

*But this is what is wrong with the conservation movement. It has a clear conscience. The guilty are always other people, and the wrong is always somewhere else.*

—Berry 1990:176-177

**I**n 1993, Edward O. Wilson, the eminent Harvard scientist, asked, “Is humanity suicidal?” He looked at the history and evolution of humankind, and concluded: “Unlike any creature that lived before, we have become a geophysical force, swiftly changing the atmosphere and climate as well as the composition of the world’s fauna and flora.”

If he is correct, and I believe he is, it is a very heavy burden of responsibility that we bear as professional land and resource managers dealing with one-third of the land mass of Earth. My look at the future of forestry will be more about challenges related to this responsibility than it will be a prediction. First I will finish with Wilson as a way of setting the context for my challenges. Wilson says that the question of central interest to humankind at this point is: “Are we racing to the brink of an abyss, or are we just gathering speed for a takeoff to a wonderful future?” With touches of whimsy and irony, he says that the answer is unclear because we are both an unprecedented and a bizarre species. Wilson sees human responses to this key question as falling loosely into two schools: exemptionalism and environmentalism.

According to Wilson, exemptionalists see humans, by virtue of our intelligence and spirit, as free from the iron laws of ecology. Population growth is not a problem; it may even be good. Science and technology will overcome land and water shortages. Species extinction is natural, so don’t worry, be happy. Human genius will solve each new problem, so let us go on as we have begun.

Depending upon your point of view, environmentalists, by Wilson’s defi-

nitions, are either more pessimistic or more realistic than exemptionists. Environmentalists honor human ingenuity, but they do not believe it can free us from the constraints of the natural environment in which we evolved and live, nor can we successfully transfer the solutions from the smaller problems of the past to the global issues of our time. The scale of our impacts has enlarged; the scale of our thinking must *also* enlarge.

Schools are supposed to be places of learning, where we pass on the fundamental values of our culture and yet have the freedom to explore in the trust of collegiality, where we can think the generally unthinkable and discuss the generally unspeakable. We do this not for the thrill of it, or to institute change for change's sake, or to be politically correct, but as part of the process of growing, learning, adapting, and changing, as well as enlarging, justifying, and defending time-honored traditions and systems.

Schools are also institutions that compete with one another. There are other kinds, like grantsmanship, but the most obvious is the institutionalized mayhem of college athletics, where the name of the game is big money, and if you don't "whup" your opponent, you're gone. It represents the kind of "we vs. them" mentality that creeps—nay, leaps—into so many of our contemporary issues: smokers vs. non-smokers, abortion rights vs. right-to-life, gun owners vs. anti-gun advocates, democrats vs. republicans in a race for votes where the good of the country be damned, and so on. In forestry, this has too often meant conservationists vs. preservationists, or more recently, foresters vs. environmentalists. At the very least, it has meant that the viewpoints and interests of others have been seen as constraints on our interests, rather than as opportunities to work together in an expansive way.

I suggest that a profession is a sort of school—a collegium or group of equals with the power to advance their common interests. So a prime challenge to our future is to determine our common interests. Or put another way, what are the unique purposes forestry purports to serve? Historical records clearly indicate that this is not a new question, and I think just as clearly they indicate that the roots of our profession involve a concern for the whole forest, not just wood and fiber. In 1900, Gifford Pinchot said, "The forest takes its importance less from the individual trees which help it to form it than from the qualities that belong to it as a whole" (p. 5). The growth of environmentalism and the pervasive presence of the media intensify the debate and the need for some resolution. If we argue amongst ourselves as to who we are and what we do, why should the public, in all of its many guises, believe or trust us?

This brings me back to Wilson's answer to the question of whether humanity is suicidal. His opinion is that we are not, because we are smart enough

and have enough time to avoid what he calls “an environmental catastrophe of civilization-threatening dimensions.” But, he warns, “the technical problems are sufficiently formidable to require a redirection of much of science and technology, and the ethical issues are so basic as to force a reconsideration of our self-image as a species.” I’ll offer four challenges as we reconsider our self-image as professional foresters moving into the future. In brief, these are the challenges to (1) overcome the search for enemies, (2) overcome scientism, (3) build communities, and (4) adapt to the paradox of increasing globalization accompanied by the resurgence of tribalism. But first I can’t resist a bit of looking into the future after all.

### Two Future Scenarios

I’ll briefly describe two future scenarios. The first is more a statement of my “druthers” than it is a prediction. I’d like to believe that, not too many years into the future, all those interested in healthy forests and healthy people will agree that land-use allocation will follow a dominant-use theme, where multiple use is always considered but especially as it is dispersed over large areas. I’d also like to believe that high-intensity agroforestry on fewer acres will allow preservation of wilderness and ancient forests on larger acreages, all with pertinent attention to the environment, economics, and social desires. I’d like to believe that the practice of urban forestry will be widely accepted and widespread, bringing service to our heavily urbanized population and providing knowledge to that population whereby they recognize their dependence on and responsibility to the forest and the need for forest management. As Robert Miller says in his text on urban forestry (1999), “. . . all forestry is urban forestry in an urban society.”

I’d like to believe that especially on public lands, user fees are charged so that each user group pays its fair share, and the costs and benefits of each of the various uses of the forests becomes clear. I’d like to believe that our thinking will be broad enough to try alternative management schemes, such as permanent advisory boards or local groups that share responsibility as well as authority. And I’d like to believe we would have reached a point where we know what we truly expect of public participation; where, following the Carver model of management, professionals are given goals and allowed the discretion to reach them without being told how; where performance is measured by results and not by input or effort (1997). This would require, in my druthers, forestry as a licensed profession. But enough of my druthers. I’ll go on the second scenario, which is more a “what if” than a prediction.

What if, down the road a few years, the major raw materials for paper-

making were hemp and kenaf, not wood? What if steel studs and other framing materials were the prime choice for home and other construction? What if materials made from wood were largely reconstituted, with only a small, high-value niche market for solid products? What if, in the user-fee scheme I described earlier, non-timber monies often became more important than timber monies? Remember, I'm not predicting these things will happen, but what if they did? Would there still be a role for foresters? What would it be? If we were as much conservators of the rare, the fragile, and the beautiful as we were producers and managers, would you be comfortable? At a recent professional meeting on the topic of regeneration, the assembled foresters were asking the experts, "What do we plant?" referring to species. I suggested that we plant what we have always planted: faith. But our faith needs to be strengthened by the best evidence we have. I wonder if we spend enough time asking, "What if?"

Now, for the four challenges.

### **1. Overcome the 'Search for Enemies' Mentality**

It is much easier to rally the troops around perceived enemies than to discuss the differences in civil dialogue, and we have had more than our share of searching for enemies in forestry lately. We have had talk, maybe even threats, of starting a new professional organization separate from the Society of American Foresters, because the latter is perceived as being too liberal. We have seen the start of a new organization, The Forest Stewards Guild, by foresters of the opposite persuasion, who apparently often feel that not only are their ideas not accepted, but that they themselves are looked upon as kooks and outsiders not welcomed by their professional colleagues. I find these incidents a terrible indictment of our willingness or ability to be an open, just, disciplined, celebrative, and caring community. In the sense of the forestry profession as a collegium, it must be an open community where freedom of expression is uncompromisingly protected and where civility is powerfully affirmed (see Boyer, 1990). And so far I've only talked of internal forestry situations; then there are the environmentalists.

Often, non-foresters with opinions on forests and forestry are regarded as being somehow out of line—why don't they just leave forests to the foresters? We fail to remember that these folks are stockholders and stakeholders, land-owners, voters, opinion leaders, activists, but most of all, citizens. I also suggest that we foresters often have opinions on non-forestry issues—issues of social welfare, education, the military, the legal system, and so on—and we want our opinions heard and respected. Certainly in all of these cases, we hope the opinions are informed and rational, even as they may be passionately felt. If the

forestry opinions of non-foresters aren't informed, then it is our professional obligation to inform them and to be activists ourselves. The point is, we must make forestry real to people where they live, work, and play . . . in communities (Backiel, 1999).

Why is this important? We know there has been and is much conflict in forestry. The Conflict Research Consortium of the University of Colorado says that “conflicts cannot be transformed, and people united in well-functioning societies, unless they are tied together with some sense of unity and commonality” (1999). The response of solving social issues of forestry with technical applications is long past; we need first to find that sense of unity and commonality, and we have to be proactive in doing so.

The struggle for unity is not unique to forestry. In a very interesting book, *Toward Unity among Environmentalists*, Bryan Norton, an environmental philosopher, argues that within the environmental movement there is “no single, coherent consensus regarding positive values, no widely shared vision of a future and better world in which human populations live in harmony with the natural world they inhabit” (1991:6). Norton believes that a fundamental reason for this is that choices and schools of thought are too often seen as exclusive and opposed rather than as complementary and supplementary. Sound familiar?

Norton also suggests something that should give us encouragement and food for thought. He says, “Long-sighted anthropocentrists and ecocentrists tend to adopt more and more similar policies as scientific evidence is gathered, because both value systems—and several others—point toward the common denominator objective of protecting ecological contexts” (1991:246). The reference to scientific evidence is a good segue to my second challenge.

## 2. Overcome Scientism

Simply put, scientism is a belief system that says the only way we can know the world is through science. It leaves little room for learning through art, literature, poetry, music, or experience. In this world, scientists have traditionally been supposed to be objective and mostly emotionless at their work, without value objectives. In the ideal world of scientism, scientists—including forest scientists and forest managers—would do research, observe, and tell policy-makers what to do. The policy-makers, in turn, would provide the resources with which to do it. There is much that could be said about scientism, but I'll focus on it in the context of policy- and decision-making.

The problem with acting as if scientists operate without values is, very bluntly, that it is incorrect. Whether explicit or implicit, deliberately thought

about or not, values are *always* present. The formulation that policy equals facts plus values makes this clear, and the policy process itself is a way to focus on values and to confront one's beliefs, values, and biases. Think of the recent news-making issues in forestry—spotted owls and red-cockaded woodpeckers, chip mills and whole-tree harvesting, agroforestry and ancient forests—and see how scientists, how *you*, project values into the discussion. Look at the SAF policy and position statements and decide whether they are truly value-free, or whether they should be. Conservation biologists Gary Meffe and Stephen Viederman argue that scientists cannot and should not remove themselves from these usually unstated value judgments. It is quite acceptable (in fact unavoidable), to hold values as a scientist and try to influence the policy process, as long as the scientific process of objective hypothesis testing is not compromised (1995:16).

The first step, then, is to accept the fact that as scientists and managers we have values and biases. The second is to remember that we play many other roles, such as citizen, parent, and friend, and it is nearly impossible to divorce one role from another. Finally, we must learn how the policy process works so we are better able to influence it.

If we believe that something is right, and good, and necessary—something like clearcutting or herbicide use or ancient forests—we can let others make the decision or we can get involved. In discussing *A New Scientific Methodology for Global Environmental Issues*, S. Funtowicz and J. Ravetz put the need for such involvement in policy decisions by scientists into perspective when they said, "...facts are uncertain, values in dispute, stakes high, and decisions urgent" (1991:150).

### 3. Build Communities

The third challenge is to build communities. This challenge has been implied or directly stated in my previous remarks. Let me start by reminding you that in human history, the change from scattered hunter-gathers to rural pastoralists-farmers took several thousand years. The change to urbanized industrialists took not much more than a century. Our urban society is new to us and unprecedented.

We may still hold that rural life as idyllic, but Peter Drucker, the highly regarded management guru, claims it was really more a compulsory and coercive community (1998:3). Urban communities, on the other hand, offer anonymity and license and the absence of community. In both cases, whatever boundaries there are become walls separating communities, whereas the model of nature is that boundaries are often permeable, allowing meeting and ex-

change in both directions that support both the communities and the individuals (Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers, 1998). Management consultants Margaret Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers describe the core paradox of community as our need for individual freedom and autonomy while we necessarily live in relationship with our neighbors, however described. They go on to say, “Today, so many of our communities and the institutions that support them are lost because they lack clarity about why they are together” (1998:16).

One quick example will suffice. Why are forestry, fish, and wildlife, recreation, watershed management, and other natural resource disciplines so often separate yet housed in the same broad academic program? Why are these same groups set into competitive, functional departments in our management organizations? Is it so that each piece of the ecosystem can be managed separately when we know and preach the interconnectedness of ecosystems?

As President of the SAF, I want to move us toward greater cooperation with our professional colleagues in all the other natural resources professions. Imagine the increased power of policy and position statements issued jointly by the SAF, the Fisheries Society, the Wildlife Society, the Association of American Landscape Architects, and so on. Take a look at their Web sites. I think you will be surprised at how much commonality there is in the various policies and position statements of these and other groups. And, yes, we will have to agree to disagree on some items.

#### 4. ‘Jihad vs. McWorld’

Sociologist Benjamin Barber uses the shorthand phrase *Jihad vs. McWorld*, the title of his book, to indicate the simultaneous occurrence of two opposing forces in the world. The first, Jihad, refers to the balkanization of nation-states, to pitting culture against culture, people against people, tribe against tribe, and also to sentiments of “against,” whether against social cooperation, technology, pop culture, integrated markets, or modernity itself. McWorld, on the other hand, “mesmerizes people everywhere with fast music, fast computers, and fast food—MTV, Macintosh, and McDonald’s—pressing nations into one homogenous global theme park...” (1995:4). The two forces are interrelated, and both threaten democracy: Jihad by pursuing a bloody politics of identity, McWorld by pursuing a bloodless economics of profit, while democracy needs “citizens autonomous in their thoughts and independent in their deliberative judgments” (1995:15). Barber suggests that in the long run McWorld, with its globalization of American pop culture and “imagineering” of minds through what he calls the “infotainment telesector of the service economy,” is the greater threat. Think for a moment: do you want to have your mind “imagineered?”

Yet that is what Disney proclaims they want to do! And what of Nike? And the soaps? And political campaigns? And what else?

So what does this have to do with forestry and you? I suspect that when I mentioned globalization, you expected me to talk of multinational companies and international trade in forest products, goods, and services. These are, of course, important, and they are part of the movement toward one world. But let me go back to what I called that “very heavy burden of responsibility that we bear as professional land and resource managers” and tell you of Barber’s unusual definition of *ecology*. He says, “Even the most developed, supposedly self-sufficient nations can no longer pretend to genuine sovereignty. That is the meaning of *ecology*, a term that marks the final obsolescence of all man-made boundaries” (1995:12; italics as in the original).

Much more could be said of Jihad vs. McWorld. Time allows me only the opportunity to bring these opposing forces to your attention and to suggest that as practicing ecologists, we need to be role models in dealing with the elements of Jihad and McWorld. This includes such common things as diversity in all of its forms; the emergence of international standards, such as ISO 1400; and countering the insidious messages of both doomsayers and homogenizers. I hope you will take some time to think about Jihad and McWorld.

### Final Thoughts

As I bring my remarks to a close, I have to admit that I lied. I have a fifth challenge to offer, a challenge inherent in all that I have said: be involved and be respectful. If this seems trite, forgive me, but I’ll share with you a very recent exchange on the SAF newsnet to illustrate why it is important.

On that newsnet, a consulting forester was consistently and aggressively taking the SAF and professional forestry to task for a perceived lack of leadership. Another newsnet participant pointed out that the consulting forester had been asked to assume a leadership role but had declined. Yet another asked what the consultant was doing about the perceived problems that he raised. He responded, “What is there that says just because I bring up these problems I have to solve them? I’m just a forestry peasant, not a leader. Let the leaders solve them.”

The consultant was not a member of the SAF, saying “I don’t get anything out of it.” Of course, he didn’t put anything into it. And there is nothing that dictates one be a member or a problem-solver, except respect and common sense. If you cry wolf often enough, and with biting invective, without first seeing that there really is a wolf and trying to do something about it, people begin to take you as a misfit. If you don’t define the problems in a

proactive way, others will, and they may not even define the right problems. You and I can't wait for others to solve the problems we perceive. Forestry is the one natural resources discipline that purports to be interested in the management of the total resource, which again places the heavy burden of leadership upon us.

Because my challenges are broadly conceived, I want to recommend that the involvement I suggest take us past dependence on the government or the private sector. The future of community lies with the not-for-profit, non-governmental sector, where partnerships can be built that protect private freedoms in strong voluntary association. But this future calls for volunteers.

I'll close with a quote from my worn copy of Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*:

We shall never achieve harmony with the land, any more than we shall achieve absolute justice or liberty for people. In these higher aspirations the important thing is not to achieve, but to strive. It is only in mechanical enterprises that we can expect that early or complete fruition of effort which we call 'success' (1949:210).

Forestry is not a mechanical enterprise. Keep on trucking!

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