

Radio and Aviation for Fire Fighting

THERE have been installed during the present season, in the west, three wireless telephone stations as links in the Government Forestry system of fire fighting and survey work. The opening of the Winnipeg station, which is located in the Customs Building, along with the forestry branch is the latest of the three wireless stations now operating in the Province of Manitoba, the others being at Norway House and Victoria Beach. The installation has been effected by the Royal Canadian Corps of Signallers, who are doing all the work for the Canadian Air Board and the Dominion Forestry department.

Major W. A. Steel, who has charge of the radio work stated the wireless installation was primarily carried out in order to speed up the work of fire fighting. Speed was an essential thing both in fighting and controlling fires. As a result of the radio communication, the time required for communication between Col. H. L. Stevenson, district forest inspector in Winnipeg, and Norway House, has been reduced from a matter of ten days or a fortnight to the same number of minutes.

Provided a financial appropriation is secured, Major Steel said he would also like to equip all the aeroplanes in Manitoba with wireless sets. A system like this is in operation in Alberta, where in addition to the ground stations, all the aeroplanes are fitted with radio sets, so that the pilot can keep in touch with his home station

all the time to report fires and call for assistance if necessary. These aeroplanes cover a patrol of approximately 350 miles. The Manitoba system and the Alberta radio system are in touch with each other, said Major Steel, through the stations at Victoria Beach and High River, a distance of approximately 750 miles. Any of the three Manitoba stations will be able to keep in touch with Alberta, but for all practical purposes only the two stations mentioned will be used for this communication.

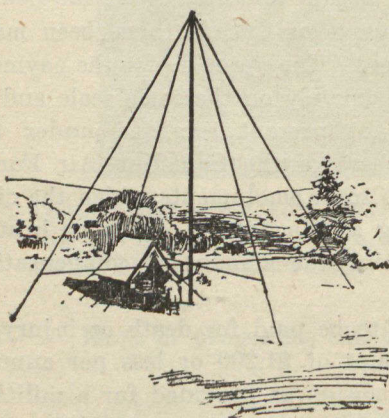
A system of wireless has been developed in Ontario for the Canadian Air Board, but has not yet been connected with the forestry department, although this will likely be carried out shortly. The great difficulty according to Major Steel, is in securing men experienced not merely in sending and receiving wireless messages, but in getting those conversant with the type of machine used. One of the features connected with the inauguration of the radio stations in Manitoba, is the daily weather report received by Col. Stevenson from Norway House, which enables him to keep in close touch with the fire situation and possible development.

Installation of these radio stations have greatly facilitating the locating and checking of forest fires, according to Major Basil N. Hobbs, Superintendent of the Victoria Beach air station. As an example of this, five forest fires which were started by lightning in the vicinity of Norway House during the latter part of August were located by one of the aeroplane scouts in less than three hours after they had started. By the same evening fire fighting gangs had been dispatched by aeroplane to the several points and all the fires were extinguished before they had time to gain any headway.

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