

DUMP THE DOYLE

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The Doyle log rule is a time-honored tradition that is best honored in memory, not in practice. Arguments such as “everyone understands the shortcomings” and “small logs should be undervalued will not hold water in today’s market. Everyone from the landowner to the mill suffers from the Doyle’s well documented inadequacies.

Suppose you walk into my bank with your hard-earned money in your hand. You want to make a deposit, so I’m glad to help. The rules of my bank, though, are a little strange. For every dollar bill you deposit, I’ll credit your account for a quarter. For every five dollar bill you get \$2.50. For every ten dollar bill you get \$7. For every twenty dollar bill you get \$15. And for every one-hundred dollar bill you get \$80. I’m happy to do business with you.

But you ask “Why don’t I get one dollar credit for every dollar deposited? Why are you shortchanging me?” I have two standard answers. First, I say “Small denomination bills cost as much to handle as large denomination bills, but they aren’t worth as much.” This is absolutely true. “So, I have to discount the small bills to make up for the difficulty in handling and to encourage deposits in large denomination bills.”

If this answer doesn’t work and you still want to know why a dollar isn’t a dollar, I fall back on the clincher, reason number two. “Look, what’s your problem? I’ve always done it this way and everyone understands it. Why should by be unhappy when no one else minds?”

Smiling now with the light of understanding, you leave my bank until you have enough cash to make another deposit. Next time don’t ask silly questions.

You have just been Doyled. I’m happy to give you a quarter for every dollar you give me, but you might not be pleased. You might not even entirely trust me since I told you dollar isn’t a dollar.

Nobody would fall for this, right? Well, we do, and we do it almost every day.

The Doyle log rule understates the board foot contents of common log sizes by one-half compared to the International log rule. The usual statement is “The Doyle log rule underscales small logs and overscales large logs.” The “small” log referred to here has an 8 inch scaling diameter. It takes a 30 inch scaling diameter before a log becomes “large.” Which size log do you see most often?

But, suppose you sell your logs to my wood yard on Doyle scale. I just paid you for one-half the volume the logs may really contain. So, am I happy? Not really, because I take the logs to a mill where they give me the same deal I just gave you. Clever, eh?

The mill now turns quarters back into dollars, showing a consistent overrun. The profit margin on turning quarters into dollars, when they were dollars to begin with, is assured. Any mill that can't do this trick is a poor mill indeed. So, even though you're unhappy and I'm unhappy, the mill manager must be happy. Right?

Wrong. Production control and evaluation is based on erroneous information. All manner of conversions and adjustments must be invoked to explain the mysterious quarter to dollar transformation. Sleight-of-hand makes process control difficult.

Everyone has based their work on false information. We all have to pretend that what we know is wrong is actually right, or the whole system comes apart. What if the landowner wants a real statement of his wood volume? What if the logger wants to really know what he delivers to me? What if I want recognition for my contribution to the enterprise? What if the mill manager decides magic is not part of the production process? Any break in the chain brings the whole system crashing down.

The Doyle log rule is a house of cards built on sand. Mr. Doyle's notion of log volume should be junked, and the sooner the better.