

OBITUARY

FREDERICK J. PERHAM

Frederick James Perham, who died in February, was the first man to serve for 40 years in the Forest Service after it became a separate Department of State. Up to the time he retired in February 1961, he was undoubtedly the best known personality in the Forest Service. In retirement, while privately employed in forest industry, he always retained his contacts and interests with his former Forest Service colleagues.

Rather than traverse Jim Perham's career—one which had its many genuine triumphs in more than one field—it is perhaps more fitting in a gathering of foresters to take a brief look at the place he occupied and the contribution made to forestry by Jim Perham and his contemporaries of the early days.

That ranger group who established the Forest Service in its first decade of existence was by any standards a mighty team. Mention of names could be invidious and I am bound to omit some who have every right to inclusion, but one can scarcely think of Perham in that era without also recalling such giants as Fred Field, Reg Murray, Norman Dolamore, Bert Roche, Sam Darby, Darcy Dun, Bob Collet, Dick Wastney—to mention some of the early identities I knew well in later years. All these people bore a full share of the heat and burdens of their day—and heat and burdens there were in plenty. In those times it was undeniably the indigenous forest ranger who was most in the public eye and I doubt whether many people now realize what a tough row this group had to hoe.

Before the passing of the Forest Act 1921-1922, the sawmilling industry secured its raw material from Crown-owned land virtually by right of discovery; stumpages were nominal and paid only on timber actually sawn and sold; and the territorial local body in whose area the timber grew received half the revenue as of right. The Forest Service under Macintosh-Ellis changed this situation drastically. Timber was measured on the stump and charged for whether it was recovered or not, stumpages were raised, and the local body share was diverted to the forest's account. One can imagine the reaction of the public in sawmilling districts to the unfortunate forest ranger charged with implementing this new authoritarianism. Perham and his colleagues of the early 1920s were the representatives of a new Act, a new Department, and a new policy more restrictive than anything previously heard of in the forest industries, and they had little in the way of training or experience to guide them. Much of their work was timber cruising and the general policing of the sawmilling industry, which up to that time had had a very free hand indeed in the native forests.

The forest ranger was in fact salesman, ambassador, hatchetman, forest practitioner and public relations officer. Doubtless in that day he had never heard of a P.R.O. and would not know what a public image was, as these much-garbled terms had not then been coined. But as one who traversed much of the same ground in later and less exacting times, I can attest that Perham and those of his era, wherever they worked, were long remembered and highly respected by the people of the forest industries. They

laid a foundation not only in technical competence and integrity, but also in humanism, and we in our day and age are still benefiting from their good work.

My own first association with Jim Perham was about 1930 when I was a very new boy in forestry and he was, or seemed to me then, a very big shot. He was in every sense a big man and a straight shooter who did his share of the hard work and enjoyed his share of the hard play, a man who will always be remembered with respect and affection by all who ever knew and worked with him.

I thank Council sincerely for giving me this opportunity to pay a tribute to one who was a great personal friend.

D.K.