



# *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

## *Department of Conservation* *Natural Resources* *Insect Pest Control*

*15 Ashburton Place, Boston 8*

September 15, 1954

Memo to: Director Kenney  
From: H.L. Ramsey, Chief Superintendent  
Subject: Report on Bureau of Insect Pest Control

With apologies for the delay, I am now submitting an overall report of the Bureau, as requested by you several months ago.

Chapter 132, G.L. specifies the duties, supervisory authority and procedures under which we operate. It originally was based on the control of two insects specified as "public nuisances", gypsy moth and the brown-tail moth. In recent years, however, several amendments have been made whereby we now have duties which in no way can be considered as "foliage pests". In the course of amending, several necessary changes were overlooked with the result that we now have a series of contradictions. We shall endeavor to present for your consideration shortly a revision, especially of Chapter 761, so that we can at least have a definite procedure for Dutch elm disease control.

Referring again to our diversified duties, we have now become a bureau involved in activities encompassing agriculture and public health. The wood tick is a menace to public health inasmuch as it is a carrier of a communicable disease - it certainly is in no way connected with foliage destruction. Dutch elm disease and white pine blister rust were in the agriculture department for years - suddenly transferred to us. Japanese beetle was a federal project for many years - also suddenly transferred to us. The most recent addition is poison ivy - I contend that poison ivy and wood tick should be under public health - they have no connection with foliage destruction. However the point in question is that while all these items have been legislated to us the same legislation made no mention of additional funds nor personnel. As a result, we have several problems, some of which seem possible of slow correction, others in which we have made no apparent headway.

Personnel. I had high hopes that the recent departmental reclassification survey would put the division superintendents in a salary grade commensurate with the many added duties now required of them. Even though Commissioner Lyman requested an upgrading of at least 8 points, the final result was 2 points, as my division men are now in the same category as elevator operators, golf green keepers, chauffeur for Registrar King, etc. Definitely no boost to their morale. I have been informed that apparently my men "were not very good salesmen in selling themselves". I certainly didn't realize, nor did the men, that they were supposed to be high-pressure salesmen in addition to everything else. Would like to discuss this problem with you later as I would like to know if I was partially at fault in this sales angle. As you know from contact with these fellows in recent months they now have to be technicians in several fields and their work is not confined to riding around enjoying the scenery.

We have been shorthanded at the supervisory level for some time, but as you know, we are asking for additional employees in the next budget request. In the meantime I believe if the proper official took the trouble to follow the question through, Blair and Laverdure could be made permanent at once. They have been "Division Superintendents - Temporary" for over 3 years. Their performance has been very satisfactory - they are within the authority of Chapter 597 so why can't we have their permanent rating from Personnel?

Temporary assignments as to clerical help have also been a hindrance within the office. As you probably are aware I have had at least ten girls in the past 5 years - clerk-typist, temporary. Based on the size of the budget I am handling and the numerous records that must be kept I hope it is more than conceit that prompts me to say that there should be at least one qualified clerk in this office on a permanent basis to whom, once trained, I could turn over all the detail work. I spend too much time breaking in new girls, am still personally doing too many minor services that should be handled by a clerk, and am still answering correspondence in long hand due to lack of a short-hand stenographer. Until the office is staffed on a business-like basis, we can hardly expect business-like procedure, beyond the office.

Although a definite procedure of aerial spray programs was agreed upon several years ago (approved by state and federal agencies) attempts to change the procedure have been made, and the recent "Regional" program sponsored by the Governor actually obliterates the original program, despite the fact that it is still the most sensible and most economical concerted action ever taken against the Gypsy Moth in this state. If the original program was left alone we could prepare our schedules more in advance and have an opportunity to rehearse and study them, correct any errors, and definitely assign each individual's part in advance - not the day before a project starts. Even were we not short-handed these last-minute changes affect any careful planning. We are engaged in 4 fields of work-forestry, insects, agriculture, and public health. None of our division superintendents has sufficient time to do a good

job on more than one phase at a time - as a result all other activities have to be ignored for the time being. This makes it even more imperative that good planning is ready. No business or industry can succeed without a coordinated program - neither can a state agency. It is my contention that this Bureau must also have a definite goal and a definite approach. The top supervision must know where it is going, have a definite route to follow, a trained chain of command and sufficient employees to carry out the commands. One glance at the foregoing and you can see that this Bureau is behind the eight-ball. Although some improvement is in sight the Bureau Chief is not always certain of the goal until the last moment; last minute changes are required on previously agreed plans, and not having sufficient full-time employees we are always faced with the emergency hiring of greenhelp. I purposely omitted any mention of the "chain of Command" - you are aware of our difficulty along that line quite recently, a difficulty I hope can be ironed out between ourselves in the very near future. I feel that it was largely due to the outside interference and can be eliminated for the future. I think both you and I have similar ideas as to guaranteeing that the "chain of command" is to be just that and very shortly. That will straighten out the present personnel problem at the supervisory level, with the labor question to solve a little at a time.

Legislative: As I mentioned previously there are several discrepancies now existing in the pest laws, due to hurried amendments. These will have to be taken up individually and new legislation prepared. At present I intend to concentrate on the Dutch elm disease (Chapter 761) and we shall seek your advice when we get our ideas consolidated. But even at the expense of wasting some of your time now, I should like to mention why, and how seriously some of the present law is handicapping us. There was a time when the title of Division Superintendent carried at least a certain amount of dignity. During the spray programs now, for example, those men become laborers. This is because we are understaffed with supervisors, as well as having insufficient trained workers. We borrow office workers for one of the very important phases of the program - and as a result, those office workers become for the time being, equal in authority to division superintendents. Despite the fact that these employees are thoroughly familiar with the duties imposed upon them, and have done an excellent job, their appearance in the field with supervisory authority has its effect on the morale of our Division men - it also leaves a mighty poor impression on the public.

The several discrepancies and contradictions in our moth laws cause several interpretations of how to proceed, who has authority, etc. This alone is confusing but our big problem is in the towns who have no intention of complying with the laws. When our Division men attempt to secure even slight cooperation they are laughed at. We have had several instances where officials have publicly dared the department to enforce the laws. This attitude on the part of some officials has gradually become known to tree wardens and moth superintendents and they, in turn, are tending toward independent procedures. We have actual occasions where town appropriations are illegally expended and any protest on our part reveals that town officials are in approval of the moth superintendents actions. Lack of any authority, even though granted by law, is slowly breeding a "defeatist" attitude in every Division man. We are supposed to supervise all pest work for the good of all people in all towns, not

just for a selected few. If the existing law does not apply to every city and town it needs either correction or repeal. Our division men can then operate efficiently with legal authority, regardless of what city or town they are in. They should be more than just titled figureheads, but our present reputation will soon be undermined. To prevent that we are going to concentrate on one revision of the law for this year.

After all this preamble I can sum up the biggest problems for correction as follows: I firmly believe that this Bureau should,

1. Have eight (8) more Division Superintendents
2. Have a permanent stenographer and a permanent clerk
3. Have the classification of "Tree Worker", LS9 for our Dutch elm disease crew. (Public Works and M.D.C. employees are so classified.)
4. Be relieved of jurisdiction over White Pine Blister Rust, wood ticks and poison ivy.
5. Immediately be covered by a correction of existing laws.

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