

THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

In anticipation of our June 1967 meeting in northern New England, I have been reading various comments on the results of Man's confrontation with Nature in this part of the continent. Some reactions reflect economic considerations exclusively. Take this one, for example, regarding the State of Maine:

"Its uninterrupted forests were once full of wild animals with furs of highest value. It had various timbers, particularly white pine, with rivers to take it to market. For long spells of the year, the large streams flowing into the ocean were in former times thronged with countless shoals of salmon, shad and herring. Now the animals with valuable furs have been exterminated or driven back, and fish in large streams are of little account compared with their former value. Lumbering still flourishes in the northern and eastern parts of the State, lucrative if rightly managed, but bringing impoverishment and insolvency to crowds of people who rush in without capital or experience."

The foregoing is no recent complaint from some economic report of today. It was written a century and a quarter ago—in 1841. It appears among remarks delivered at a meeting of a county agricultural society. A quite different reaction to the confrontation of Man and Nature found expression in 1856, in Thoreau's journal:

"But when I consider that the nobler animals have been exterminated here . . . I cannot but feel as if I lived in a tamed, and, as it were, emasculated country . . . Is it not a maimed and imperfect nature that I am conversant with? . . . I take infinite pains to know all the phenomena of the spring, for instance, thinking that I have here the entire poem, and then, to my chagrin, I hear that it is but an imperfect copy that I possess and have read, that my ancestors have torn out many of the first leaves and grandest passages, and mutilated it in many places."

One of the field trips planned for our June 1967 meeting will take people to the Errol-Umbagog area of New Hampshire. Sixty years ago, in 1907, William Brewster included in his "Birds of Lake Umbagog" a passage which may seem amusingly quaint today—until we realize that today's implications for our wilderness areas are neither amusing nor quaint:

"But almost no part of northern New England, however rugged and remote, is now beyond reach of the swift touring-cars. Of late they have traversed the Errol road with increasing frequency, powdering its wayside flowers with dust, disturbing the quiet of its wooded reaches with the muffled roar of their throbbing machinery, and leaving everywhere the reek of their fetid breath . . . To many of us who have long known the region and loved it especially because of its remoteness and seclusion, this invasion of its highways is scarcely less deplorable than is the ever-increasing havoc wrought in its forests by the lumbermen."

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