

By HENRY T. L. TIDEMAN

*Question.* In your Econo-quiz you wrote of oil and coal lands and of forests. There is a difference between forests and the others. Coal and oil are already material; but the forests may be still growing. How about taxation of growing forests?

*Answer.* What I now write is so much my personal reaction that I wish to emphasize that the field for thought in it is not closed. It seems to me to be a common failing, when confronted with a social or economic problem difficult of analysis, to fall back upon the idea: "if I were king I would make the pirates behave." Such an attitude seems to me a surrender—for I have a firm faith that with a just foundation, the market will be orderly, and will function in such a manner as will conserve for men the gifts of the Creator.

So I see very little merit in proposals for arbitrary regulations and controls being applied to the activities of men seeking to serve their own ends by serving their fellows. My view of the forest conservation problem envisages no necessary regulations other than those of self interest and demands of the market.

The fear that a regularly applied tax rate on the value of natural standing timber will cause timber to be cut to any large extent before the demand for it in the market asserts itself is, it seems to me, groundless. The quantity which will be cut down by a consistent policy of taxing natural resources values, is the value. Such lands man will not monopolize unless it can be done profitably.

But the thought arises—do we really care about the timber supply of our descendants?

If we do, we should at once cease to tax planted timber while definitely continuing the taxation on the value of the land on which it is planted. Already, despite the handicap of the taxation of such timber, some lumbering companies consistently replant their cut-over areas, tending them as crops—not because they care about the descendants of their neighbors, but because they wish to keep their corporations solvent.

Wishing to do so, we can make self interest serve the common weal, especially if we will establish justice in fundamental relations. Not doing justice, we must ever seek to keep order with new police measures, instead of developing the mores which men must ever respect.