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**REPLANTING EFFORTS BY THE PREDECESSOR COMPANIES
OF MacMILLAN BLOEDEL DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD**

by Sen Wang, Ph.D.
Canadian Forest Service
Victoria, B.C.
Part One of Two

INTRODUCTION

The years prior to 1912 were pioneer times when scores of timber companies settled in British Columbia for purposes of timber exploitation. Out of concern for the province's timber resources, a Royal Commission, led by F.J. Fulton in 1909 - 10, reported that reforestation was one of the primary requirements for conservation of the province's timber resource. The Fulton Report led to the passage of B.C.'s first *Forest Act* in 1912.¹ It gave the newly created Forest Branch the mandate to collect seeds, grow seedlings, and reforest denuded areas.

Recycled paper



¹ For a short period of time H.R. MacMillan was Chief Forester.

However, natural regeneration was much depended upon, and it was an accepted view that 3 – 12% of logged-off lands might have to be planted along with barren areas (Williston 1989).

In 1930, the first plantation was created by the Forest Branch on 26 hectares after a permanent forest nursery site had been established at Green Timbers in Surrey one year earlier. Although the Forest Branch started to plant logged-over land on West Thurlow Island in 1932, its efforts were mainly on experimental planting, and operational planting did not begin until 1936. In 1938, 150 000 seedlings were planted on 65 hectares. But in that same year a huge wildfire near Campbell River destroyed 31 000 hectares of forests. In response, the Forest Branch decided to accelerate its reforestation program by planting 4050 hectares each year in the future (Williston 1989). This policy marked the beginning of production planting in British Columbia.

There has been considerable interest around the province in regard to understanding the main forces that pushed up reforestation efforts. Specifically, the forest industry is keen on assembling information that describes the contribution made on the part of industry leaders during the period roughly corresponding to the transition era of B.C.'s reforestation program (Knight 1990).² In spite of the fact that the MacMillan Bloedel Company Ltd. has become history with the takeover by Weyerhaeuser in 1999, there is no question that MB's important role is firmly slated in the history of B.C.'s forest industry.

As the amalgamation process of MB started in the 1950s and was not complete until the 1960s, the replanting activities up to the latter part of the 1940s were performed by the various predecessor companies that later became part of MB.

COMMITMENT TO THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINED YIELD

In British Columbia, reforestation was driven by recognition of the need to practise sustained yield forestry. Since the Fulton Royal Commission, although provincial forest policy was clearly concerned with forest conservation, very little progress was achieved beyond the development of a legislative framework (Knight 1990). In the 1937 Forest Branch report *Forest Resources of British Columbia*, author F.D. Mulholland was very critical of the situation. He commented:

"In British Columbia it has been evident for some time that the forests with protection only will not continue indefinitely to support the great industries already established, to say nothing of the increased production which is now being actively planned. It is time to institute active measures providing for more successful reforestation."

Mulholland was not alone in his view. In his influential article *Forest Conservation in British Columbia*, W.A. Carrothers declared that the era of extracting the free gifts of nature was past and we must develop a policy of assisting nature to provide for us and for succeeding generations.

² In his paper titled "Reforestation in British Columbia: A Brief History", E. Knight defined B.C.'s reforestation history as falling into four stages, namely, (1) the pioneer period, pre-1912; (2) the transition period, 1912-47; (3) development of the sustained yield regulation, 1947-78; and (4) the modern era, 1978-present.

Carrothers referred to the development of a policy of reforestation, either by assisting the natural growth of our forests, or by planting. The technical forestry staff employed in the Forest Branch and those with adequate knowledge about forest resources represented only one of the forces that pressed for changes in forest management. Another important source of preaching more responsible forest management actually came from the larger forest companies (Knight 1990). The predecessor companies of MacMillan Bloedel played a major role in developing an atmosphere that led to the second Royal Commission into forest policy, with Hon. Gordon McG. Sloan as Commissioner.

The essence of the Sloan Commission was a call for commitment to the concept of sustained yield forestry. Defining sustained yield as "a perpetual yield of timber to the fullest extent of its productive capacity," Chief Justice Sloan noted in his 1945 report that, since forests could not renew themselves rapidly, reforestation should be undertaken which would be capable of sustaining an annual yield for a future industry (Marchak 1983 p.74). Sloan advocated that growing new forests on denuded land was an important step toward achieving a sustained yield production objective.

H.R. MacMillan was one of the first people to recognise and accept the forest industries' responsibility for regeneration. In his paper *Forests for the Future* (dated January 23, 1945), MacMillan identified the conditions essential to a sustained yield policy in the context of managing British Columbia's coast forests. As a matter of fact, the paper was published about one year before the release of the Sloan Report, and it was a comprehensive statement of MacMillan's understanding of the concept of sustained yield.

Around the same time, Bloedel, Stewart & Welch (BS & W) and several other companies publicly expressed their commitment to the concept of sustained yield, advertising that they were responsible harvesters of the renewable resource. BS & W adopted a famous slogan – "Here Today, Here Tomorrow" – which was a forceful expression of the company's confidence in its program. In spite of some thirty years of continuous operation, BS & W boasted the best forest reserves in the industry at the end of the Second World War, and their slogan seemed applicable to more than simply faith in forestation (MacKay 1982, pp.91 -2).

The Sloan report served as a cornerstone for the establishment, around 1947, of the sustained yield policy that was to govern the forests across the province in the ensuing decades, and it was a summary of the industries' commitment to the new policy.

To make the best of its timberlands for the purpose of sustained yield, MacMillan Export Company Ltd. hired John D. Gilmour, an eastern forester, to establish a forestry department in 1944. Mr. Gilmour was instrumental in the company's commitment to implementing the concept of sustained yield. He wrote extensively, such as *Observations on the Growth of the Next Forest Crop in the Lower Fraser Valley and Southern Vancouver Island* and *Cultivated Forests and British Columbia's Lumber Markets*. He was also chiefly responsible for the development of working plans of sustained yield forest management for Alberni Pacific Lumber Company Limited, Victoria Lumber Company Limited, Shawnigan Lake Lumber Company Limited, Canadian White Pine Company Limited, and MacMillan Industries Limited.

In the *Plan of Sustained Yield Forest Management for the Victoria Lumber Company Limited* which was finalised in 1947, Gilmour revealed that the company had maintained a forestry staff and left a substantial acreage of good second growth after its operations. When logged-over sites failed to restock fully (for whatever reason) the company endeavoured to fill plant. The area planted exceeded 1000 acres and this caught up fairly well with all the logged areas which required planting.

Meanwhile, the Alberni Pacific Lumber Company Limited had felt all along an important duty to look ahead for the benefit of its employees and their future. In making expenditures to obtain a second crop, APL sought to meet the responsibilities of citizenship, although there was no regulation requiring, nor any business reason for following, such a policy. Lands were logged in a manner to encourage natural regeneration and replanting was carried out on lands not naturally restocked. In addition, various steps had been taken at company expense to awaken the public to the value of young stands, and to the fact that young forests required special protection against fire.

Most of the predecessor companies of MacMillan Bloedel, like the Shawnigan Lake Lumber Company Limited, the Canadian White Pine Company Limited and MacMillan Industries Limited, retained ownership of all logged lands. In forestry, long before legislation was passed to encourage management for sustained yield, these companies took steps to produce a new crop, protect it against fire, and plant areas where natural regeneration failed, even though a considerable portion on the east side of Vancouver Island was not of high site quality. The companies had had foresters in their employ for several years and they paid attention to getting a new crop started, as well as studying stocking and the growth of the new crop.

The Alberni Pacific Lumber Company Limited also employed a forestry staff. Instead of concerning themselves directly with actual logging operations, they devoted their studies and planning entirely to the second crop which, according to the top management, represented the long-distance future of the company and of the community (Gilmour 1946). Bloedel, Stewart & Welch went even further and hired forestry professor T.G. Wright of the University of British Columbia to begin plantations at Franklin River. Wright became one of the first commercial foresters in the province; the others at the time were all working for the government (MacKay 1982).

REPLANTING ACTIVITIES OF PREDECESSOR COMPANIES OF MB

Reforestation efforts of the predecessor companies of MacMillan Bloedel began in the late 1930s. Trees were planted in areas where natural regeneration failed to achieve a high rate of success. Using acreage as the yardstick, Bloedel, Stewart & Welch was by far the largest private tree planter in the forest industry across the province. In 1938, BS & W initiated a reforestation program at Great Central Lake and became one of the first companies to plant seedlings, though the Elk River Timber Company was reportedly the first firm to reforest Crown land - 16 hectares near Campbell River (B.C. Ministry of Forests 1989).

Looking back over the years of his leadership of Bloedel, Stewart & Welch, Prentice Bloedel recalled: "We were among the earliest to adopt the principle of replanting."

The *Forest Act* then in force provided rights to cut existing mature timber only and carried no replanting obligations. That was why Prentice Bloedel said:

"There was no legislation at that time that replanting had to be done, but we did it. I believe that we should have respect, in the sense that the long-term welfare deserves more consideration than it's had, and I say that as no criticism of the earlier people, because the problem for them was very different. They had to clear the land, they had to make money, and the timber was relatively endless." (MacKay 1982).

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EX-FOREST SERVICE VESSEL SQUADRON NEWS

by John Parminter

Last year's ExForest Service Vessel Squadron Rendezvous was held from Saturday, August 5 to Monday, August 7 inclusive at the Vancouver Maritime Museum. Boats in attendance were *Cottonwood II*, *Forest Ranger II*, *Kwaietek*, *Maple II*, *Oak II*, *Poplar III*, *Silver Fir* and *White Birch*. The classic steam tug *Master* was also at the docks.

A Squadron Trustee, Tommy Edwards, was a special visitor. He started his career as a boat builder at the Thurston Bay station in 1939 and subsequently became head boat builder at the Forest Service Marine Station in Vancouver in 1941, then foreman there in 1946. He became Assistant Superintendent in 1965 and Superintendent in 1968.

The Rendezvous participants were lucky to have ringside seats for a performance of the Symphony of Fire on the Saturday night, something that most of the estimated crowd of 400,000 onlookers had to do without.

The squadron's Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday, August 6 in the Maritime Museum and a group dinner ashore on Granville Island that evening was enjoyed by all.

Newcastle Island Marine Park in Nanaimo Harbour is the site for this year's rendezvous—scheduled for Saturday, August 4 to Monday, August 6 inclusive.

For more information about the activities of the squadron, please contact Doug Mitchell at 599 Norris Road, Sidney BC V8L 5M8. Phone (250) 656-2959. E-mail: douglassmitchell@home.com



BILL MOORE PASSES

Bill Moore, a fixture in the coastal forest industry and a Charter Member of the FHABC, died in late November at the age of 78.

A former President of the Truck Loggers Association, he also found the time to put pen to paper and write historical reminiscences and logging poems— usually published in the trade journals. His trademark closing words were “Keep out of the bight.”

He also took care to point out, at the FHABC AGMs which he attended, that he was from “downtown” Winter Harbour. He was our only member from that small community and we'll miss him.

The WRIGHT MEMOIRS, the FHABC and TRAFFORD PUBLISHING

A subcommittee of the FHABC Executive met with representatives of Trafford Publishing in June of 2000 and evaluated their approach to book production and marketing. Trafford Publishing is a "print on demand" operation, meaning that they do not keep large inventories of their titles in stock. Rather, they keep a few copies of each on hand and simply reprint more when supplies run low and new orders come in. The advantages to this approach are that it is no longer necessary to pay for a minimum print run of several hundred copies and with a book stored in digital form, as computer files, it can be printed and bound in Trafford's shop whenever the need arises. Titles always remain available and never go out of print.

Trafford looks after the administrative and legal aspects of book production as well as the technical aspects such as scanning and inserting photographs and designing the cover. Publicity is provided on their web site and they sell books via their internet bookstore and toll-free phone number. Royalties are paid quarterly, for as long as sales continue.

It was decided that this would be a very suitable way to publish Tom Wright's story. In essence, the FHABC is both a client and a partner of Trafford Publishing. The FHABC receives royalties from Trafford's sales of the book and we can also purchase copies in bulk, at wholesale, then retail them directly to individuals (as was done by Stan Chester at the recent ABCPF AGM in Kamloops) or institutions.

This explanation is provided to clarify our relationship with Trafford Publishing for the benefit of the members. The royalties received by the FHABC from Tom Wright's biography will be put towards our future projects.

Parminter, John. 2000. Tom Wright: recollections of a pioneer forester and tree farmer. Forest History Association of British Columbia in cooperation with Trafford Publishing, Victoria, B.C. xiii + 106 p. \$15 CDN, shipping charges extra.

To order phone Trafford Publishing at 1-888-232-4444 (locally in Victoria at 383-6864) and ask for the order desk. The catalogue number for this book is 00-0128. The online bookstore is located at www.trafford.com

UPDATE

Mentioned in the last issue,

Endert, W.E. (Bill). 2000. The timbercruisers. (novel) 222 p. \$13.95 CDN + \$4.95 shipping.
Web site: www.user.dccnet.com/capricorn/ ISBN 0-9686865-0-8

is most efficiently ordered directly from the author, at:

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NEW PUBLICATION

Geoff Bate, the immediate Past President of the FHABC, published a book in June of 2000. Entitled "Places of Kettle Valley," it identifies builders of the old homes, barns and hay sheds that were constructed between 1890 and 1910. Additional information includes the identification of the five one-room schools and two post offices that were located in the Kettle Valley area.

There is some information about primitive logging practices, pictures of old logging trucks and some excellent examples of the large ponderosa pine that used to exist in this area. The Kettle Valley Ranger Station property, now privately owned, was built in the late 1940s on the Commander Lewis place. All the Forest Rangers, from 1914 to 1979 are identified. The book is 182 pages in length and contains 11 maps, 4 illustrations and 137 pictures.

If anyone is interested in a copy please mail a check for \$30 to Geoff Bate, 2278 Cooperidge Drive, Saanichton BC V8M 1N2. Or phone Geoff at 250-652-5360. E-mail: gbate@telus.net

A PLEA FOR ARTICLES

A number of our members have published books recently, including the wonderful "Island Timber" by Richard Mackie (Sono Nis Press) – number four on the B.C. bestseller list between November 2000 and January 2001!

For those of you who want to break into the business gradually, how about contributing to this newsletter? The editor's file of new material is getting thinner and thinner and unless it's replenished **your** newsletter will appear less frequently in the future. Please get those memories and stories down on paper and send them in. Better yet, e-mail them! All of you have something to contribute and there's no time like the present.



This newsletter is the official organ of the Forest History Association of British Columbia. It is distributed at no charge to members of the association, libraries, archives and museums. Items on forest history topics, descriptions of current projects, requests for information, book reviews, letters, comments and suggestions are welcomed.

Please submit newsletter material and send changes of address to the Editor: Mr. John Parminter, # 3 – 130 Niagara Street, Victoria, BC V8V 1E9. Phone (250) 384-5642 home or (250) 356-6810 office. E-mail: jvparminter@telus.net

Membership in the association is \$10 yearly, or \$45 for five years. Please send dues to the Treasurer: Mr. Edo Nyland, 8793 Forest Park Drive, Sidney, BC V8L 4E8. Phone (250) 656-9276. E-mail: edonon@islandnet.com

The President, Stan Chester, can be reached at 5686 Keith Road, West Vancouver, BC V7W 2N5. Phone (604) 921-9880. E-mail: 2schester@home.com