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New Laws for New Forests, Erling D. Solberg. Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1961. Pp. xxiv, 611. \$7.50.

The subtitle of Mr. Solberg's book indicates the scope of this careful study, "Wisconsin's Forest-Fire, Tax, Zoning, and County-Forest Laws in Operation." Taken in conjunction with the main title, this also defines his point of view. The author has analyzed each of these efforts of the lawmakers to cope with specific problems in the cut-over northern counties to determine how the changes have interacted to create a new institutional framework suitable to nurture a viable forest economy. That he has taken great pains is indicated by the 228 pages of appended tables, references, and amplifying text.

After a brief sketch of the "farm-it-all" hopes of north country citizens and the natural resource potential after the cut-and-get-out era, Solberg shows that reducing fire loss was central to any progress toward permanent forestry. He demonstrates why the state was the only local agency with broad enough interests and a long enough purse to reduce forest fires to a tolerable risk. The rising cost of achieving this laudable end may raise the question of how much the state can profitably afford to spend for control, but this point is not considered in the book.

The convoluted progress toward forest tax reform is traced, starting with constitutional limitations and ending with Solberg's proposals for further improvements. He also analyzes the time likely to elapse before yield taxes will repay annual state outlays to the counties and towns. The situation he describes makes a reader wonder why so much forest land is still in private hands, especially when only a small fraction of the owners take advantage of the relief offered by the forest crop law. The complexities of the forest crop law suggest that Solberg might have said more about the apparent loss of freedom to manipulate his land that an owner pays for tax relief. But as Solberg points out, the chief virtue of the yield tax system may be as a "yardstick" or "haven of relief" when the ad valorem tax gets too onerous.

The complex of laws making county forests out of the depression-born avalanche of tax-delinquent holdings has created promising forest opportunities for the future, according to Solberg. If the values built up can continue in public hands, it would seem that "ash-can socialism" can have advantages. The problem may be to help county officials hold their land in spite of the tug of short-run gains promised by selling out, or foregoing state aid and control at the end of the first 50-year contract. Further analysis of the alternatives would help clarify these choices.

The crucial role of rural zoning in knitting together these diverse forest laws is outlined, and reading between the lines suggests that such an enterprise could best be undertaken at a time of crisis like the "great depression." The important catalytic function of real or pseudo emergencies in our national and state legislative halls has not been adequately explored. Although this is not his central theme, Solberg's carefully documented case histories make it appear that there is a good deal to the idea.

Solberg's "cold-light-of-morning" look removes much of the romance and excitement from Wisconsin's great era of social innovation. However, he has done a considerable service to social scientists and the State by showing how seemingly small legal details may frustrate a whole social program. His book exposes the interacting effect that a series of separate laws can have in reshaping the future of a whole region. Wisconsin's first quarter century of rural planning emphasizes the need for future flexibility to take advantage of emerging opportunities.

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