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PROSPECTS FOR UTILIZATION OF LAND FOR TIMBER IN
NEW ENGLAND

(Talk presented by Professor R. T. Fisher, Harvard University, at the annual meeting of the New England Research Council on December 7, 1928)

For both natural and economic reasons a large part of upland New England must come to be used for forest production. Leaving out the northern portions of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, which are already devoted to wood production, chiefly for pulp, not less than one-third of the remaining area cannot be put to any other foreseeable use except the recreational, which is auxiliary to forestry. Already farm lands abandoned in 1840-60 have by natural reforestation yielded twelve billion feet of pine in the last thirty years. This represents a manufactured value of over \$400,000,000., all distributed through local wood-working industries, principally in the smaller towns within the region itself. Thus a substantial portion of our present livelihood and industry is already dependent upon the use of the land (accidental though it has been) for timber growing. The loss of this item of production would probably mean a serious reduction of inland population.

Nature unaided will never reproduce this resource, because neither the areas favorable for seed nor the desirable seed itself are now available. Nevertheless, the technique of forestry already developed in New England is adequate to maintain the necessary timber whenever and wherever economic conditions justify the cost. During the period from just before until after the war it was possible in many localities to maintain timber production by forestry for less than the current net value on the stump. Lately a fall in the use and value of native lumber through competition of substitute products and of Western material has weakened the business incentive to forestry. Minor deterrents have been burdensome taxation, public ignorance of the methods of forestry, and the general belief that nature will produce successive crops unaided. Forest production as a going business can come only through changes in social and economic conditions. Taxation must be adapted to the financial status of forest enterprises. The inefficiency of small, scattered ownerships must be obviated by owner associations for management and selling. Most important of all, markets must be bettered through new uses or more outlets for by-products of native timber, especially softwood. With these favoring improvements the present regional business in lumber products of at least \$25,000,000. annually might easily be doubled.