



UI Extension Forestry Information Series

From our Files *Archival Wisdom*

Ron Mahoney

Foresters of today, and in fact all natural resource managers, may feel the public questions their every move and motive. Some of those questions come from well informed individuals and organizations, and others from well-meaning folks that suspect a lot of information presented to them is not true. Current speakers on public relations tell us that the time of expert opinion finding a trusting audience is over. Perhaps they are recalling “good old days that never were”. The following guide to “*Foresters in Public Service*” was written about 100 years ago by one of the first U.S. foresters and first Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, *Gifford Pinchot*, as part of his series “*Lectures to guide the behavior of foresters in public office*”.

Today, all natural resources managers are accountable to the public, including industry foresters and private consultants. I think these words will help us all maintain our credibility. The issues we confront are not new, but perhaps we can address them with less acrimony. Here is what Pinchot said:

- 1) A public official is there to serve the public and not to run them.
- 2) Public support of acts affecting public right is absolutely required.
- 3) It is more trouble to consult the public than to ignore them, but that is what you are hired for.
- 4) Find out in advance what the public will stand for; if it is right and they won't stand for it, postpone action and educate them.
- 5) Use the press first, last, and all the time if you want to reach the public.
- 6) Get rid of the attitude of personal arrogance or

pride of attainment of superior knowledge.

- 7) Don't try any sly or foxy politics because a forester is not a politician.
- 8) Learn tact simply by being absolutely honest and sincere, and by learning to recognize the point of view of the other man and meet him with arguments he will understand.
- 9) Don't be afraid to give credit to someone else even when it belongs to you: not to do so is the sure mark of a weak man, but to do so is the hardest lesson to learn; encourage others to do things; you may accomplish many things through others that you can't get done on your single initiative.
- 10) Don't be a knocker: use persuasion rather than force, when possible; plenty of knockers are to be had, your job is to promote unity.
- 11) Don't make enemies unnecessarily and for trivial reasons; if you are any good you will make plenty of them on matters of straight honesty and public policy and will need all the support you can get.

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About the Authors: *Dr. Ron Mahoney* is an Extension Forester and Professor at the University of Idaho. *Gifford Pinchot* was one of the first U.S. foresters and the first chief of the Forest Service.

