

THE FOREST GENETICS RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Ernest B. Babcock

This must be a brief report and little time can be given to historical details. Let it suffice to state that the FGRF was incorporated in April, 1951, and that official certification of exemption from Federal taxes on gifts to the Foundation was issued by the Commissioner of Internal Revenue in April, 1952. The, five incorporating Directors were impelled to take this step for two reasons: (1) they were convinced of the potential importance of forest genetics to the future of American forestry; and (2) they were impressed by the great activity in forest genetics research in Europe, especially in the Scandinavian countries, and the comparatively small support of such research in our own country. So it was decided to establish this Foundation. The original five Directors gradually added others until we had 20 members on the Board, 16 in the West, 2 in the Midwest, and 2 in New England. Then something fine happened. We were enabled to add 10 Directors from the southern States, so now our Board is nation-wide in representation.

It is very fortunate, I believe, that the purposes and aims of the Foundation, as stated in our articles of, incorporation, were broadly conceived. In condensed form the articles state:

That the corporation is organized primarily for the production of better forests through the creation of new arid superior varieties of forest trees by means of applied genetics.

The corporation is also formed:

(1) To provide an organized medium for obtaining recognition by the general public: a. of the need for increasing the nation's supplies of timber; b. of the value of tree breeding as a means of increasing wood products; and c. of the importance of scientific research on trees as a basis for, successful tree breeding.

(2) To organize efforts for the establishment of a permanent endowment fund, the income from which shall be used for research on the genetics, cytology, biochemistry, physiology, taxonomy and related sciences pertaining to the breeding of forest trees.

(3) To cooperate with and assist any public or private institution or company, or individual desiring to cooperate in the breeding of better trees.

(4) To provide a medium for lectures, motion pictures, field trips, and publications to interest and inform the public concerning the need for research on forest genetics and the accomplishments and future possibilities in creating better forest trees.

Thus, you see, while the advancement of research on forest tree improvement is the primary purpose of the Foundation, it is proposed to accomplish this in part through public education which should lead

eventually to the establishment of a permanent endowment fund, the income from which will provide continuous support for such research. No doubt the creation of this endowment fund must come about gradually through future gifts and bequests.

Meanwhile, in order to run the Foundation for a period of years, and thereby to demonstrate how the Foundation can be of service to forestry and the forest industries, it has been the hope of the Executive Committee of the Foundation that some of the larger wood-using corporations and, perhaps, some of the larger railroad companies would make contributions to the annual general expense budget of the Foundation amounting to at least \$25,000 a year. This hope has not been realized as yet, and the fault may lie with the Foundation. Perhaps our approach to the industrial leaders has not been adequate, although we have solicited by personal letter plus brochure several hundred firms in the Southeast, Midwest and West. From the results of this effort it is clear that some industrialists are not convinced about the value of the proposed research to their own industries, and they do not feel impelled to come forward with contributions for the general purpose of national or international welfare. Therefore, for the present, the Foundation is doing little more than mark time, as far as supporting research is concerned, while continuing to seek sufficient support to become more active both in advancing research and in public education about forest genetics.

The financial report covering the entire period since incorporation can be summarized briefly as follows. Total contributions to December 31 amount to \$36,500. Of this amount, \$20,000 was contributed by one man for a specified project, and the \$20,000 has been set aside for that project, about which I will have more to say if there is time. This leaves \$16,500 to be accounted for. We have on hand about \$6,500. Thus, during the 21 months of the corporation's existence, we have used about \$10,000 for setting up an office, routine office expenses, legal advice, public accounting, travel and promotion, or an average of less than \$500 a month. Obviously there have been no salaries except for the office secretary.

In my opinion, the most urgent need of the Foundation is a salaried executive officer, a considerably younger man than myself, who doesn't mind hopping a plane whenever necessary and who is well enough informed about forestry and forest industries to be able to work successfully in both fields. Until we are in position to offer an adequate salary to such a man, I am willing to carry on as actively as possible. But I do have other commitments that demand part of my attention and, at the age of 76 (next July), I'm not really craving a heavier load. Hence it is my earnest hope that, before many months, the Foundation will receive substantial contributions that will enable it to employ a well qualified executive and to begin making grants in support of research in forest genetics.

Already we are beginning to receive applications for such grants. For example, Dr. Joranson of Beloit College has a project on faster growing aspen trees for paper pulp. This project is supported now by two Wisconsin pulp manufacturers who would like to see the project expanded.

Joranson wrote me that he needs another geneticist and a plant physiologist to work with him. The two industrial firms concerned think that, if a satisfactory project is proposed, they can find the additional support needed. Therefore I have asked Joranson to outline the proposed expansion and to submit the same for criticism and advice to our two directors at the University of Wisconsin and then to the industrial firms concerned. When the project has been approved by all concerned and accepted by the Executive Committee of the Foundation, it will be in order for the interested companies to send their contributions to the Foundation, and these will be set aside for Joranson's use as needed for this project. This illustrates one mode of procedure. It is essentially the same as the procedure already followed in handling the \$20,000 contribution mentioned earlier. Perhaps somebody should suggest a few research projects that should interest some of the southeastern industrialists. Would be glad to discuss this with any of you. Improved varieties for the South should be developed in the South and most of the basic research should be done there too.

Now a question has been raised by one of our own Directors: Why should the industrial firms make their contributions through the Foundation? Why not directly to the research individual or to the institution where he works? I would answer emphatically that in no case does the Foundation wish to intervene in an arrangement already consummated between donor and recipient. Such arrangements are all to the good and we give them our blessings and any assistance possible. At the same time, the advantages to all forest geneticists of having on file in some central office or clearing house a record of all research projects in the field of forest genetics, along with a roster of the active scientists working in this field, must be obvious. The Forest Genetics Research Foundation might well serve as such a clearing house, provided that the local groups will cooperate by furnishing the needed information. Furthermore, it should be realized that in the illustration just described Dr. Joranson took the initiative in asking the Foundation about getting additional support for his project. It happens that shortly before that letters of solicitation were sent by the Foundation to many Wisconsin firms. As a result it was learned that the two companies already supporting Joranson's work were anxious to expand it, something that Joranson himself evidently did not know. Thus the Foundation has already functioned in stimulating more willingness to support research and, presumably, in expanding a going project subject to the advice of some of our own Directors. I believe this one illustration answers the question, Why should the Foundation handle such contributions for specific projects.

In the long run, however, the Foundation must have its own funds for the support of research. When that time arrives applications for grants-in-aid can be acted on directly without having to first raise the funds. It is our hope, therefore, that Industry will come to appreciate the desirability and importance of supporting the Foundation with funds for general expenses, including research, without insisting that their contributions must be used for projects of immediate practical importance to themselves. Perhaps this calls for a broader view and deeper appreciation of the general importance to both national and international economy than some industrial leaders are willing to take. But I believe there

are some who have the needed far-sighted, vision and who will rise to meet this challenge. In this connection we realize that the Southern States are of major importance in present and future rood production. Tree planting has progressed more here, than anywhere else in the country. I firmly believe this Foundation can be. of great assistance in the continued improvement of our southern forests and, therefore, that the Foundation deserves both the moral and the financial support of the southern wood industries.

In conclusion, I can state that although there has never yet been a meeting of the enlarged Board of Directors, it is now definitely planned to hold a meeting in California next May. We have been assured that at least half of the Board members will attend this meeting, and we hope that a good two-thirds of the members will come. We also hope that, by the time this meeting is held, the Foundation will find itself on a better financial basis.