

Lumbering Economics

Perhaps the best authority on Oregon is the booklet issued by the forest products industry of the Business Executive Institute.

Committee sponsored by Lewis & Clark college and Reed college. This booklet is dated September, 1956, and from it are taken the following excerpts.

Although the compilation is dated 1956, there has been little change since

in the twenty percent credited to Oregon of the nation's cut of sawlogs although there may have been a drop in the timber mortality figures of that year which show Oregon lost a little over 18 percent of its timber in that year.

was through insect damage.

In the replacement of growing timber it is stated that on a desirable site a two year old Douglas fir 'Whip' should average a two foot diameter tree in 35-40 years where it might require twice that long to produce a log this size if growing conditions were not good.

Charts show that actual cut from national forest lands falls a bit short of the estimated cut and although some 45 percent of Oregon's timber is on National Forest lands, it amounts to only 21 percent of Oregon's entire cut and if the full allowable cut had been taken from this land it would have accounted for only 21 percent of the state's harvest. Much of the timber is ready for harvest and is making no growth, in a way, hindering forest development, taking up the room that could be occupied with reforestation. One of the reasons given for this lower percentage of harvest is inaccessibility and another is that there has been a change in the standards of the forest service regarding the diameter of trees which may be harvested, due to changes in the utilization of the cut. Some species, previously considered as "weeds" are now being included in inventories.

The report recognizes the worthiness of limiting stumage

sales to operators in the area where it may be processed but states that it does not work well, economically, as it limits the number of bidders and these small local mills have been found not capable of making the fullest use of the timber, thereby limiting their market and hence their cash returns are less, so they cannot afford to pay as much as more efficient mills.


The blocking off of timber stands, varying in area from less than 50 acres to a section or more, in the O & C areas, is a serious handicap to the merchandising of such timber as may be on them. In many instances, these blocks of O & C stumage are entirely surrounded, or at least inaccessible due to their being wholly or partially surrounded by land under private ownership and, so far, Congress is reported to have been reluctant to supply funds for access ways to these isolated stands. Some land exchange has been accomplished but there is still a great deal to be done before this timber is available. An adequate system of access roads averaging about five miles per section is held essential for the best management and use of timber resources and these roads should be designed not only to harvest timber but also to protect watersheds, fish and wildlife, and to facilitate recreational use of the forest lands.

According to charts the Siskiyou National Forest ranks next behind the Willamette in miles of these access roads but there is a great difference in their condition. Of the 2462 miles, total in the Siskiyou, as shown on this chart, about 100 are shown "satisfactory", possibly 300 as "unsatisfactory", and "non-existing" roads some 2,000 miles more. Oregon stands in greater need than any other state for access road funds. Slightly over one half the commercial forest area of the state is located on the west slopes of the Cascade mountains where there is rough country, heavy rain fall, and much clay, thereby making building and maintenance costs very high. Of the above "unsatisfactory" roads, these are in constant need of repair and thus handicap the harvest of timber which would yield a greater income to the community, especially in an area where non-recovery of the timber enhances loss through decay, disease and insect infestation. The recovery of this timber would go a long toward meeting the annual charges of an adequate access road system. Unfortunately, in the O & C holdings there are some 5,243 separate parcels of land and access to many of them must be had across privately owned property as road construction does not lend itself toward following property lines and although there are some 8,000 miles of roads of sorts in existence, an estimated 12,000 miles is required to reach these tracts. With about 1,100 miles of road already built on O & C lands, new road construction is progressing at only about 140 mile per year. With 75 percent of the money for timber harvested from O & C land going to the counties and only 25 percent returned to the counties from stumpage taken from National Forest lands, congress has not been enthusiastic in allowing access road money into O & C stands.

Among the recommendations embraced in the study is that stress be made for the harvesting of mature or overmature trees yet the rate of cut should be adjusted so these will last until the second growth is merchantable; that a comprehensive survey of resources be accelerated for a better understanding but the industry, as to future; the "allowable cut" figures revamped in the light of newer forest practice and technology; federal timber sales should be simplified and sales contract clarified; the policy of restricting sale of public timber to purchasers who must process it within a restricted marketing area should be abolished gradually; the price at which government owned stumpage is sold should be based upon supply and demand, on the competitive market; management of all federally owned forest land

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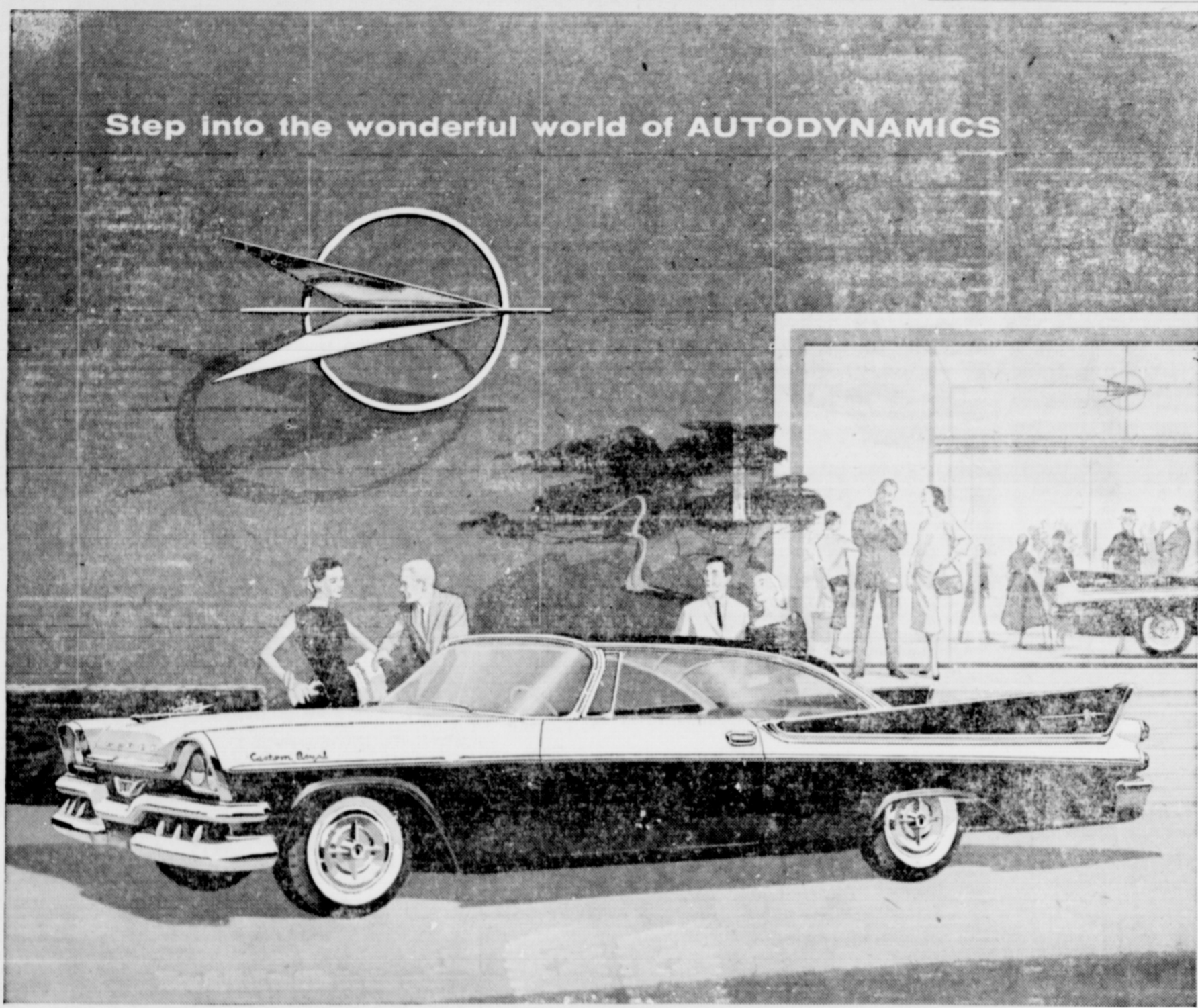
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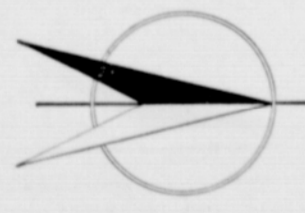
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