ing timber might not in itself be a sufficient inducement to cause private owners to engage extensively in the growing of timber commercially, it would undoubtedly be a step in the right direction. That such an innovation would help immensely to stimulate this sort of enterprise and make it much more profitable and attractive than it is at present can not be gainsaid. The change must come sooner or later if the state is to attempt to remedy existing conditions, and there is no apparent reason why decisive action with that end in view should not be taken now. The remedy can not, of course, affect the past or to any great extent the present, but must necessarily be confined to the future. Its aim should be to encourage the growing and proper management of new forests. And although a change for the better in existing conditions may do much to promote the growing of a future timber supply by private capital, it is firmly believed that if the supply is to be commensurate with the local needs the greatest part of the burden in providing it must and will rest with the state.

Recommendations.

In preceding pages, it has been shown that the present method of taxing timber is fundamentally wrong; and that the time seems ripe for the formulation and application of some remedy. The next question is, what remedies may be regarded as feasible. For convenience of discussion the proposed solutions are divided into (1) woodlots, limited in area, and (2) private forests, without any limitation as to area.

Woodlots.

As has already been pointed out, this state along with many others has endeavored by means of bounties and total exemption from taxes for a certain period of time to encourage the growth by planting of tree belts and woodlots by private owners. The results obtained under these laws in Wisconsin have been inconsequential. Their aim was entirely confined to the encouragement of tree planting in a limited way, and failed to make any provision whatever for the encouragement of woodlots naturally grown. The tree belt law, now repealed, needs no further comment here. The law passed in 1907 is much more commendable than its predecessor, yet it is not satisfactory in every respect. It can be made far more satisfactory if so redrafted as to include the main features enumerated in the recommendations which follow.
In order to encourage the maintenance of woodlots by private owners and the practice of forestry in the management of such woodlots, the enactment of legislation along the following lines is recommended:

1. The owner of any land which is occupied by a natural or planted growth of trees, or by both, may apply to the State Board of Forestry, in manner and form to be prescribed by it, to have such land separately classified for taxation, but in no case shall more than 40 acres owned by one person be so classified.

2. Each application for such classification should be accompanied by a plat and description of the land and such other information as the State Board of Forestry may require.

3. As soon as practicable after the receipt of an application, the State Board of Forestry shall cause an examination to be made of the land for the purpose of determining whether or not it is of a suitable character to be so classified.

4. If the decision of the State Board of Forestry is in the affirmative, it shall submit to the owner a plan for the future management of the land and trees, and shall certify to the town clerk that the land has been separately classified for taxation in accordance with the provisions of the act.

5. So long as the land so classified is maintained as a woodlot and the owner faithfully complies with all provisions of the act and instructions of the State Board of Forestry, it shall be assessed at not to exceed $10 per acre and taxed annually on that basis. In fixing the value of the land for assessment the assessor shall in no case take into account the value of the trees growing thereon.

6. When the owner desires to cut any of the trees he shall give the State Board of Forestry at least thirty days' notice prior to the time he desires to begin cutting, so that it may have ample opportunity to make an examination of the land and designate for the owner the kind and number of trees, if any, most suitable to be cut for the purpose for which they are desired. The cutting and removal of the trees so designated to be in accordance with the instructions of the State Board of Forestry.

7. After such trees are cut and before their removal from the land, the owner shall be required to make an accurate measurement or count of all of them or of their products, and file with the town clerk a true and accurate return, under oath or affirmation, of such measurement or count and of the variety and value of the material so cut.

8. Before any of the material so cut is removed from the land the
owner shall pay to the proper county officer an amount equal to 10 per cent of the stumpage value of the timber, provided, however, that any material which is actually used for domestic purposes by the owner or his tenant shall not be subject to such tax.

9. To knowingly file a false return as to the quantity, variety, or value of the material cut, or failure to comply with the provisions of the act or with any instruction of the State Board of Forestry, shall be deemed sufficient ground for canceling the certificate separately classifying the land for taxation.

The aim of the legislation above proposed is to encourage and make it profitable for the small owner, especially the farmer in the agricultural districts, to utilize a part of his land for the production of wood and timber, thereby affording him a ready supply of wood material for domestic use, as well as a shelterbelt for his other land. All the necessary administrative details have not been covered in the recommendations, the purpose being to point out the essential features of any tax law which is designed to encourage the growth and maintenance of woodlots. The number of acres owned by one person which may be separately classified for taxation is limited in order to prevent an owner from resorting to the law for speculative purposes. It is believed that the amount specified will be sufficient for all ordinary purposes. While it is suggested that the tax which is to be paid for all timber cut and sold by the owner shall be collected by the local authorities, it is not material, except from the standpoint of local revenue, whether this suggestion is followed or not. It may be preferable for the state to collect such tax as it is suggested shall be done in the case of timber cut from privately-owned forests.

Private Forests Without Limitation as to Area.

In the northern counties there is a great area of essentially forest soil, land which will probably never be susceptible of any use other than the growing of timber. In order to encourage the owners of such land to hold it as a forest property and to apply practical forestry to its management, the enactment of legislation that will include the following provisions is recommended:

1. That any land in the state suitable for timber growing and occupied by a natural or planted growth of trees, or both combined, may be separately classified for taxation; and that when so classified the land and the wood and timber thereon shall be taxed in accordance with the plan set forth in paragraphs 5 and 6.
2. That the determination of the question as to whether or not any land is suitable for timber growing shall rest with the State Board of Forestry.

3. That all applications to have land so classified shall be made to the State Board of Forestry, in manner and form to be prescribed by it, and shall be accompanied by a description and plat of the land and such other information as said Board may require.

4. That if the decision of the State Board of Forestry is in the affirmative, it shall submit to the owner a plan for the future management of the land and trees, and shall certify to the State Tax commission that the land has been separately classified for taxation in accordance with the provisions of the act.

5. That when so classified the land shall be separately taxed annually; that in making the assessment the land shall not be valued at more than $1 per acre; and that in fixing the valuation the assessor shall in no case take into account the value of the growing timber.

6. That whenever any timber or wood is cut from such land the owner shall be required to pay an amount equal to 10 per cent of the gross value on the stump of the wood and timber so cut.

7. That the owner be required before the timber is removed from the land to file with the State Tax commission, a true and accurate return under oath or affirmation of the variety and gross amount and value of all material which has been cut.

8. That the assessment and collection of such tax on the timber shall be in the absolute control of the state, leaving the tax on the land where it is now.

9. That the management of lands so classified under the act shall be subject to such supervision as the State Board of Forestry may deem necessary to protect the public interest, and to insure the proper management of such land and timber.

10. That failure on the part of the owner to comply with any provision of the act or to carry out any instruction of the State Board of Forestry shall be sufficient cause to cancel the certificate separately classifying the lands for taxation.

11. That where a certificate separately classifying land is canceled for either of the causes mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the owner of the land covered by such canceled certificate shall be required to pay an amount equal to what the total taxes under the general property tax would have been for the period of time the land was so separately classified.
12. That when there is reason to believe that a return is incorrect or where the owner has failed to make a return, the State Tax commission may require from the owner such further information as may be deemed necessary; and for the purpose of ascertaining the correctness of such return or for the purpose of making a return where none has been made by the owner, the State Tax commission shall be authorized to designate an agent to examine any books or papers bearing upon the matter and to determine the actual amount and gross stumpage value of the timber cut, which determination shall be the basis for fixing the amount of taxes the owner shall pay.

Conditions in Wisconsin indicate that a tax on the yield, together with a nominal annual tax on the land, is superior to any of the various tax laws which have from time to time been proposed. It would be far more equitable, however, if no annual tax were levied on the land, or if levied, to allow the aggregate amount of such taxes together with interest to be deducted from the tax on the yield when it is levied. But if such a tax were not collected annually, it is probable that the local revenues might be so reduced as to seriously interfere with the fiscal affairs of the community. It is not recommended that the annual tax with interest be deducted from the yield tax at the time it is levied, because it would be simpler, administratively, to offset such annual tax by reducing the rate of the yield tax.

The maximum value at which land shall be assessed is fixed at $1 per acre. In many of the towns cut-over lands are now assessed at that rate. However, in others the rate is much higher, and for that reason it may be preferable to increase the maximum value to $2 per acre. The self-assessment feature of the proposed law is made with a view of lessening the cost of administration. It would be far more desirable for the state authorities to check in every instance the return of the owner for the purpose of verifying the amount and value of the material cut, and it is recommended that this be done if the cost of such verification is not prohibitive.

If the foregoing plan for assessing woodlots and private forests is adopted, some provision should be made for returning all or a part of the revenues collected by the state authorities to the counties and towns entitled thereto.

What the State Should Do.

Even though a satisfactory adjustment is made of the tax laws so far as they relate to timber, it is none too certain that it would result
in promoting the growth of timber by private capital on a very extensive scale. Certainly such remedial legislation can not be expected to assure the future generation of a sufficient timber supply. While a consideration of state forest reserves may be somewhat irrelevant to the subject of forest taxation, it nevertheless deserves mention here because it is believed that only through direct state action can there be a reasonable assurance of a sufficient supply of timber in the future. The state has already made a splendid start in the establishment of forest reserves, and it is to be hoped their extension will be rapidly carried forward. There are extensive tracts of land in the northern part of the state that are essentially forest lands, and it is feared that unless the state takes up the work of reforesting them they will continue as they are now, unproductive wastes.

Of the various plans which might be adopted for the acquirement of these lands by the state, the simplest, least expensive, and most effective method will be for the state to purchase them in the open market. The present plan for raising money with which to purchase forest reserve land, although an excellent one, has its limitations. It will hardly furnish all the funds that will be needed if the state is to do all that it can and should do in reclaiming these lands from their present idleness. By all means the state should immediately provide by appropriation such additional funds as may be needed in carrying forward this important work. Not only should waste and cut-over lands be purchased, but also lands chiefly valuable for the growing of timber which contain a growth of young or partly mature trees. The purchase of restocked lands would make it possible for the state forest reserves to be revenue producers practically from the beginning.

The perpetuation of a timber supply in the state is so fundamentally important to the general welfare of the people as to make it necessary for the state to at once take affirmative action along the lines suggested, and not rely to any great extent upon private enterprise. At present the great tracts of land in the northern part of the state that are now unproductive, but that should be under forest cover, can be purchased by the state at a comparatively low figure. The longer they remain in their present condition, the more difficult it will be to make them productive as a forest property because the fires which are continually running over them are gradually but surely so impoverishing the soil as to eventually make them valueless for any purpose.