

MINUTES OF CONFERENCE OF STATE FORESTERS, held at the OFFICE OF THE NEW YORK COMMISSION, No. 1, Madison Avenue, New York City, June 28, 1909, to consider the matter of a disease affecting white pine known as "European Currant Rust," or "Blister Rust," imported from Germany.

Hon. James S. Whipple, Chairman.

P r e s e n t :

Mr. W. O. Filley, State Forester, New Haven, Conn.

Mr. A. F. Hawes, " " Burlington, Vt.

Mr. Alfred Gaskill, " " Trenton, N. J.

Mr. F. W. Rane, " " Boston, Mass.

Mr. C. R. Pettis, " " Albany, N. Y.

Dr. Perley Spaulding, Bureau of Plant Industry, Washington, D. C.

Dr. Haven Metcalf, " " " " " "

Mr. Raphael Zon, Forest Service, " "

Mr. R. A. Pearson, Commissioner of Agriculture, Albany, N. Y.

Hon. J. S. Whipple, Forest, Fish & Game Commissioner, Albany, N. Y.

Mr. Austin Cary, Superintendent State Forests, " "

Mr. G. G. Atwood, Chief Nursery Inspector, State Dept. Agr., "

Prof. J. W. Toumey, Yale Forest School, New Haven, Conn.

Mr. R. Bristol, Forester, D.& H.R.R., Plattsburg, N. Y.

Mr. Geo. Aiken, Forest Commissioner, Woodstock, Vt.

Mr. John Foley, Asst. Forester, Penn. R. R., Philadelphia, Pa.

Prof. F. C. Stewart, State Agr. Expt. Sta., Geneva, N. Y.

Mr. S. W. Spring, Consulting Forester, New Haven, Conn.

Prof. C. C. Curtis, Prof. of Botany, Columbia Univ., N. Y.

Hon. R. P. Bass, Forest Comm'r, Peterboro, N. H.

CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, I assume we ought to get right at this matter so that we can get our work done and get away.

Some days ago Mr. Pettis, one of our Foresters, called my attention to the fact that it was evident that a disease, very dangerous to white pine and imported into this country, had appeared in our transportation of seedlings from a garden in Germany, and he brought me some of the specimens that he found in the Lake Clear gardens, and I was informed by him and some gentlemen who represented the national Department, one of whom was with Mr. Pettis when he found the trouble, that it might be very serious indeed, not only to us in the State of New York, but in the adjoining States in the eastern part of the United States. I realized that unless the situation, to some extent at least, was promptly handled, serious results might follow.

We have been to great trouble and some expense in getting the public sentiment aroused along the line of having our people plant trees and commercial trees in the State of New York, other States doing the same; and if this matter was not handled diplomatically and promptly I could see how, in this State, we might be set back in this work many years, which would be very injurious to us, further than the mere effect of the disease of the trees.

I believe that no newspaper man should get hold of this matter, and in my letter to you I made that suggestion. I am delighted to see that so many of you are here. I know nothing or little about it myself, from a technical or scientific standpoint, as I am not a scientific man; but calling you here by the few facts stated in my letter, and without saying anything further about it, I will ask Mr. Pettis to

make a brief statement about it, and then we will ask Dr. Metcalf to talk to us about the matter, and I shall hope that each person here will give us his idea upon any phase of it, as to how we shall treat it, how to eradicate it, as to the further importation of trees of this character, how we shall present it to the public, the relations of the State to the National government, and how we can work in harmony with it. Perhaps we ought to discuss as well the question of the tariff upon the trees, it appearing that Mr. Paine in the House believed there should be no tariff, and has put back his bill in the Senate, which was carried. All of these things we may want to discuss.

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MR. PETTIS: About all I can say is simply to give the information as to how we happened to find it. This spring we brought in about 250,000 3-year-old transplants, and about 800,000 1-year-old seedlings. None of the seedlings showed any signs of infection, but a few of the transplants had already developed it. That was found in the field by one of the men and he did not know what it was; I got into communication with him, Dr. Spaulding was at that time working in the garden, and he immediately took up the problem with pathologists in different parts of the country. Since that time we found that it had developed in some 2-year-old transplants in the nursery. I think that is about all in regard to the situation at that time. Dr. Spaulding was there, and Dr. Metcalf soon came, and they made investigations in other States.

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DR. METCALF: Perhaps in this matter I better say a word or two in regard to the disease itself and its nature.

The disease is a rust, and up to the present time has been known exclusively in Europe. It rusts perhaps a part of its life on one

post, and part of its life on another; this particular rust living part of its life on the white pine and the other part on various kinds of currants. Now, it is an interesting fact that this disease has already appeared in this country and on the Continent. It was discovered by Prof. Stewart, of the Geneva Experiment Station in this State, and he promptly eradicated the disease, and it has apparently been eradicated since. But it was never before found on white pine. The disease in Europe is serious; I do not think that the seriousness can be overestimated, but it is not so much as to what it may do in Europe as it is to the possibilities of what it may do here generally. We know that on the introduction of diseases of humankind they show that on coming to a new country they take on a new lease of life, and in addition to the increased vigor that might come to this parasite on the white pine, there is another species of pine that it might come in contact with in the West, and we do not know what it would do then..Pathologists for a number of years have been on the lookout for this disease. Now, as has already been said, it has been imported - it is here on German rust seedlings. We know positively at the present time that it is in New York, Vermont, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, and we do not know where else - that is yet to be determined. So from that mere fact of distribution it is a serious question, which is really one of national importance, affecting not only the States where the disease may already be at present, but affecting all the States where white pine is grown. The disease I do not say is one that essentially kills nursery stock, but it also occurs on the adult trees. Of course, the first question that arises in our minds is what we are

going to do about it, and in that connection I might say that whatever we are going to do or are not going to do, whatever we do must be done now, because if the thing is permitted to go another year, it will be absolutely beyond the possibility of control of any sort. And in the second place, I ~~can~~<sup>may</sup> say that the proposition of the control of this disease is purely a problem of pathology. When the disease is in its most obvious condition, it is very easy to detect, but in the stage which it is in at this time of year, it is not so easy; in other words, the entire question of eradication, or rather inspection, or whatever method is advocated, will have to be at least under the direction of expert pathologists.

Now, Dr. Spaulding and myself have known of this matter for only a short time - a couple of weeks - and in that time we have not had opportunity to look the entire situation over so far as we would wish; so far as we have looked the situation over, however, we believe that the disease can be stamped out at this stage by thorough inspection, with eradication of the disease in suspected plants. That necessarily involves a visit to every place where these imported seedlings have been put up; it means going over every planting; it means that the person who is doing the inspecting is going over every individual plant, and that is necessarily quite a task. There is also another difficulty that the disease which has occurred this spring may already have spread itself to currants, and currant bushes will have to be gone over, and that would have to be done in August. So you can see it is a very serious problem, and now is the time if it is ever going to be done.

In conclusion I must say that the National Department of Agriculture stands ready to assist in every way, and I want to say frankly that

we have no desire whatever to "butt in"; if the situation can be handled by the pathological forces in the States themselves, it had better be handled in that way. But the thing is a national question, as it affects every State throughout the white pine range, and so we naturally and necessarily feel a very decided interest in the situation.

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Specimens of pine and photographs were then passed to each member present and a discussion followed among those present as to the elimination of the disease.

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PROF. STEWART: I might say that all I know about this matter is what is printed in our technical Bulletin No. 2. I think Mr. Pettis has distributed among you a copy of that bulletin; it is entitled "The Epidemic of the European Currant Rust." In the fall of 1906 we found that our currant plantation at <sup>the</sup> Geneva station, containing a large number of varieties and representing several species, was thoroughly infested with this disease. It appeared as a rust underneath the surface leaves. We do not know how we got it. It is true we have been importing currants from Europe, but the last importation we made was in 1904, and this outbreak occurred in the fall of 1906. Now, to the best of our knowledge the disease cannot live from one year to the next on the currant; it is in the leaves only on the currant, and when these leaves drop off the disease is gone, so far as the currant is concerned. It must come to the pine before it can come back to the currant again, and we were unable to determine how we got the disease. We inspected the pine trees in the vicinity, and there were very few in the immediate vicinity. There were two young pine trees within 25 feet of the

plantation of currants, but these were perfectly healthy, and have remained healthy today. We watched them carefully and they are still healthy, and there were none of the pines that could have this disease close by. I immediately saw that the disease attacks only those species which have their leaves in clusters of five. We were, of course, very much worried over the matter; we did not want the disease to get started at the Experiment Station; we did not wish to be the agent of introduction, and so we very promptly eradicated the disease in the whole plantation. That was in the fall of 1906, and we did not plant any more until a year ago this spring, that is, we missed one year. We have not seen any on our currants since, and none has appeared on the pines, so far as we have been ~~able~~<sup>able</sup> to detect. I think there is one very hopeful feature about this situation, and it is this: that although we have been importing from Europe for a considerable number of years and in considerable <sup>to</sup> quantity, and this disease is common in Europe, especially in northwestern Germany, still the disease has not become established up to the present time. We feel pretty sure that our pathologists are alert, and the disease is a conspicuous one, and it is safe to say that it is not established in this country, notwithstanding the fact that we have been importing pines pretty freely, but I think we ought to take pretty radical measures to get rid of it notwithstanding.

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DR. MEECALF: Mr. Chairman, in regard to the matter of inspection, I might say that this disease occurs at present on 1906 seedlings imported from the Heinze nursery this last spring, and also on seedlings which were imported this spring. If there had been any kind of a dock inspection - I mean inspection by persons who were familiar with this

type of disease, every one of the seedlings that came in this year could have been excluded; probably not, however, those that came in last year, which showed no evidence of the disease. In the present instance, however, nine-tenths of the disease would have been shut off by inspection. I would suggest that we hear from Mr. Zon in regard to this matter. I think he can particularly tell us about the German end of it.

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Mr. Zon addressed the members on this subject, and advocated imposing a duty on seedlings imported from Germany.

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CHAIRMAN: What is the opinion of you gentlemen about the necessity of saying anything just yet to the public; in other words, that we have Mr. Pettis and other men first examine every plantation that has been made this year from this stock in forty-nine States or wherever that stock went, and the other States do the same; then later on, two weeks if we could get around to it at that time, have another meeting to better inform ourselves before we give anything to the public? Or are we satisfied now about it so that we might make a statement today on that point. I would like to know myself by having somebody examine these plantations and the stock this year throughout the State, what the situation is. The International Paper Company has some of its stock, and Mr. Burnham had 30,000 of this stock. Are we quite prepared today to talk for publication in even a guarded way?

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After some discussion among the members present, Mr. Whipple continued as follows:

My own impression about this would be to issue a statement today of the fact so worded that it would not frighten the people at all.

The people are not stampeded so easily, after all. They are pretty sensible. The main point in any department of State, it seems to me, is to keep their confidence. Now, it is nothing to find a case of smallpox in a city or village, but it is an awful thing not to know about it; nobody would ever be abused if a case was found, but they are abused if it is found that it existed and they were not notified. We have a case of smallpox and it will spread if we do not do something. The danger of having it get away from us and finally having to acknowledge it is a thousand times greater than facing it on the spot. Now, I think that a committee should be appointed to see Mr. Paine and Mr. Aldrich, or the members that are likely to be on the Conference Committee, and show them this situation, not for publication, but in an executive session, and have a duty placed upon the importation of trees that will be prohibitive if there cannot be a statute enacted direct. I do not believe that we can afford longer to take the chances of importing this class of trees. On the other hand, I do not believe there is much necessity for it. I have resolved, so far as I am concerned, that the State of New York shall not buy another tree from abroad--we will raise them ourselves. It seems to be impossible to detect this disease if the tree is infected six months before it is shipped here, and any kind of inspection at the dock never will eradicate it. Any provision of the tariff looking to the money being devoted to the purpose of inspection by the Government will be futile, because they will keep coming in all the time, and we won't know it unless we are right about the development of the disease; then no inspection will do it, that is the second point - we can abandon that proposition. I think we should raise all our own trees. I believe that of necessity we have got to make further investigation, but in order to eradicate it we must imme-

diately inspect every plantation where these trees have been put out. Now, a committee should be appointed here to prepare a very careful statement about this whole matter, and it can be so worded, I am sure, that the public won't be frightened at all and they will be glad that they have men in their department who have taken hold of this thing and feel secure, because they will say "these men are on their jobs and doing business." I will take chances with the people here.

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The following named gentlemen were named as a committee to prepare a statement for approval to be given to the press for publication:

Dr. Haven Metcalf,  
Mr. R. A. Pearson,  
Mr. George Aiken,  
Mr. F. W. Rane,  
Mr. Alfred Gaskill,  
Hon. James S. Whipple.

The committee prepared and submitted for approval the following statement, which was duly approved and given to the press for publication:

"Mr. Pettis, one of New York State's Foresters, and who has charge of tree nurseries and tree planting for the State, discovered about ten days ago indications that what is known as "European Currant Rust" or "Blister Rust," a disease which has affected white pine abroad, had attacked some of the seedling plants in one of the Lake Clear nurseries of the State of New York. Specimens were immediately submitted to Dr. Spaulding, of the National Department of Agriculture, who was at the plantation at the time, and he pronounced it the "European Currant Rust" or "Blister Rust," confirming Mr. Pettis notion about it."

"Commissioner Whipple immediately took the matter up and called a conference, inviting to it the following named well-known gentlemen from the National and State Departments. The conference was called at the Commissioner's New York City office, No. 1, Madison Avenue, on June 28.

The following named gentlemen attended the conference:

Mr. W. O. Filley, State Forester, New Haven, Conn.  
Mr. A. F. Hawes, " " Burlington, Vt.  
Mr. Alfred Gaskill, " " Trenton, N. J.  
Mr. F. W. Rane, " " Boston, Mass.  
Mr. C. R. Pettis, " " Albany, N. Y.  
Dr. Perley Spaulding, Bureau of Plant Industry, Washington, D. C.  
Dr. Haven Metcalf, " " " " " "  
Mr. Raphael Zon, Forest Service, " "  
Mr. R. A. Pearson, Comm'r of Agriculture, Albany, N. Y.  
Hon. J. S. Whipple, Forest, Fish, and Game Comm'r, "  
Mr. Austin Cary, Supt. State Forests, Albany, "  
Mr. G. G. Atwood, Chief Nursery Inspector, State Dept. Agr., Albany, N. Y.  
Prof. J. W. Towney, Yale Forest School, New Haven, Conn.  
Mr. H. R. Bristol, Forester, D. & H. R. R., Plattsburg, N. Y.  
Mr. Geo. Aiken, Forest Commissioner, Woodstock, Vt.  
Mr. John Foley, Ass't. Forester, Pa. R. R., Philadelphia, Pa.  
Prof. F. C. Stewart, State Agr. Expt. Sta., Geneva, N. Y.  
Mr. S. W. Spring, Consulting Forester, New Haven, Conn.  
Prof. C. C. Curtis, Prof. of Botany, Columbia University, N. Y.  
Hon. R. P. Bass, Forest Commissioner, Peterboro, N. H.

"The subject for which the conference was called was thoroughly discussed, and it is believed that no serious damage will occur, especially in view of the prompt action taken by all of the States represented in immediately proceeding to eradicate the danger caused by the appearance of the disease in the few places it has been found.

" Several of the Northeastern States have imported large quantities of small white pine trees for reforesting land, and in some of the shipments the disease has been found. The trees affected have come from a single nursery, so far as known, in Germany, and it is well known where the trees have been planted, and for that reason it will be comparatively easy to take care of the trouble if promptly attended to. Representatives of the Bureau of Plant Industry of the United States Department of Agriculture, and of the New York State Experiment Station, have examined the diseased plants, and agree that a complete eradication may be made now.

"The European Currant Rust is a fungus disease which lives alter-

nately on the white pine and the currant bush. It is most serious on small trees. The disease has not been reported in this country on white pine until this year; however, it was found on currant bushes at the Geneva New York Experiment Station in 1906, but Prof. F. C. Stewart of that station took every precaution and eradicated the disease by destroying the infected currant bushes.

"The representatives of the conference believe that there is no reason whatever for alarm among those who have planted seedling trees and those who desire to do so. All those having planted will be asked by the Department to make a careful inspection of the trees planted, and such trees as are found infected will have to be destroyed. Agents of the New York State Department of Agriculture who are making nursery and horticultural inspections in all parts of the State will be instructed to watch closely for the first appearance of suspicious indications, and where such departments exist in other States they will cooperate in the same way, as will also the National Department of Agriculture. In this way the danger will be entirely eliminated. It is a disease of trees that cannot be discovered until the disease has developed for a year, and for that reason, any inspection at the docks on receipt of trees, unless it is fully developed, could not be effectual in the discovery of the trouble on receipt of trees on this side.

"Commissioner Whipple believes that the people as well as the Departments are to be congratulated that the disease has been so quickly discovered and such prompt steps taken to wipe it out."

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RESOLVED that Metcalf, Spaulding and Zon be authorized to act as a committee to present the matter of importing tree diseases on nursery stock to the Secretary of Agriculture.

RESOLVED that a law be passed giving the Secretary of Agriculture the same power in excluding fungous diseases that he now has in relation to insect pests.

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STATE OF NEW YORK  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Confidential.

Raymond A. Pearson, Comm'r.  
George L. Flanders, 1st Ass't. Comm'r.

Albany, N. Y., July 1, 1909.

Circular to importing nurserymen and custom house brokers and all others in New York State who have recently handled shipments of pine trees from Europe.

Take Notice:

The blister rust of pine, *Peridermium strobil*, has recently been found on a few pine trees imported from Germany. This disease is capable of creating enormous damage to pine trees if it is not suppressed. With the help of all persons interested, and under authority of State Law, this department hopes to eradicate this disease at once. It is of the first importance for us to know of all places where pine trees have been received from abroad. Inspectors will be sent to investigate, and it is of the highest importance that the investigation be made at an early date. If cooperation can be had as desired, it is believed that no great harm will result.

Will you assist us, first, by acknowledging this communication, and second, by sending us at once any information you have regarding places where pine trees from Europe have been set out in this State during the last two years? It is not necessary to refer to plantings which are on the grounds or under the control of the State Forest, Fish and Game Commission. Mr. Pettis of that department first discovered the new disease, and Commissioner Whipple has taken steps to forestall the development of the disease on any grounds which he controls.

Raymond A. Pearson,  
Commissioner of Agriculture.