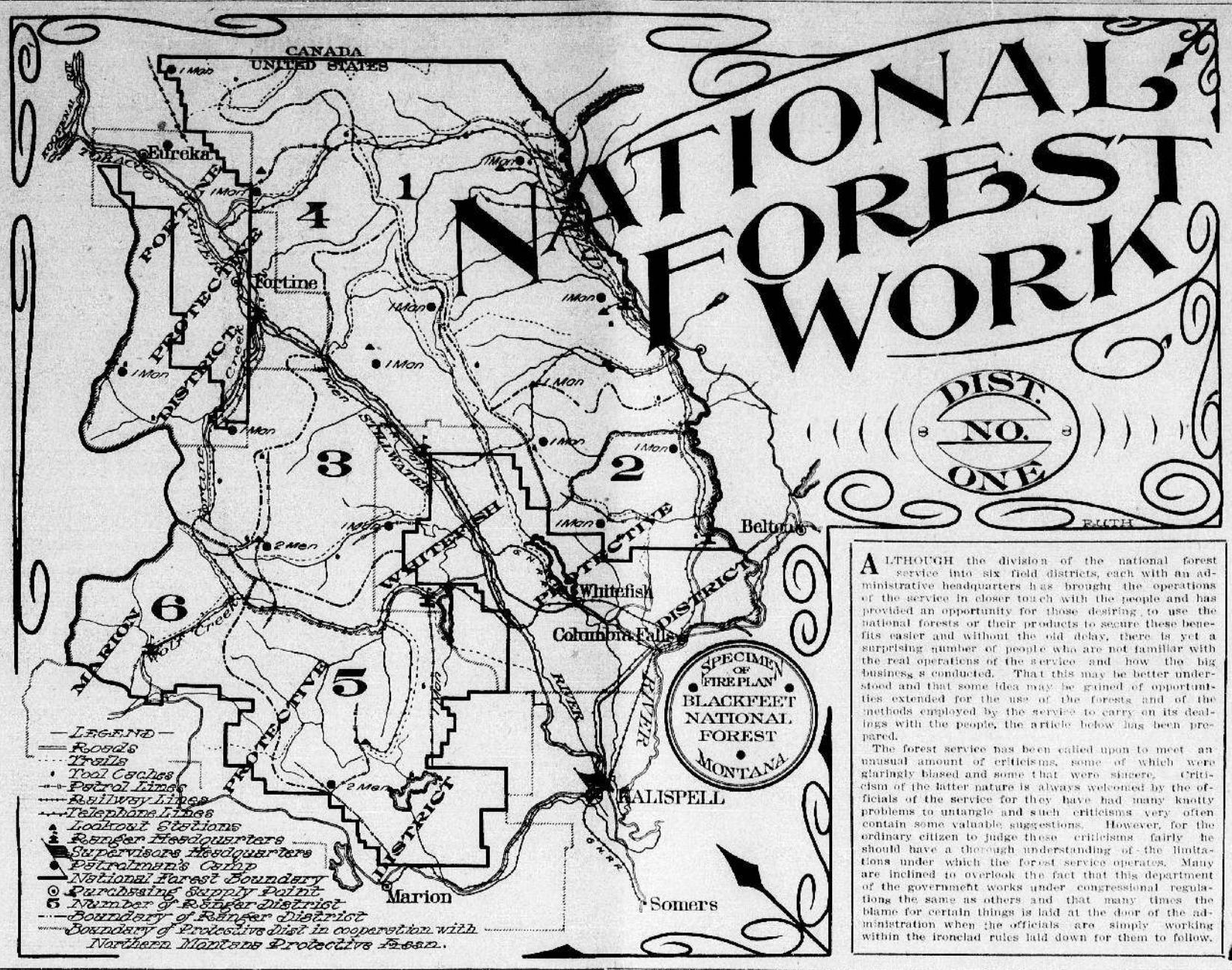
NATIONAL FOREST WORK



ALTHOUGH the division of the national forest service into six field districts, each with an administrative headquarters has brought the operations of the service in closer touch with the people and has provided an opportunity for those desiring to use the national forests or their products to secure these benefits easier and without the old delay, there is yet a surprising number of people who are not familiar with the real operations of the service and how the big business is conducted. That this may be better understood and that some idea may be gained of opportunities extended for the use of the forests and of the methods employed by the service to carry on its dealings with the people, the article below has been prepared.

The forest service has been called upon to meet an unusual amount of criticisms, some of which were glaringly biased and some that were sincere. Criticism of the latter nature is always welcomed by the officials of the service for they have had many knotty problems to untangle and such criticisms very often contain some valuable suggestions. However, for the ordinary citizen to judge these criticisms fairly he should have a thorough understanding of the limitations under which the forest service operates. Many are inclined to overlook the fact that this department of the government works under congressional regulations the same as others and that many times the blame for certain things is laid at the door of the administration when the officials are simply working within the ironclad rules laid down for them to follow.

THE change of name from "forest reserve" to "national reserve" was to get away from the idea that the forests were not to be used. They are! "Forest reserves had become firmly fixed in the public mind as an area of timbered land which was reserved from use. Even yet, with the timber cut, the sheep and cattle grazed, the summer residences occupied, and the water power developed, this idea still lingers among those who have not informed themselves. Use is the keyword of the administration of the national forests. To emphasize this, the first set of instructions were called "The Use Book." The bulk of the land included within their boundaries is primarily timber land. The highest economic use of the forests will be to use them perpetually for the growing and marketing of timber. While this is the principal purpose, there are a great many other uses that the lands can be put to, such as agriculture, grazing, mining, water power, and special uses of all kinds, and it is and always has been the policy of the forest service to make every resource of the forest available for public use.

The administration is made local and flexible. Six district headquarters were established at points throughout the west, at Missoula, Denver, Albuquerque, Ogden, San Francisco and Portland. These offices in charge of a district forester handle timber sales up to 20,000,000 feet without reference to Washington. They also direct the policies and arrange the distribution of money to the various forests. The unit of organization is the forest, which is under a forest supervisor. The authority of the supervisors in charge of the national forest has continually been enlarged, and, in turn, so has the authority and responsibility of the district rangers having charge of each unit of the forest.

Since the rangers come in most direct contact with the people, authority was given them to make sales up to $50 in value, issue free use permits to settlers and miners and in fact to act directly on a large proportion of the business which comes up in his district.

"Red Tape" Gone.

In the administration of a business as large and as widely scattered over the country as is that of the national forests it is necessary to keep the policies and procedure fairly uniform in order to insure that the public is receiving the same treatment under the same rules and regulations throughout the country. To a superficial observer many of these restrictions are classified as "red tape," while in reality most of them could not rightfully be classed under that head. "Red tape" is unnecessary routine and requirements. Uniformity of policy or procedure, is system. On account of congressional limitations, decisions of the comptroller of the treasury and many legal decisions affecting governmental work, there is and always must be more safeguarding requirements than in private business. This is inherent and necessary to protect the many interests involved.

The Organization.

As now organized, only important matters are referred to the district forester for consideration. The supervisors handle most of the business directly affecting the public and only a very small minority of the business must be referred to the Washington office to secure action. This is usually the class of business for which there is no special haste and which involves some inter-departmental matter or general service policy.

Take the case of a settler or resident in and near the forest boundary. One of his first needs is for timber for fence posts, fuel, corral poles and similar uses. All that is necessary is for him to see or write the nearest ranger living in his community who writes him out a permit at once. When the material is taken he reports to the ranger the amount taken and that closes the deal. A new plan for handling this work is to be tried out under which it will not be necessary even to secure a permit for timber desired from areas of dead timber.

Timber sales up to a value of $50 are handled directly by the ranger without reference to any superior officer. Supervisors ordinarily handle timber sales up to a value of about $500. It is necessary, however, on account of congressional restrictions, to advertise every timber sale involving timber of a value of $100 or more. The district forester handles all large sales up to a value of about $20,000 and only the larger sales involving over $20,000 are referred to Washington for action. Congress requires the forest service to advertise timber and award it to the highest bidder and in no case to sell it for less than the actual market price. No matter how deserving a particular applicant for timber may be the forest service is not authorized to sell it to him at a stumpage price less than the market price. It is oftentimes very desirable to award the sales of timber to local operators and small millmen rather than to bring in outsiders. This policy is followed so far as the congressional limitations referred to will permit.

Free Timber.

Statistics for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1912, show that there were a total of 6,496 permits issued for free timber to settlers, valued at $39,494, involving a total of 19,169 feet, board measure. Twenty-eight per cent of this amount was green timber. This is an average of about 216 families provided for on each national forest. In reality the average for some forests runs a great deal higher than this because west of the divide, where timber is plentiful there are very few applicants for free timber. As a matter of fact, some of the district rangers in eastern Montana, issue a great many more permits than this in one season. For the same period a total of 305,858,000 feet, board measure, of timber was sold, valued at $549,460. About one-third of this material was green and two-thirds dead timber. A large amount of the dead timber was caused by the forest fires of 1910. The total cut during this period was 108,454,000 feet, board measure, valued at $256,391; about 60 per cent was green timber. The total number of sales was 1,420. Of this number 1,222, or about 86 per cent, were for amounts less than $100 and only 3 per cent were for amounts over $1,000. Some of the critics of the forest service have said that the timber sale policy was rather to favor the large operators, and to play into the hands of the so-called lumber trust. In view of the above facts, showing that 86 per cent of the total number of sales made are to small operators is sufficient answer to such a criticism.

Special Permits.

Permits to occupy forest lands for purposes of erecting cabins, sawmills, summer hotels, road houses, and similar purposes are all handled without delay by the forest supervisors. Only the water power permits and those of similar character are referred to the Washington office for consideration. Issuance of permits for water power are of sufficient importance to the public to justify the delay of forwarding them to the highest officials of the department for consideration before the permits are issued.

Agricultural Lands.

The disposal of agricultural lands included within the boundaries of the national forests has perhaps caused more criticism than any other of the different phases of forest service work. The segregation of agricultural lands in national forests was authorized by congress, June 11, 1906. This act provided that the secretary of agriculture should list for entry lands not needed for public uses and which are chiefly valuable for agriculture. There are so many opinions with regard to the agriculture value of land that it is hardly any surprise that considerable difference of opinion has ben found among the officers of the forest service. A great deal of the criticism against the forest service in the administration of this act is to some extent at least, just, but at the same time it is doubtful if any other organization of the government or any private corporation would have done very much better. As a general rule, if there is no timber involved on the agricultural lands, the tract is listed for entry without any more delay than is necessary for any inter-departmental matter. Where there is valuable timber involved it has been the policy of the forest service to hold the land until after the timber is cut and then to list the land. For a justification of this policy it is only necessary for the ordinary citizen to consider the timber lands adjoining the boundaries of any of the western national forests. Many of the national forests west of the continental divide in western Montana and northern Idaho, have their boundaries located well towards the breaks of the mountains through heavy timber. The portion outside the forest boundaries is timber land and a great deal of it is agricultural land. These lands were entered under the public land laws before the forests were created. The land, however, is not being used for agriculture, but is held by lumber companies for its timber value. Eventually there is no question but that these lands will pass into the hands of farmers, but they will not be farmed until the timber is cut off and marketed. If the forest service followed the plan of opening to entry agriculture land having valuable stands of timber on them, they would follow the same course as similar lands outside the boundaries. In other words they would fall into the hands of lumber companies and be held until it suited their pleasure to cut off the timber. In the meantime the settlement of the country would be held up just as it is now held up by the timber holdings outside the forest boundaries.

The quickest way to open up agriculture land to settlement, having valuable stands of timber, is to retain them in the hands of the government until the timber is cut off. There is nothing left then but agricultural value and all these lands which are sufficiently valuable for agriculture, will be cleared and settled. The agricultural lands inside the national forest boundaries will be settled at the present rate long before similar lands outside the boundaries. The western country needs settlers. In this policy the forest service will, in the long run, help the country most. The removal of the timber depends, however, on the market for lumber. But this is necessarily the case whether inside or outside the forest with the difference that if it is in the hands of the forest service every effort will be made to dispose of the timber within a reasonable time. No attempt will be made to hold it for higher prices. No man would be justified in throwing away $5,000 or $6,000 or more in stumpage value of timber in order to clear land for agriculture. Neither is the forest service justified in doing this as agents of the people.

Act of June 11, 1906.

The procedure for the securing of land under the act of June 11, 1906, is about as follows: One prospective homesteader locates a piece of land inside the forest which he desires for a home. Application blanks are furnished him by any officer of the forest service without charge. On this blank he describes the land desired and forwards it to the district forester at Missoula. A record is made of his application and the case referred to the supervisor who takes action to have the claim surveyed and if found chiefly valuable for agriculture under the law, he recommends the case for opening to entry. It is then referred to the district forester and by him to the Washington office, where it is transferred to the department of the interior. Delays have occurred in the past due to the lack of men in the forest service to do the necessary field work and undoubtedly at times to the lack of money in the department of the interior to cover the expenses in that department. Recent arrangements will now make it possible for the forest service to make a preliminary and a final survey of the claims so that the only expense to the applicant will be the clerical work in the surveyor general's office.

The forest service is taking active steps to classify carefully all the land within the boundaries of the forests in the attempt to open immediately for entry all of the available agriculture land. To classify all of the lands valuable for agriculture over areas amounting to about 100,000,000 acres is, however, a tremendous job as well as an expensive one. Some progress is, however, being made every year. As fast as the agricultural land is located it is being surveyed and thrown open to entry.

During the last fiscal year the forest service received a total of 1,105 applications for agricultural land. Since the act of June 11, 1906, was passed there have been received 5,727 applications. Last year 419 claims were opened to entry, making a total to date of 1,811. In addition to those listed, 165 were last year rejected because lands applied for were not considered chiefly valuable for agriculture. The total rejections to June 30, 1912, was 1,006. On June 30, there was awaiting action in district 1, 1,418 applications. Most of these applications have been surveyed and passed upon during the past field season, but the statistics showing just the number open to entry and those rejected are not available. Of the total number received since 1906, about 1,492 have been withdrawn for one cause and another.

Mining Claims.

The work of examining mining claims in national forests involves a considerable amount of work. In this the forest service merely acts as an agent for the department of the interior, giving them information which can be obtained cheaper by the forest service than by the land office. An attempt is made to secure only the facts in each case showing the compliance with the law. Mining claims taken up presumably for a mineral value, but in reality for the timber value, or for some other purpose aside from mining, are reported on unfavorably by the forest service. In other words, if the facts indicate that the mining claim is not a bona fide one these facts are reported to the general land office for such action as they see fit to take. The work of the forest service in reporting on claims is a real hindrance, as it should be, to fraudulent locators, but is a real help to the honest locator. During the last year 148 mining claims were reported on favorably against 63 unfavorable. During the year ending Oct. 31, 1912, only 17 1-2 per cent of the mining claims reported were unfavorable.

In the administration of the grazing business settlers and residents and especially the small owners of stock are always given preference over large owners and those living at greater distances from the forests. The general approval of the grazing policy of the forest service among the men most affected is the best indication of its justness. The majority of the stock permitted on the national forests are owned by settlers whose entire dependence for range is that afforded in the national forests. By exercising proper precautions in the handling of stock, by opening up new grazing country, by studying the needs of the people as well as of the range, the forest service has been gradually increasing the capacity of the national forest ranges. As fast as funds will permit an intensive examination of national forest ranges is being undertaken in order to administer the business in better shape, to allot the grazing privileges intelligently, and increase the carrying capacity of the ranges.

Last year in district No. 1, 2,186 applications for cattle and horses were approved for a total of 139,314 head; 447 permits were approved for 747,816 sheep and goats. Of the permits for cattle and horses 1,262, or 60 per cent were for not more than 40 head each. Five hundred and eleven permits, or 23 per cent, were for numbers between 40 to 100 head. The balance, or 17 per cent, were for more than 100 head each. Of the permits for sheep 144 were for less than 1,000 head, or 32 per cent of the total. One hundred and eighty-three permits were for numbers between 1,000 and 2,500 head each, or 40 per cent of the total. The total number of permits for numbers less than 2,500 head each made up 72 per cent of the total. The sheep business is such that only a comparatively few applications are received for a small number of head. It very rarely pays under the present conditions to run less than 1,000 sheep.

At the request of congress a complete report has been prepared showing the receipts and disbursements of the forest service since its organization. This report is published as House Document No. 681. It involved the close scrutiny of 165,000 vouchers. The report shows that congress has appropriated a total of $18,000,000 for the forest service and that the net cost to the government for administration and protection of the national forests after deducting receipts and value of improvements and property on hand, was only $530,000 per year. The people of Maine and Alabama, and every other state, help pay this bill. Is it worth the price to the people of Montana? Montana's share of the expenses are less than the returns to the state for roads and trails. Are there any other benefits to Montana?

Chamberlain's Cough Remedy.

This remedy has no superior for coughs and colds. It is pleasant to take. It contains no opium or other narcotic. It always cures. For sale by all druggists.—Adv.

How Hobson Repays Kisses

(By Robert F. Wilson.)

Washington, Jan. 11—Captain Richmond Pearson Hobson, hero of the Spanish war, whose exploit in sinking the Merrimac at the mouth of Santiago harbor, thus bottling up Cervera's fleet, made him the recipient of the kisses of the fair sex from one end of the country to the other (much, it must be confessed, to that gallant officer's annoyance and dismay), has reciprocated.

The captain has become an ardent suffraget. In a recent speech on the floor of the house (the captain is now a representative from Alabama) Captain Hobson mentioned his conversion to equal suffrage.

"I have come to believe," he said, "that women suffrage will solve many of the problems in national life."

The new champion of the fair sex in its struggle for political equality was not, however, won to his present frame of mind by the memories of those osculatory tributes which disputed with the laurel for place on his fervid and youthful brow. Indeed no. Nor did any apostle of votes-for-women pin a badge on his coat and lead him captive to the suffrage ranks.

The captain, who resigned from the navy shortly after the war to enter politics, has become a very serious minded person with a real aim in public life. With single hearted purpose, he is working to make the United States dry within the living generation. He is Demon Rum's arch enemy. And it was in his investigation of the liquor question and in the solitude of his own study, that he became convinced that woman should have the ballot.

After his recent confession of faith in congress Representative Hobson said in an interview:

"The average standard of the character of a nation's electorate determines the efficiency of its political institutions. In standard of character woman is degrees ahead of man. Only five per cent of the inmates of penal institutions are women; while over 60 per cent of church members are women. Therefore the absorption of women would substantially raise the character of this nation's electorate.

"From my study of national problems I have come more and more to realize that nearly all the laws of states and the nation relate to business, and that very little provision has been for the humanities. Property has monopolized the attention of legislators almost to the exclusion of problems of living.

"This one-sided condition is due inherently to the fact that men make the laws, which of necessity reflect the activities in which their makers are engaged—they cover the business part of life. To equalize this condition, to make proper provision on the part of the government for the other half of human activities, it will be necessary to give the vote to women.

CAPTAIN RICHMOND PEARSON HOBSON.

"Of course, men pay some attention to the humanities, and women pay some attention to business, but each sex has a great sphere exclusively its own, and both spheres must be considered with proportionate interest on the part of the government to get the best results. Clearly this cannot be accomplished without enfranchising women.

"I do not think that the enfranchisment of women would take her out of her sphere, but it would simply project her sphere into full public consideration. The franchise would not cause woman to usurp man's business, but it would insure justice to woman whenever she engages in business in competition with man. It would make the sphere of woman more interesting to man and the sphere of man more interesting to woman. A man would not only naturally have more consideration for the rights of his wife, but he would be more interested in his wife's activities. A wife would not lose respect for her husband's work, but would take a greater interest in it.

"So that husbands and wives in their dual nature attack together the problems of life in both spheres with greater happiness to both and with more efficient results than are now obtained."

Democratic Investigating Mania

Top, left to right: Henry D. Clayton, Samuel Untermeyer, Rep. Arsene Pujo. Lower right, Oscar W. Underwood.

Washington, Jan. 11.—The investigating mania has struck the house of representatives and during the next three months it is estimated that not less than $100,000 will be spent in conducting seven distinct investigations.

Perhaps the most important of these will be the inquiry into the so-called money trust by the Pujo committee. This inquiry has already continued over several weeks and many important facts have been brought to light. Samuel Untermeyer, attorney for the committee, is well pleased with the results of the investigation thus far. The partners of J. P. Morgan will be the first witnesses called when the committee gets a little farther along.

Next in importance are the hearings before the ways and means committee, of which Oscar W. Underwood is chairman, preliminary to tariff revision by the next congress. Then there will be the hearings before the judiciary committee, of which Representative Clayton is chairman, on general trust legislation. The trusts as well as the tariff will receive the attention of the special session, and this investigation will be preliminary to trust legislation which will pass the next congress.

In addition to the foregoing, these other investigations will be taken up by the house immediately; the probe into the Grand Trunk-New Haven railroad situation in New England; the inquiry into the ramifications of the so-called foreign and domestic shipping trust by the merchant marine committee; the Glass sub-committee's investigation incident to the framing of a currency bill, and the inquisition into the affairs of the office of superintendent of insurance in the District of Columbia.