

From the People

Flambeau Land and Timber

To The Journal: In the early days of Wisconsin, as elsewhere in the nation, money for education was scarce. Therefore the federal government made land grants to the states, such lands to be managed to provide money to establish and administer schools of advanced education.

Each state made constitutional provision for the administration of such lands. Wisconsin provided that the public land commissioners (secretary of state, state treasurer and attorney general) be given complete jurisdiction but failed to make them responsible to the legislature or the governor. In fact, they are a law unto themselves, the only requirement that the land should be made to provide the greatest amount of money possible.

The only large block of near virgin timber left in Wisconsin lies within the Flambeau state forest, held in trust by the public land commissioners, who recently published notice of timber sale by auction. Although they propose to sell on a selective cut basis, the proposed cut would be so heavy as to completely destroy it from the standpoint of a park or wilderness area.

Conservationists feel that since it lies within the boundaries of a state forest and is unique as a hemlock-hardwood stand and is the only large block of such timber in the state, it should be preserved in its present condition.

The conservation department has been dickering over the purchase price for years. In the meantime, prices have doubled and trebled. Both departments probably have been at fault. But that is water over the dam.

A restraining order is our only hope. Is the next step passage of an appropriation bill by the legislature to buy this tract and turn it over to the conservation department for administration as a wilderness area? Isn't the following step a constitutional amendment abolishing the public land commission and placing the administration of these lands in the hands of the proper department?

This is the last call of the Flambeau wilderness area.

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[Editor's Note: The conservation commission wants to pay not more than \$250,000. The land commission wants about \$450,000.]

Employ the Hand