

"Deforestation Means Famine in U.S." Newspaper Article, May 23, 1921

DEFORESTATION MEANS FAMINE IN U.S.

Washington, May 23. – Future generations of Americans may face famine conditions, such as are now agonizing millions of Chinese. This is the ominous warning issued by the Department of Agriculture, whose foresters declare that Chinese famine conditions are partly responsible to the "folly of deforestation," which has gone on in China for many years.

The ruthless destruction of their forests by the Chinese is one of the reasons why famine and plague today hold that nation in their sinister grasp," says a statement issued by the Department of Agriculture. "Denudation, wherever practiced, leaves naked soil; floods and erosion follow, and when the soil is gone men must also go and the process does not take long. Forests not only play an important part in the distribution of mankind over the earth's surface, but also deeply affect his spiritual, physical and economic life. A country that recklessly wastes its natural resources faces ultimate poverty and decadence. History is full of such examples.

"Human folly and short-sightedness have made a country fertile enough to support over 50,000,000 people into a place where man must ever be haunted by fear of starvation and destruction. The lesson of deforestation in China is one which mankind should have learned many times from what has occurred in other places. In fact, it may, in a lesser degree, even be brought home to the people of America in future years unless, through wise forethought, care is exercised in the preservation of our forests from destruction by fire and wasteful lumbering."

Cause of Great China Floods.

When signs bearing the warning, "Beware of the Mountain "Water," such as appear in many places in China, begin to appear in America, then the nation must guard against a decadence in its natural resources, the foresters of the Department of Agriculture declare.

The Great Plains of Eastern China were transformed from forests into agricultural fields centuries ago. The mountain plateaus have also been devastated of their tree growth. As a result water rushes off the naked slopes in veritable floods, gulying away the mountainsides and carrying large quantities of fertile soil away to the muddy China seas.

Tree-covered mountains of China formerly absorbed a considerable portion of the rainfall and permitted it to escape by slow seepage during the dry season. Now that there are no trees, shrubs, or even grass to restrain the rainfall the streams of China are but little rivulets during the

dry season, but become roaring torrents, bringing disaster and destruction, in the wet season. Agriculture becomes difficult, if not impossible, in these regions, with consequent lack of food.

Though it would take many years for deforestation to reach the stage in America which it has reached in China, nevertheless the forestry experts of the United States Department of Agriculture declare that now is the time to act to save this nation from any future suffering.