

Welcome to this first conference on forest genetics to be held in the South. The interest that has been exhibited throughout the South in this conference has been surprising. When this conference was first discussed, we thought that perhaps 25 or 30 people, with special interest in the field of genetics, would wish to attend. However, when we began to explore the field of possible interest, we found that our estimate was considerably under and plans had to be adjusted to meet the expanded interest.

Purpose of the Meeting

The purpose of the meeting, simply stated, is to assess the status of our knowledge of genetics as related to trees and to determine the status or extent of the application of this knowledge. I have hopes that this meeting can give substance to the role which practicing foresters can and should play now and in the future in applying the principles of genetics to forest management. Out of our discussions, I am sure, can come some leads to the course which research in the field should take, and the part each individual and organization can take.

Importance of this Conference Now

My purpose on this program, however, is not to dwell further on the objectives of this exploratory conference, but rather to suggest the relationships of efforts in the field of genetics to the present international situation.

We are in a period of national emergency. No one can foretell how long this condition may exist, but all the facts seem to point to a long, continued state of emergency and uncertainty. This country must bear a large and important part in arming the free countries of the world and building up a defense program which can meet any aggression. Our whole economy must be and is being put into gear to produce and maintain the sinews of war. Our domestic economy will, no doubt, feel the pinch. Certainly, throughout this effort to rearm and to mobilize to meet the threat of aggression, our forests will be called upon to do their part. We will need increasing supplies of wood for pulp; we will need lumber. Our forests must provide these things. Pressures on them will increase. Since the emergency promises to be of long duration, foresters have a challenge to make our forests produce, and the responsibility to maintain our forests in a condition to meet an extended pressure for products to meet the national emergency.

Forests are not built in six months or a year as you folks all know, Certainly we would be remiss, however, if we did not take the leadership in bringing to bear in our planting programs the scientific knowledge we now possess and in extending research in this field. Our forest planting must go ahead in order that we may be prepared to meet emergencies of the future. Our job is to grow the maximum amount of best quality timber that we can. We must apply scientific principles to the planting and the nurture of these crops. Our fund of information is all too limited, but we do know some things and those things we must get into practice and our research program must be geared to finding out the facts that are needed to make our planting programs, as well as our cutting practices, best serve the country's welfare present and future.

We, as individual practicing foresters, will have to face the question of how fast we can apply the principles which are shown to be desirable. I am sure we will not get to heaven in one jump, but neither will we make progress toward a goal that we do not have definitely in mind and for which we are not making effective plans. Personally, I believe that there will be many things that every practicing forestry organization or individual can do.

It is indeed timely that we have a conference of this sort from yet another point of view. In the last five years the number of trees being planted in the South has increased many fold. The number of trees produced and distributed throughout the South last year was something over two hundred million. That figure can be expected to increase behind the drive of such organizations as the Georgia Bankers Association and other agencies of that nature that are pushing the planting of forests all over the South. The Fulton Bank program, backed by the Georgia Bankers Association, and carried out by the multitude of country banks throughout the State of Georgia, are looking forward to a planting program in the next five years involving ninety to a hundred million seedlings annually. In a program of that sort the application of principles of genetics can be of untold value to the country in the future. It is high time that we made preparation to apply this scientific knowledge to strengthen the natural resource base on which our country's welfare will rest in the future. I think this conference is timely; indeed it may be too late. I believe that there are many principles which can be put into effect which will not increase the drain upon the manpower or equipment which may be needed in other phases of our economy. I do not believe our country can afford to set aside a planting program, and, particularly, not to apply the best known principles to that planting program during this grave period of national emergency.

Conference Action

Later today the program makes provision for the organization of four working committees. I hope that these working committees will find it practicable to suggest clearly the role of practicing agencies in helping to make the South's planting program contribute to the national need. I hope that they will point out the things that each organization or individual can do to put into practice the knowledge that is now known and I hope they will also point out the way in which these agencies can help to further the great research program which needs to be carried forward at an accelerated pace.

The second important task that I hope the committees will point up is the need for research. How should our research programs be strengthened? What need for correlation of these programs is there? How should research efforts be distributed between the various agencies working in this field.

Possibly there are other ways in which these committees can lay the framework to speed up and guide action in the field of genetics, but these are some of the things which seem to me important and which I hope we will see emerging from the deliberations of these various committees.