

A CHALLENGE

Not so long ago we were in the throes of a mighty depression. We still have with us many who are unemployed, and the recent recession indicates that the problem is by no means solved. We are still up against the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty. There has been burned into the national conscience however, a new concept of social values and responsibilities.

This in itself spells a better era for the democracy in which we live. Yet as a Nation we still have to undo much that has been done in the past. Some of us enjoy the fruits of hard-earned victory, but there are many who do not. This is a challenge, particularly to all of us in the Forest Service.

Why particularly to us? Because forests are vital tools in the service of mankind and we, as foresters, must wield them. Because in one of our own forest communities 98 percent of the houses, of log or pole construction, have leaky roofs. Because 98 percent of them have no screens; only 1 in 10 have toilets. Because cash incomes are only \$40 to \$280 yearly, and 7 out of every 10 are undernourished. Because only 30 percent of the children attend school, and 90 percent of all family heads are illiterate.

Because this forest community is but one of many in which similar conditions prevail in varying degrees. Because, except for industrial centers, our most serious social problems are now in forest regions from which future citizens will in large measure come. Because our whole forest problem is primarily a social one, with such wide ramifications and implications that we dare not - if we would - practice an economy of scarcity with respect to forests and forest resources.

Here, then, lies the challenge. And successfully to meet it we of the Forest Service must reexamine our responsibilities; reanalyze our opportunities; revitalize the forest movement in relation to human beings. We must rededicate ourselves to a broader public service. As trustees we must manage the Nation's forests so they may become tools - and better tools - in the service of mankind.

It is with this thought in mind that I extend to all of you my personal greetings and best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

F. A. Silcox