NEW DIMENSIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOREST POLICY

A View From the Trenches

T.M. (Mike) Apsey
President & Chief Executive Officer
Council of Forest Industries of B.C.

Lecturer
Forest Industry Lecture Series
Forestry Program
Faculty of Agriculture & Forestry
The University of Alberta
16 March 1989

FOREST INDUSTRY LECTURE NO. 22
THE FOREST INDUSTRY LECTURES

The forest industry in western Canada is cooperating with Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife to provide funds to enrich the Forestry Program of the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry at the University of Alberta through sponsorship of noteworthy speakers.

The Forest Industry Lecture Series was started during the 1976-77 term as a seminar course. The late Desmond I. Crossley and Maxwell T. MacLaggan presented the first series of lectures. The contribution of these two noted Canadian foresters is greatly appreciated.

Subsequent speakers in the series have visited for periods of up to a week, with all visits highlighted by a major public address. It has indeed been a pleasure to host such individuals as C. Ross Silversides, W. Gerald Burch, Gustaf Sirén, Kenneth F.S. King, F.L.C. Reed, Gene Namkoong, Kenneth A. Armson, John J. Munro, Peder Braathe, Vidar J. Nordin, Juhani Päiviäinen, Conor Boyd, John A. Marlow, Gordon Gullion, Hugo Von Sydow, Mary Jo Lavin, Harold Walt, and Adam Zimmerman. The subjects of their talks are listed at the end of this paper.

This paper contains Thomas Michael (Mike) Apsey’s major public address given on 16 March 1989.
SPONSORS

We would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks again to the sponsors of this 1988-89 program. We appreciate very much their willing and sustained support:

- Alberta Forest Products Association - Edmonton
- Blue Ridge Lumber (1981) Ltd. - Whitecourt
- Canadian Forest Products Ltd. - Grande Prairie
- Forestry Canada - Northern Forestry Centre, - Edmonton
- Grande Cache Forest Products Ltd. - Grande Cache
- Procter & Gamble Cellulose Ltd. - Grande Prairie
- Silvacom. Forestry Consultants - Edmonton
- Weldwood of Canada Limited - Hinton Division
- Weyerhaeuser Canada Ltd. - Saskatchewan Division
- Alberta Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife - Edmonton
THOMAS MICHAEL (MIKE) APSEY

Thomas Michael (Mike) Apsey is President and Chief Executive Officer of the Council of Forest Industries of British Columbia.

Born in Vernon, British Columbia, he graduated from the University of British Columbia in 1961 with a degree in forestry. Starting as an economist and forest industry analyst for the B. C. Department of Industrial Development, Trade and Commerce, he moved to the private sector in 1963 to join MacMillan Bloedel Limited as a senior market analyst. In 1968, Mr. Apsey accepted a two-year posting to Turkey with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to prepare a long range forest industry development plan. Returning to Vancouver, he worked for the
Council of Forest Industries, a non-profit trade association representing the interests of the forest industry in B.C. Two years later he was made a Vice-President of the Council responsible for activities relating to forestry and logging, especially economics and taxation. Continuing in the field of economic research in 1974, Mr. Apsey became Senior Economist and Vice President for F.L.C. Reed and Associates. As a member of the Forest Policy Advisory Committee, he was actively involved in developing new forestry legislation and policies based on the report of the 1976 Royal Commission on the province’s forest industry. He also developed international forest industry insights conducting studies on the forest industries in Colombia, Ghana, Honduras, and a number of European and Latin American countries.

In 1978, he was appointed Deputy Minister of Forests for the province of British Columbia. During his tenure the B.C. Ministry of Forests was reorganized, a new management system was introduced, and new legislation was implemented which saw an increased commitment by the province to forest management and reforestation.

In 1984, Mike Apsey returned to the Council of Forest Industries of B.C. (COFI) as President and Chief Executive Officer. COFI members and affiliates account for over 90% of the value of total forest products production in B.C. and produce a wide range of products including lumber, pulp, newsprint, plywood, shingles and shakes, and an expanding number of further manufactured products. COFI provides services for its members and affiliates in the areas of trade promotion, transportation, quality control, government and public affairs, forestry and environment, occupational safety and health and economics, statistics and energy.

Mr. Apsey is a member of the Association of Professional Economists of British Columbia, the Association of British Columbia Professional Foresters, the Canadian Institute of Forestry, CIDA Forestry Sector Advisory Committee, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis Advisory Committee (Forestry Project), the Government of Canada’s International Trade Advisory Committee and the Sectoral Advisory Group on International Trade - Forest Products; and he is a Director of the Canadian Forest Industries Council, Forintek Canada Corporation and the Pacific Salmon Foundation. In 1984/85, Mr. Apsey was a member of the Task Force (convened by the World Resources Institute, The World Bank and the UNDP) which prepared the report entitled Tropical Forests: A Call for Action.

In 1985, Mr. Apsey was awarded the prestigious Rielle Thomson Award “for his outstanding contribution to the public knowledge of the forest”. Mr. Apsey is married and has two daughters.
NEW DIMENSIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF
FOREST POLICY
A VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES

1. OPENING REMARKS

I am honoured to have the opportunity to participate in this lecture series. When Dean Murphy first extended the invitation he told me that the topic could be of my choosing. Shakespeare may have once said “What’s in a name?”, but as someone who gives a lot of presentations, I consider titles and topics very important.

There are titles that lend themselves to short speeches, titles such as: “A Discussion of the IQ of Economists”. And there are titles that lend themselves to longer ones, titles such as: “A Forester’s Short Explanation of Stumpage Policies in B.C.”. There are titles designed to generate media attention. I gave a speech last year with a title like that. It was called: “The B. C. Forest Industry’s Relationship with Government - Do they really love us or are they just after our money?”. And there are titles designed to put your audience to sleep. Titles such as “References to Foresters in the Collected Works of William Shakespeare”.

In choosing a title for this presentation I was guided by my own experiences as a forestry student at UBC back in the early 1960’s. Sometime around third year, it occurred to me that I needed answers to some pretty important questions; one of which was: “How do I go about getting a job?”

That’s when I got the bad news: there are no answers out there. Fortunately, that was a long time ago, and today . . . today, there still aren’t any answers out there!

As I therefore do not have any absolute truths to convey to you today, I felt my best contribution to your study of forest policy lay in a less scholarly and more personal approach to the issue. What I’m going to do is pass on to you some of the observations I have collected and some of the lessons I have learned during three decades of working in the area.

My assumption that you will find this helpful stems from the broadly recognized truth that you don’t have to learn everything from first-hand experience. Many
certainties can come from the experience of others as revealed to you through conversations with friends over beer, or by watching the soaps. If you didn’t believe this certainty, you wouldn’t be listening to me right now. Which explains why some of you may not be!

My decision to follow this approach was also inspired by some advice that one of my professors gave me when I was finishing my undergraduate studies. He warned me that once I was out there in the so-called “real” world I would look back on my university days and complain. And he predicted that my complaints would follow a set pattern.

He forecast that in the first five years after graduation I would complain that I should have been taught more practical techniques.

In the next five years I would say that I should have been given more basic theory.

Ten to fifteen years after graduation, I would inform the Faculty that I should have been taught more about administration and relations with co-workers and subordinates.

In the subsequent five years I would condemn the failure of my professors to put the profession of forestry into its larger historical, social and economic contexts.

Twenty years after graduation I would insist that I should have been given broader orientation to all knowledge, scientific and human.

Some time after that, I would stop giving advice to the university because I would feel that it had deteriorated so badly since I left that it was beyond hope!

Today I’m going to fast-forward some of that process for you by presenting my analysis of the forces shaping forest policy and the implications for people entering the forestry profession at this time.

Now remember, I said in the title that this was going to be a view from the trenches. This gives me some advantages over your professors. Because I’m not an academic, I can leap with ease between the disciplines of forestry, economics, sociology, and political science and not worry about having to defend my theories in learned publications.
But even with these advantages, I knew when I chose it that the subject of new dimensions in the development of forest policy would be a tough one to address. Not because there isn’t much going on in this area. To the contrary, there is so much going on – and there is so much being said about it – that it is somewhat difficult to shed new light on the situation.

I think it was Churchill who once said that every public speaker lives in fear of the possibility of receiving a note from a member of the audience saying:

"Dear Sir or Madam.

Your speech was both good and original. Unfortunately, the parts that were good weren’t original. and the parts that were original weren’t any good."

But I decided to persevere because I have some strong beliefs about where we’ve been, where we are now and where we’re heading with forest policy in this country. And I think it is critical that those of us working in the forest sector speak out on these issues more than we have in the past.

If nothing else, I would like to leave you with the thought that the ability to communicate is probably the most important new dimension in the development of forest policy. Believe me, as a forest industry representative I have the scars to prove that it now ranks right up there with silviculture, harvesting, production and marketing when it comes to management challenges confronting the Canadian forest industry.

In fact, it is becoming increasingly clear that our industry’s opportunity to practice silviculture and produce and market forest products may well depend on how good we are at communicating.

Some of you may feel that my use of the word “trenches” denotes a certain editorial comment as to what I think is going on as regards the development of forest policy today. But I want you to know that while some aspects of the current public debate over forest policy obviously do have certain war-like characteristics – such as the development of “eco-tactics” by preservationist forces and fears within industry of the “domino effect” of giving in to preservationist demands – I for one don’t believe the analogy is an appropriate one.

It’s not appropriate because it implies there’s a battle going on that only one side can win. And in this instance, that’s just not an acceptable option. It isn’t a question
of the environment triumphing over the economy or vice versa. Both must win if we are to achieve success in today’s terms.

Public opinion pollsters and sociologists tell us we live in a society that is beginning to replace the more narrow concept of “standard of living” by the more holistic concept of “quality of life” as the broader measure of success.

I hope this presentation will convince you that to be successful according to the core values that now drive our society, the forest industry must be capable of delivering both economic prosperity and environmental quality. Indeed, it is the desire to have both that is currently powering the rapidly emerging global move towards the adoption of the concept of “sustainable development”.

While it’s true that in my province, at least, forest policy issues have become a bit of a battleground, I am convinced that those who approach the task at hand with the idea that they’re engaged in some kind of war effort are unlikely to make a significant contribution to the development of solutions to some of the current impasses.

I suggest to you that one of the most difficult challenges confronting those who want to find ways to make the system work is to find ways to isolate the extremists at both ends of the spectrum.

***

2. Change in the Forest Sector

I have said that communications now ranks up there with technical knowledge as one of the dominant forces shaping the development of forest policy.

Coming from a technical background myself, there are many times when I find this proposition hard to accept. For one thing, it’s not fair. Surely there’s an unwritten law somewhere that says that technical knowledge and skill should ultimately prevail over uninformed opinion and emotion?

As I hope to demonstrate to you in a few moments, if you look at the history of forest policy in Canada, there certainly was a time when that was true. But fortunately or unfortunately, depending on your point of view, it’s not nearly as true today as it once was.

If you could time-travel a forest company executive from the 1950s or ‘60s to the
present, I guarantee you that he would not recognize the industry. Everything is
different -- forestry and logging techniques, production methods, marketing strate-
gies, and corporate structures.

New forest policies, the tax on lumber exports to the U.S., increased stumpage
rates, stiffer competition in world markets, land use conflicts, native land claims,
increasing public concern over environmental impacts, the Canada-U.S. Free Trade
Agreement, changes in government priorities, changes in industry ownership and
changes in the forest resource itself are just a few of the changes our sector has had
to deal with these past few years.

Once one of the world’s few exporters of wood, we are now one of many. There
are new producers and new products. Throw in the effects of currency fluctuations,
outbreaks of protectionism as well as the development of wood substitutes and there
can be no doubt we are now traversing a very different landscape from the one that
shaped much of the industry’s growth up to the 1980s.

Change has become the norm in the forest products business. Our markets are
changing, our products are changing, our competitors are changing, our workforce is
changing, our corporate structures are changing, and the public values and government
policies that affect us are changing.

* * *

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: INFLUENCES ON
FOREST SECTOR BEHAVIOR.

The people I work with give me a hard time about the fact that I’m always scribbling
graphs or charts on scraps of paper to illustrate my points. I guess that must be the
technician in me coming out because I’m definitely more comfortable with an expla-
nation or a process you can see or get your hands on. And when one isn’t available,
I have a tendency to draw one up for myself.

This series of slides is my attempt to illustrate my view of the evolutionary process
that has occurred regarding influences on forest sector activities. They’re simple
schematics and some of them illustrate the obvious, but going through them is
worthwhile because it’s hard to understand where we are now without an apprecia-
tion of where we’ve been. In the beginning (Figure 1), there was industry, there was
government and there were markets.
It's important to remember that the private sector in most industrialized countries is caught between two centers of authority: economic and political. It is also important to recognize that the objectives of these two realms of power are different.

The objective of the economic realm is to produce profit. The objectives of the political realm are two: the assertion of national sovereignty and the preservation of law and order.

Managing the relationship between the realm of government and the realm of markets has always been one of the most difficult challenges confronting the business sector. But in most western industrialized countries, it has been made easier by the fact that government, and the population at large, have long recognized the benefits of economic growth and are generally willing to work towards creating a framework within which business can operate smoothly. Thus government's role of regulator and overseer has not been completely at odds with the dictates of the marketplace. In theory at least, it intervenes in business sector activities only when the dictates of the marketplace threaten government's primary objectives.

Figure 1. Government and markets -- in the beginning.

The benefits of economic growth was the core value that bound all the players in this system at this point, so much so that it led to the evolution of a second stage (Figure 2), a stage that saw the industry begin to develop a capacity to communicate with policy makers and governments adopt a partner-like or cooperative approach with industry on some issues.
Figure 2. Partnership development.

There are many examples of this in the forest sector. Partnerships have developed between government and industry on a range of issues including trade, market development, regional development, manpower and training and silviculture — to name a few.

But at about the time many of these initiatives were getting underway, another new variable emerged (Figure 3). Public perceptions of forest sector activities were beginning to have an impact on government involvement in those activities.

Figure 3. Emergence of public perceptions.
This accompanied the appearance of limits to growth -- the realization that there were no more frontiers -- the forest resource was finite. With this realization came disputes over who would do what with the resource.

And it was widely felt in policy circles that public involvement was the best mechanism for resolving those disputes. The idea being that the more groups involved in the decision-making process, the more amenable and acceptable the outcome would be. Consultation of affected interests would create consensus and reduce controversy.

And so, not surprisingly, the industry itself began to develop a capacity to communicate directly with various publics (Figure 4).

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 4.** Industry communicating to publics.

At first, public criticism of industry practices was perceived within the forest industry to be largely the result of misconception or misinformation. It wasn't that the industry wasn't doing the technically correct thing, it was just that sometimes people outside the forest sector didn't understand what was correct and what wasn't.

Forest circles were all abuzz at this point with talk about the importance of communications. The communications process we were all talking about was in essence a corrective process. It was thought to be mainly a question of getting the information out there. Once it was out, everybody would understand and agree.

The assumption was -- and I think it was quite valid at the time -- that majority
support for the benefits of economic growth would translate into majority support for forest sector activities provided sufficient information was given to the public.

The challenge was to activate the silent majority. And information was to be the key.

But just when we thought we had it all figured out, another development occurred and suddenly, life got a lot more complicated (Figure 5).

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 5.** Public economic expectations.

It became clear to many of us in the forest sector that public opinion on forest issues -- and by definition, public pressure on government to intervene in forest sector activities -- was being driven not only by perceptions of what forest companies were or weren't doing, but also by public expectations of what they should be doing.

As we looked at it more closely, the sociologists told us that increasingly, expectations were being translated into values, and values into entitlements or "rights".

This was first evident on economic-related issues such as labour relations, workplace standards and compensation. It became widely recognized, and indeed institutionalized, in our society that people had a "right" to union representation, a "right" to a safe workplace and a "right" to compensation if injured on the job.
And the role of government expanded as the organized delivery and maintenance of these rights became part of its responsibility.

In recent years this sense of entitlement — or right — has moved beyond economic issues (Figure 6) to include the environment. Now people refer to the “right” to clean air, clear water, and a pollution-free environment the way they once talked about some of those other rights I just mentioned.

Figure 6. Emergence of environmental concerns.

Green is the world’s new political colour. And I want to make it clear that I’m not talking about the “Green party”. I am talking about a political and social phenomenon that knows no political boundary or ideology. The maintenance of environmental quality is an issue that Margaret Thatcher, George Bush and Deng Xiaoping all agree upon. And Canadian political leaders of all persuasions are desperately trying to be seen as the greatest champions of this new cause.

The ability of industrial technology to puncture the protective mantle of the environment is moving government to intervene more and more frequently in the realm of industry activities with the objective of safeguarding human habitat. Governments are introducing stricter regulations and legislation on environmental issues. And the disruption of industrial operations by special interest groups bent on registering their protests is becoming all too common.
The Bruntland Commission's call for sustainable development is perhaps the most visible manifestation of the transition that is occurring.

It is an intriguing transition because it marks not simply the entry of new values into the system, but more specially, the attempt to integrate old values concerning the benefits of economic growth with new values concerning the need to protect the environment.

We are now attempting to develop institutional mechanisms to formally integrate economic and environmental factors in development decisions. An ambitious undertaking by any standard of measure and an extremely exciting and demanding time for those of us with careers in the natural resource sector here in Canada.

Which brings us to the most current stage in the relationships between the various players that influence forest sector activities (Figure 7).

![Diagram showing the relationships between government, markets, public perceptions, and public expectations with economic and environmental growth and forest sector activities.]

Figure 7. Government adjudication and intervention.

More and more we are seeing the public's sense of entitlements – both economic and environmental – expanding to push government to intervene not only in the activities of the forest sector, but directly into the marketplace itself.
Examples of this are trade restrictions in the name of job preservation -- also known as protectionism, something the forest sector in Canada has had more than its fair share of experience with lately -- and stricter control of environmental impacts such as a proposed tax on products judged to be "environmentally-insensitive".

And while it still retains its old roles of regulator, overseer and partner, government is increasingly taking on the role of adjudicator between the needs of economic growth and environmental protection.

In reality, when you consider all of the factors now at work in the development of forest policy, the framework we are operating under probably looks something like this (Figure 8). the situation is more fragmented, more complex, more interdependent and more vulnerable than any of its predecessors.

Figure 8. Interdependency — emphasizing importance of good links of communication.

Interdependency is, I think, the dominant characteristic of this current system and the economic and political realms it reflects. It can best be compared to some sort of interlocking grid work, where a miscalculation or shock at any point in the process threatens the stability of the entire thing.

Hence the critical importance of establishing good links of communication between the different parts.

***
4. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: LOG PRODUCTION AND FOREST POLICY.

If we look at what's happened with log production these past few decades an even clearer picture emerges of where we've been and where we are now.

B.C. Log Production 1947-1988

If you will allow me the luxury of using data from my own province to serve as an example, this chart (Figure 9) portrays growth in the B.C. forest sector between 1947 and 1988 as depicted by log harvest. As you can see, today we are pushing the limits of the allowable annual cut as it is currently defined.

![B.C. Log Harvest 1947-1988 Chart](chart.png)

Figure 9. British Columbia log harvest volumes from 1947 to 1988.

This chart shows that the B.C. forest industry saw a period of relatively slow growth, followed by a period of tremendous expansion from 1960 to the present. The only notable exceptions to the expansionary trend were the recessions of 1975 and 1982.

Our industry's growth coincided with a world which was a much simpler place. We were blessed with a bountiful forest resource and there was rapidly rising demand for
the products we were capable of producing from that resource. And so we became extremely efficient, high volume producers of lumber, pulp, newsprint and other commodity products.

I have always felt that institutions, policies and technologies in the forest sector are a pretty accurate reflection of the state of the forest resource itself. If you were to analyse the public policies that have accompanied industrial use of the forest over the last few decades, three distinct eras emerge.

"Era of the Technician"

The first might best be called the "Era of the Technician" (Figure 10). It occurred during the 50's and 60's. The industry was expanding rapidly and was concerned with protection of the resource, mainly from fire, and utilization and production issues.

![B.C. Log Harvest Chart](chart)

**Figure 10. Era of the technician.**

Consistent with this, public policy of the day was largely concerned with how to produce more jobs, more revenues, more growth. Forest policies brought huge investments in new processing plants and improved stability to many communities.
"Era of Public Involvement"

If the first era was the "Era of the Technician" the second (Figure 11) might be described as the "Era of Public Involvement". As I mentioned earlier, it occurred when the limits to growth began to appear.

**B.C. LOG HARVEST**

**"ERA OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT"**

![Graph showing log harvest over time]

Figure 11. Era of public involvement.

Resource scarcity entered the picture and public policy and industry goals shifted from a preoccupation with industrial growth, to how to best manage and replenish the resource for a range of users on an ongoing basis.

Reforestation and silviculture became major themes and public involvement was thought to hold the key to conflict resolution.

Policies designed to control use, sustain benefits and encourage increased commitments to forest management and silviculture were introduced. In British Columbia, this was a process that had its origins in the Sloan Royal Commissions of 1946 and 1956, and gained further impetus and refinement in the Pearse Royal Commission of 1975 and in the new Forest Act of 1979.

But unfortunately, not all of the theories proved accurate. Though it got off to a
promising start in many jurisdictions in Canada, public involvement in resource
decision making did not always bring the desired result of consensus.

Lack of government decisiveness together with specialization of interest led, in
some instances at least, to seemingly intractable conflict and the immobilization of the
policy making process.

"Transition Point"

Which brings us to today (Figure 12). The 1990's loom on the horizon and industry,
government and all the other new players in the forest policy game face some pretty
tough questions such as: where do we go from here and how do we get there?

**B.C. LOG HARVEST**

"TRANSITION POINT"

![Graph showing log harvest transition point](image)

Figure 12. Present transition point.

Do we know enough about the forest to accurately predict the future. Will the
harvest go up, down or remain the same? What about the land base? What about
forestry programs? Will the industry continue to develop in terms of volume, value
or both?

We're clearly at a transition point in forest policy and I think that fact has been pretty
widely recognized. Adam Zimmerman spoke here last fall about the Forest Congress
groups—more white papers, green papers, symposiums and task forces than you can shake a stick at.

And now, superimposed over all of this we have the call for sustainable development—the formal integration of economic and environmental goals.

**Era of Sustainable Development**

We're making a transition into a new era, the "Era of Sustainable Development" (Figure 13). And the search is on for public policy mechanisms that will provide both economic growth and environmental quality.

**B.C. LOG HARVEST**

**"ERA OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT"**

![Graph](image)

Figure 13. Era of sustainable development.

The call for sustainable development is in some ways a signal to all the players now involved in forest policy that the time has come to rethink their approach to development issues. What the result will be, remains to be seen. But though we have not seen the future, we can make some educated guesses as to what it will look like.

***
5. CHARACTERISTICS OF POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Adam Zimmerman also spoke last fall about the need for some sort of protocol. He was, I think, referring to the need for a mechanism to promote the resolution of conflicts and the development of forest policy. A mechanism that will avoid expensive legal processes and time consuming impasses over whether to-log or not-to-log a given piece of land, as well as give industry the security it needs to make long term management and investment decisions.

One thing is clear: we must replace the conflict that has come to characterize the final days of the “Era of Public Involvement” with a more cooperative approach so that progress toward all desirable goals — economic, social and environmental — can be achieved.

I don’t know whether we are looking for a single formal mechanism or a combination of formal and informal ones. At this point we are moving in a number of directions and I think progress will continue to be measured incrementally.

Mediation, negotiation, and the development of special agreements on specific issues between key players, are all conflict resolution techniques that have been or are being tried both by the forest industry and other resource industries in North America with varying degrees of success.

Courses on conflict management and resolution are becoming common both in schools of forestry and as professional development aids for those already working in government and industry.

The need for more integrated decision making within forest organizations and companies is becoming apparent. I’m talking here about internal processes that cause accountants, foresters, marketing and production personnel, and public affairs people to contribute to the considerations that result in corporate action — so that the action taken will have a better chance of being in harmony with public opinion.

This is not to be confused with selling out corporate interests! It is not an abandonment of corporate interest, but a means of achieving corporate objectives which are consistent with societal values and standards.

We also need to put more emphasis on the creation of more reliable and widely accepted databases from which to make decisions. I refer here to the development of
more accurate and detailed resource inventories that would improve the ability of all
the groups involved in the policy process to analyse the implications and results of
resource allocation decisions.

* * *

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR FOREST SECTOR

What all of these policy options and activities boil down to is the fact that the
Canadian forest industry must take a leadership role in the development and presen-
tation of plans for ecologically sound economic growth. Together with technical
knowledge -- education, communication, sensitivity, enlightenment and maybe even
a touch of clairvoyance -- are the tools we must use to position our industry and gain
support for our plans among a broad constituency.

And when I use the term communication, I hope you recognize by now that I am
talking about a process that involves more than a one-way dialogue. As I said earlier,
we no longer live in an era where it can be assumed that public support for the benefits
of economic growth will automatically translate into support for industry positions.
The communications challenge is considerably more complex than simply getting our
message out there to a silent majority.

The majority has fragmented and while communication still involves efforts to have
our message heard, it is also a highly interactive process that involves identifying
groups we share key values with and working with them on issues of common concern.

In other words, we've not only got to build bridges between the forest sector and
other groups in the policy development process, we've got to encourage two-way
traffic on those bridges!

Which means that sometimes, we may have to be prepared to re-examine and
possibly change the way we do things -- even if they are technically correct -- in order
to conform to widely held public values and expectations.

* * *

7. B.C. EXAMPLES

Let me give you an example of the kind of thing I'm talking about.
Much is said about the relationship between the industry and its critics on the environmental side. But who are we really talking about when we use the term "environmentalist"?

The so-called "environmental" camp is, of course, in reality divided up into many different sub-groups. For the most part, the media does not distinguish between these sub-groups or the issues that drive them. But there are differences, significant differences as far as our industry and its communications efforts are concerned.

I'd like to look at a number of those sub-groups, their characteristics and their implications for the forest sector. For purposes of this discussion I have compressed them into four categories.

First of all there is what I would call the "Oldstyle" environmentalist. The kind that likes to eat meat and potatoes and belongs to wildlife and outdoor recreation groups. They were the early environmentalists: sportsmen, hunters and fishermen who usually live not far away from the forest, know its ecology and recognize that defacto wilderness -- or bush -- will be there forever.

They know the forest industry because they drive on logging roads. And though they can often be critical of industry practices, ultimately, they understand and believe in multiple use of natural resources.

The second group are best known as the "Activists." They can be characterized by their fondness for granola. Often thought of by industry types as tree-huggers, they see an ecological form of guerrilla warfare as the best way to resolve resource conflicts.

Their interaction with the environment is chiefly through camping holidays, hiking or backpacking -- very few hunt or fish. They're wilderness tourists, spectators not users, who prefer wilderness in a pristine state. To them, multiple use is a term of derision.

I call the third group the "Media Darlings". They eat microphones and wear natural fibres, except fur or leather. You have no doubt seen them on the evening news.

They are usually national and international personalities who live in big cities; believers on an environmental crusade; zealots incensed at resource industries and governments equally. Their interaction with the environment is frequently on the battle lines: the Amazon rain forest, the blockade of a logging road; all in the glare of television lights.
They countenance nothing so ecumenical as integrated use of the forest resource. They make the activists look easy to get along with.

Their awareness and concern over forest industry-related issues follows initially from a first-hand concern about poisons -- in the air we breathe, in the water and food we all consume. An awareness triggered by Bhopal, Chernobyl, Love Canal and now, closer to home, dioxins. Unfortunately, they draw no real distinctions between these health threats, and the disappearing Amazon rain forest and ozone layer, and wilderness preservation and clearcut logging in British Columbia.

While they believe in the benefits of economic growth, their sense of entitlement to environmental quality is also understood to mean setting aside forests and lands for no use whatsoever.

I’m sure we all know people who fit into this category. Indeed, most of us here today share many of the values and concerns I have just described. They are increasingly fundamental to our society.

Coming to grips with the new dimensions in the development of forest policy means the forest industry -- and the men and women that work in it -- must build on common ground by forging links with others. We must forge links not only with groups we’re comfortable with, such as the “meat & potatoes” environmentalists, but also with ones that we may not always be completely comfortable with, but that we nevertheless share important values with, such as my “concerned citizens”.

Because we know this represents our best bet for the future, we are working on this approach right now in British Columbia; through our public relations and advertising efforts as well as the development of new organizations such as local citizen’s groups and the creation of new forums for discussions of forest issues.

We may have had a breakthrough of sorts late last year when 51 individuals representing 34 different organizations including industry, government agencies and a variety of special interest groups, spent a weekend discussing land use issues at Dunsmuir Lodge on Vancouver Island. The meeting was coordinated by the Council
of Forest Industries of B.C., the Outdoor Recreation Council of B.C., the B.C. Forestry Association and the B.C. Wildlife Federation.

By the end of the weekend, we had developed "The Dunsmuir Agreement" which outlines, in principle, the key elements of a provincial land use strategy. That agreement is currently the focus of discussion between the signatories of the agreement and the provincial government. It is our hope that it will lay the basis for development of a provincial strategy for managing and resolving land use conflicts.

* * *

8. CONSTRAINTS TO FOREST SECTOR RESPONSE

I do not think I am overstating the matter to say that the implications of the changes I've been discussing are dramatic for the people and the practices that make up the forest sector in this country. As an industry spokesman, I can assure you that wood supply is an issue that concerns many of the people with whom we need to forge links and build on common ground.

A lot of Canadians want to know if there's enough wood out there to keep forest industry operations -- and the jobs and benefits that depend on those operations -- going. And you can't really blame them for that. But they ask questions based on 15 second radio clips, newspaper headlines or TV images that often convey the message of raping and pillaging. And they want answers that will fit similar parameters.

"Do we have enough wood Mr. Apsey: yes or no?"

"Are we cutting our forests too fast Mr. Apsey: yes or no?"

And how do we counter? We want to say "Yes, we will have enough wood if our reforestation efforts continue to accelerate, and if preservationist groups fail in their attempt to reduce the commercial forest land base and if we progress from basic management to intensive management."

We want to say "No, we're not overcutting, if you take into consideration that harvesting figures are swelled by statistics on timber taken from private lands and bug kill areas, and that anyway, they're averaged out over a five-year period so last year's figures must be put in context."

And while we're dancing our circuitous jig in a sincere effort to tell the whole story,
the cameras and the tape recorders have long since turned off and our critics are doing handstands. Too often, the most informative parts of our statements are heard only by the editor who cuts them out to fit the 12 seconds needed before the screen fades to black.

It grows clearer to me as I am sure it does to many of you, that we in the forest industry -- not just the so-called spokespersons, but everybody in the industry -- need Forest Sector Answer: "How much money have you got?"

Sometimes it's hard for us to answer in the way most people want. Our training and discipline demand that we provide three pages of explanation and studies full of numbers.

Question: "Are enough trees being planted?"

Forest Sector Answer: "Well, if FRDA addresses NSR, and if an incentive mechanism for private investment in incremental beyond free-to-grow can be implemented, then the conversion of harvested areas into non-productive land can be stemmed and no adjustment to the AAC will be required."

Enough said. No doubt you get my drift.

Most sectors have their own distinct language, and there's nothing wrong with that. But I am increasingly concerned about the constraints our industry's language imposes on our collective ability to effectively engage in public debate on forest issues.

People want to know how many trees we plant for each one we cut down. Can we say that we plant two trees for every one we harvest? And what does that mean anyway? What's the right number? How many should we be planting? Two to one, six to one, zero to one?

NSR is always a big issue but I could eliminate the NSR backlog in British Columbia tomorrow with the stroke of a pen by redefining it and sending out a few surveyors to walk across it.
The point is that the forest sector in this country has an unfortunate track record of changing the meaning of some of its terms in mid-stream and of using language that people can't understand or relate to very easily. These are serious internal barriers to effective communication on timber supply and other issues. And like many others in our industry today, I am beginning to realize that dealing with those internal barriers may be just as big a communications challenge as dealing with the external ones.

Now in fairness to us technicians, it must be said that sometimes our tendency to over-qualify is motivated by high ideals. We want to be accurate, honest and fair. Being the largest industry in this country imposes certain responsibilities. Unlike some of our critics, we don't have the luxury of shooting from the lip with gross generalizations.

But neither do we have the luxury of becoming identified as wafflers and apologists! We must take steps to relieve the queasiness we feel in responding to the hard questions. And it seems to me there is only one way of doing that: by taking steps to ensure that our own house is in order.

There's an old saying in the communications business: what you do speaks so loudly I can't hear what you're saying.

I think we need to remind ourselves every once in a while that ultimately, public relations is a performance-driven exercise.

Sustainable development is not a radical concept in forest circles. There has long been recognition that our industry's future depends upon sustainable use and management of the forest resource. Canadians have every right to look to the forest industry to demonstrate whether or not the concept really can work. The move towards the integration of economic and environmental factors provides those of us in the industry with the opportunity to move in a direction we know is right and workable, not only for ourselves but for the process of resource development as a whole.

So as the forest professionals of tomorrow, my question to you is: Are the forests of this country being harvested faster than they can be regenerated? Can the jobs and benefits created by Canada's largest industry be sustained?

Are we practising sustainable development of the forest resource? If not, why not? If not, what should we be doing about it?

I suspect that the future of the Canadian forest industry can be found in our answers to questions like these.

* * *
9. CLOSING: WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN FOR PEOPLE NOW ENTERING THE FIELD?

I said earlier that these are very exciting times in which to be starting off in a career in the Canadian forest sector. I hope my analysis of the policy framework out there today helps you put some perspective on the processes you’re about to become part of.

Personally, I am very optimistic about what the future holds for our sector. It’s a good industry because there are lots of good people in it. Rest assured you’ve made a good choice in deciding to join their ranks.

We have our problems and our critics, of course. Sometimes the criticism is constructive and we learn from it. Other times it’s not.

But for the most part I am confident that our industry’s values are consistent with the values that drive the society we now live in. I do not believe that the recommendations of hard-line activists and preservationists will ultimately be the ones adopted by our society — though they may well garner more than their fair share of newspaper headlines these days.

Public opinion research has repeatedly shown that Canadians accept the reality that our way of life requires the use of materials that can be hazardous, that natural resources must be harvested and that tradeoffs must often be made.

When I say that in the new era of sustainable development we must find mechanisms to replace conflict with cooperation, this does not mean I envisage a controversy-free policy making environment.

We live in a democratic and pluralistic society and few of us would have it any other way. There are always going to be as many different opinions as there are people to voice them.

If you’re going to be working in the resource area it follows as night to day that you’re going to have to be prepared to take some heat. The challenge is to recognize the difference between a core value and an issue of public opinion. The benefits of economic growth is a core value. Whether or not free trade will deliver economic growth is a matter of opinion. The need to protect the environment is a core value. Whether or not this means there should be no logging in the Stein Valley of British Columbia is a matter of opinion.
The profound social changes and shifts in public awareness and priorities that I have described to you today mean the authority and respect that some of your predecessors once received as a right of passage having graduated from an institution like this one is not automatically yours anymore.

You’re going to have to prove you deserve it.

To do that, you’re going to have to be more than good forestry practitioners. You’re going to have to know how to express yourself well, both verbally and in written form. Much better than foresters of my vintage.

Unlike many of your predecessors, your careers are going to have as much to do with people as they will with timber. You must listen to the signals of social change and communicate with those who have a stake in what you do. You must help the organizations in which you work to carry out their responsibilities as refined by the economic marketplace and the society in which they live.

As the President of one of Canada’s largest public opinion polling companies told a group of forest industry representatives in Toronto last week: “Today’s niche market for dioxin-free disposable diapers will be tomorrow’s mainstream market. And tomorrow will come sooner than you think.”

One final thought. If you’ve got a sense of humour, keep it. If you don’t have one, get one.

You’re going to need it!

Thank you.
FOREST INDUSTRY LECTURE SERIES

1. Industrial Forestry in a Changing Canada.  

2. The Role of Integrated Companies in Western Canada.  
   W. Gerald Burch. 15 March 1978.

   7 March 1979.


5. The Role of the Federal Government in Forestry.  
   F.L.C. Reed. 5 March 1980.

   14 August 1980.

   Roger Simmons. 5 December 1980.

8. Space. Time. and Perspectives in Forestry.  
   Kenneth A. Armson. 26 November 1981.


10. Stocking Control and Its Effect on Yields.  
    Dr. Peder Brathe. 4 November 1982.

11. Timber Management Scheduling on Public Lands - Why the Future is Not  
    Like the Past. Dr. K.N. Johnson. 29 March 1983. Talk only - paper not available.

12. The Canadian Schools of Forestry - Retrospect and Prospect.  
    Dr. V.J. Nordin. 19 January 1984.

13. Increasing the Land Base and Yield Through Drainage.  
    Dr. J. Päivänen. 15 March 1984.

    Dr. Conor Boyd. 24 January 1985.

15. Air Pollution and Forest Resources - The Nature of the Threat.  
    Dr. Peter Rennie. 28 March 1985. Talk only - paper not available.

16. Land Use Planning for Forest Harvesting and Environmental Concerns.  
   Gordon W. Gullion. 16 October 1986.

18. From NSR to Intensive Forest Management.

19. Managing People Managing Trees: Understanding Today’s Environment for

20. The Social Renewability of Forestry.


22. New Dimensions in the Development of Forest Policy: A View From the