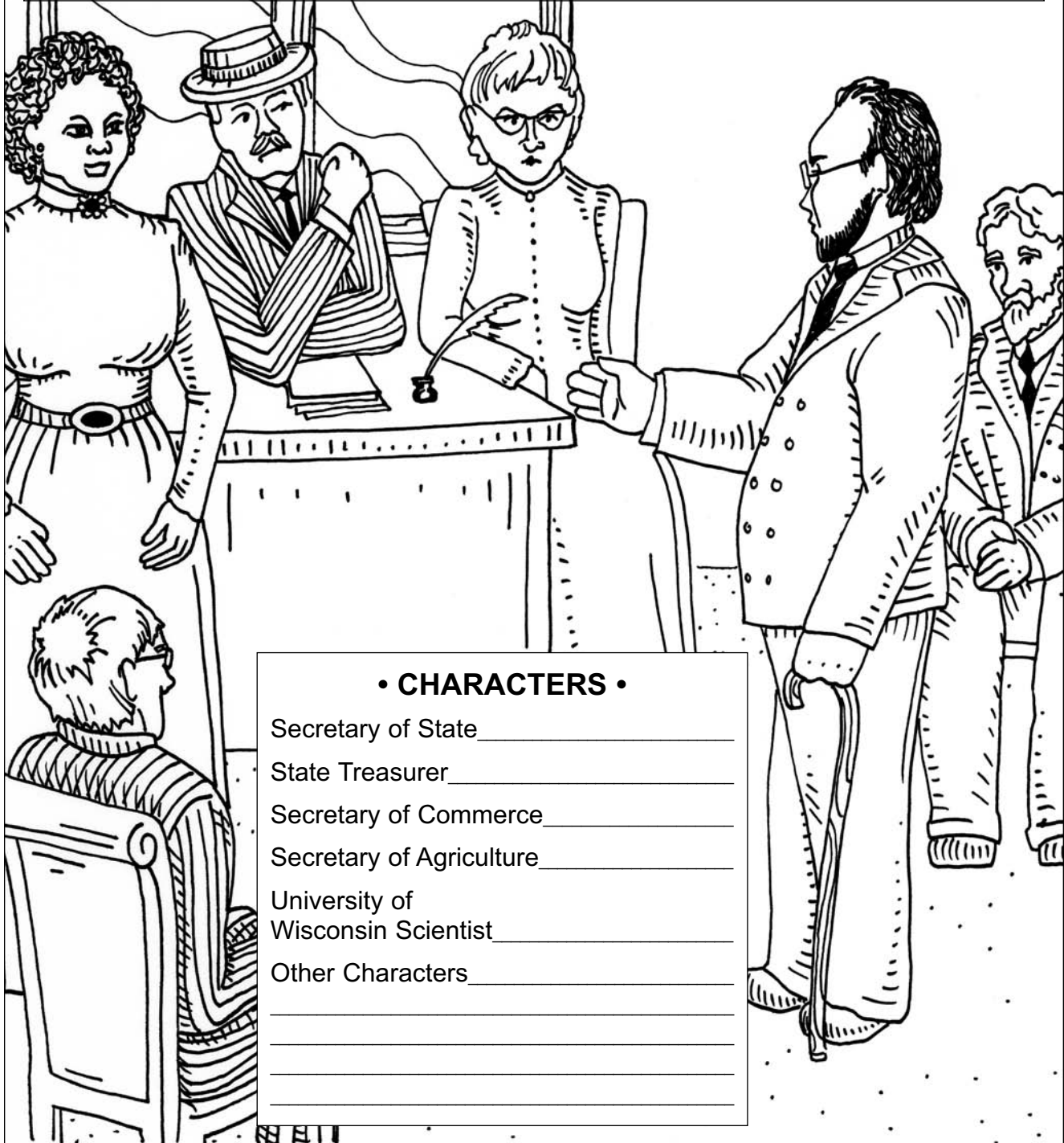


# SCENE 4 SCRIPT

AFTER THE CUTOVER *(Debating the Future of the Northwoods)*

*It is 1900 and a very important meeting is taking place at the State Capitol Building in Madison, Wisconsin. The State's government leaders have been brought together to debate the future of northern Wisconsin. Pay close attention to the solutions proposed to help Wisconsin recover after the logging and wildfires that took place during the 1800s.*



## • CHARACTERS •

Secretary of State \_\_\_\_\_

State Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary of Commerce \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary of Agriculture \_\_\_\_\_

University of  
Wisconsin Scientist \_\_\_\_\_

Other Characters \_\_\_\_\_

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# SCENE 4 SCRIPT

**Secretary of State**.....Good evening to all of you. As you already know, I have brought us together today to discuss the future of northern Wisconsin.

The 18 northernmost counties of Wisconsin make up one third of the state's land cover. Over the last century, loggers have been removing trees and selling the lumber to the major cities of the Midwest. The removal of trees has happened very fast, with very few large trees left behind. Within the next 10 years, 90% of this area will have been cleared of trees. We will soon refer to this area as "The Cutover."

As lumber mills close and the cleared lands are left behind, the lands can be abandoned or settled. What have you to say on this matter?

**State Treasurer** .....First I would like to say thanks to our Secretary of State for bringing us all together. I would like to add that the money that the State of Wisconsin gets from the taxes we collect on lumber mills has already started to decrease. Once the remaining forests are cleared, the money will completely disappear.

**Secretary of Commerce** .....Oh how the State Treasurer counts his nickels! Always worried about how much money you have tucked away.

**State Treasurer** .....Well, I might also be worried about how we will pay the salary of the Secretary of Commerce next year.

**Secretary of Commerce** .....Well said.

**Secretary of Agriculture** .....Gentlemen. Without a vision, neither of you will have a nickel to fight over. As Secretary of Agriculture, I have come today with just such a vision – northern Wisconsin is going to be a great agricultural country!

**Secretary of State**.....That sounds like a very common sense idea. The area is mostly cleared of trees. Most of the people moving to Wisconsin have experience farming. Farming has been very successful in the southern half of the state.

**University of Wisconsin Scientist**...An appealing idea, but there are a few environmental problems.

**Secretary of Commerce** .....Leave it to a university scientist to give us a speech on the environment.

**University of Wisconsin Scientist**...My dear Secretary of Commerce. You deal in the affairs of people and see only that. I only suggest that you cannot separate the actions of people from the laws of nature.

# SCENE 4 SCRIPT

**Secretary of State**.....Gentlemen. If you would like to talk philosophy, you can come by my house for dinner later. For now, let us stick to the matter at hand.

**University of Wisconsin Scientist**...As I was saying. It is my understanding that the soils of northern Wisconsin are forest soils of a cool climate. They are more similar to the soils of Canada than they are to the soils of southern Wisconsin. To me, this means that farmers will not only have to deal with shorter growing seasons, but also with different soil conditions.

**Secretary of Agriculture** .....With all due respect, I have information that suggests otherwise. A scientific study from your very own university concluded that, and I quote, “the greater part of the land is fair to excellent in quality and suited for the highest agricultural development.”

**University of Wisconsin Scientist**...I am familiar with the study, but it is incomplete. We estimate that 45% of the soils in the cutover are good for farming. This can be compared to southern Wisconsin, in which 90% of the soils are good. This is not to mention the large number of tree stumps and rocks that would need to be removed to create fields.

**Secretary of Commerce**.....Now I’ve already had conversations with people on the ground up north and they are a lot more optimistic than our fellow scientist here. I talked to a land dealer in Lincoln County. He stated, and I quote, “Any man who buys a farm...stands absolutely no chance of losing.”

I also talked to lumberman John G. Owen about the rocks and stumps that you mentioned and he said the following, “There is some good hard work in prospect before a man gets the land cleared up, but it pays him a big profit in the end.”

**University of Wisconsin Scientist**...It seems that I am outnumbered. I will just add that some of my colleagues are warning that the cutover is on its way to becoming an environmental disaster. Piles of limbs and dead trees have been left on the landscape. We are already seeing terrible fires. I do not need to remind you of the disaster at Peshtigo. There is evidence that the fires burn so hot that they destroy the very soils that you wish to grow crops on.

**Secretary of Agriculture** .....I say we take our chances. Those fires are clearing land for farms.

# SCENE 4 SCRIPT

- Secretary of State**.....With respect to the opinion of our fellow scientist, we all understand that your concerns are real, but I must agree with the Secretary of Agriculture. It seems that farming is our best option. The trees will take too much time to grow back. We need an industry that can provide money and jobs now, not in 100 years.
- State Treasurer** .....I would have to agree with the Secretary of State on this matter. We need a new industry to put people to work and provide for our growing state. This needs to happen now before we hear that the last tree has been cut down.
- University of Wisconsin Scientist**...I see that we have made our decision. I would just like to be on record as saying that I believe that the northern Wisconsin is best for trees, not corn and beans.
- Secretary of State**.....Your opinion is noted.
- Secretary of Commerce** .....We will have to get people moving up there as soon as possible. We'll need to make a brochure that shows how much opportunity exists for farming in the north.
- Secretary of Agriculture** .....We can use the newspapers to get the word out now. I can see it already. The headline will read "The agricultural resources of northern Wisconsin will equal any part of the state." Or even better, "Northern Wisconsin is bound to be the richest part of the state."

• END SCENE 4 •

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What happened to many of the trees in northern Wisconsin during the 1800s?  
 What happened to the lumber mills in northern Wisconsin after all of the trees were cut down?  
 What happened to the land after all of the trees were cut down?  
 Why did people want to farm the land after the trees were gone?  
 What do you think happened to many of the farms in northern Wisconsin?