

Committee on Forests and Waterways made a partial investigation into the question of prevention of fires in these districts at the last session of Parliament, the record of which will be available as a basis for further work. It appears that the Transcontinental Commissioners have been giving attention to the subject in conjunction with the Provincial Governments, with, so far as is known, fairly satisfactory results. I understand also that the Government of Quebec has recently had the matter under serious consideration. The investigation to which I referred was necessarily somewhat cursory, and the matter should be systematically and thoroughly gone into in order to make it absolutely certain that the same unfortunate results which have followed railway building in other forest districts will not follow there also.

In referring to this matter I speak with perfect frankness. As between Governments and political parties and public men, if there has been neglect we have all been to blame. What is required now is direct and cordial co-operation between Dominion and Provincial authorities.

Lands—Agriculture is the foundation of all real and enduring progress on the part of Canada. It is one of the striking facts of the present social condition in the United States and in Canada that, with a few exceptions, those men who, by reason of strength of character and intellectual pre-eminence, take the lead in public affairs, in professional life and in scholarship are, as a rule, removed not more than one or, at most, two generations from ancestors who tilled the soil.

The possession of a preponderating rural population having the virtues and strength of character bred only among those who follow agricultural life, is the only sure guarantee of our national future. The possession of such a population depends upon the maintenance of the fertility of the soil.

The idea that such fertility will endure without the most anxious and strenuous care is contradicted by the well-known facts of history. The countries from which Xerxes led his hosts to the attack of Greece were highly populous. Persia, Babylonia, Palestine and surrounding countries were the homes of dense populations of many millions, and all our information about them leads to the conclusion that the inhabitants lived in a high degree of comfort. To-day these countries are comparative deserts. Egypt, the ancient store-house of the world, became largely barren, and remained so for centuries, with its rural population sunk in wretchedness and poverty, until British engineering skill and administrative ability gave it a new lease of life. Spain, under the Saracens, is declared by high authority to have been more