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FACTS FOR FUR FARMERS

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Fur, a Neglected Natural Resource

The fur trade surely is interested in perpetuating a natural resource that is the very backbone of its business. Nevertheless, the reverse sometimes appears to be the case. The persistence of species in the presence of almost overwhelming forces that tend toward extermination is one of the most striking of natural phenomena. So far as the layman is concerned, it completely conceals what is in reality taking place, and creates the impression that there is no danger of extreme shortage. Few fur men even will admit that the supply of American raw furs is in jeopardy, and not all who do admit it have a clear conception of its implications.

When the fur trade itself has been aroused to uphold the efforts of State and Nation in the restoration and conservation of this important natural resource--when the members of this large industry realize that the dealer in illicit fur, far from being a great merchant, or even a "bright fellow", is actually an enemy of the industry at large, we may expect beneficial results. It is an outstanding fact that the illicit trapper would have a poor outlet for his product if it were not for the greediness of certain individuals in the fur trade itself.

Transplanting and restocking areas with beavers and other fur animals offer enormous possibilities. There are vast areas available in which fur animals could live and multiply without damage to forests and crops. In a few years the increase would result in ample supplies of animals, and the fur industry would benefit in a large way. It can be done. It should be done. But, it may be asked, why permit poachers and illicit traders to steal the rewards?

Every man in the fur trade is quick to realize that when the demand for any commodity exceeds the supply, production is stimulated to meet the demand. Why not apply this same principle to stimulate the production of the raw product? The logical way to supply the demand for furs and to prevent still further shortage in the source of supply is to produce more fur animals. The quickest and surest way to accomplish this is through the enactment of better laws and a strict enforcement of them. Better laws and strict enforcement would not only increase the quantity of fur but would greatly enhance the quality of the annual catch. Fur animals are the property of the States in which they are found, and serious responsibility rests with State game officials to cooperate with all organizations and individuals interested in maintaining the source of supply. The American fur trade is dependent to a large degree on the annual catch of fur in this country, and therefore it should effect a close cooperation with Federal and State agencies to insure a continued source of supply.

Unfortunately, few States require trappers to make reports on their annual catch, and not until all States have legislated on the subject can an estimate be made of the annual catch throughout the country. With few exceptions, the States reporting show a decided decrease in the 1933 catch, as compared with that of 1932, even though the prices paid for raw fur had increased slightly at the close of the 1932 season.

There seems to be little doubt that when the fur trade regains its normal footing it will face a marked shrinkage of American raw furs. There would follow, if experience means anything, a price increase that would send every country boy to the village for more and more traps. And then there might ensue a period not of scarcity but of actual lack. It was so with the buffalo; it was so with the passenger pigeon; it will be so with certain fur species unless the fur trade itself takes a hand in the matter.

Germans Establish Fur Sales Agreement

Fur farmers in the United States will be interested to learn that fur farmers in Germany have reached an agreement whereby the entire production of pelts will be marketed by Leipzig fur merchants, the fur trade guaranteeing appropriate prices. It is believed in Germany that this agreement will put new life into the fur-animal breeding industry, especially since foreign skins are being imported to a much smaller extent.