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
designed 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 liveli-
hood and industry is already dependent upon the use of the land
(occidental 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 develop-
ed 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 sell-
ing. 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.