command, and the way of his own responsibility is doubtless the only possible. Had there been no war, probably there would already be a new and more complete law of forest management in force.

The Finnish farm forests have not reached a very high level yet. After all, twenty years are not a long time in forest management, especially not in the far north, where forests grow slowly. But we trust that we are on the right road and we try to go forward along it.

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