

Some New Methods Required for Fighting Forest Fires

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I HAVE READ with deep interest the articles which have appeared from time to time in your valued publication with regard to forest fire fighting and protection. I understand that through the efforts of the Canadian Forestry Association the leading papers in Canada have been endeavouring in their editorials to draw the attention of the people of Canada to the deplorable losses which they have suffered during the last few weeks from forest fires.

My information is, however, that if the number of rangers available today was quadrupled we should be no further ahead in our efforts to keep down or eliminate forest fires. I believe that by a co-ordination of aeroplanes, radio telephone and portable forest fire pumps, that within a few years, the large forest fires will be things of the past. We have been given the following instance in which rangers needed supplementing: In one of the recent fires in Quebec, fire fighters sent back reports to the main station that they had succeeded in controlling a large fire. This report was accepted. A few days afterwards an aeroplane was sent out to examine the situation and it was then found that the fire had spread over a range of hills and had developed over a tremendous area. This, of course, was not due to any fault of the fire fighters, but owing to the smoke haze they were unable to see what was happening at some distance from them. In this case the aeroplane was able to leave four men on the spot with their provisions and made several return trips loaded in a like manner, the return journey in each case taking forty minutes. The same trip covered in the ordinary way by canoe would take well over a day.

With the aeroplanes the rangers can be supplied with provisions and other necessities, from time to time, and information can be given them regarding the general direction and characteristics of the fire which they are fighting. The Pulp and Paper Companies in the Province of Quebec value their timber assets at many hundreds of millions of dollars, and it seems to me that an efficient aircraft organization, working in conjunction with the rangers, would be a very cheap form of insurance. It is perhaps hardly necessary to point out that the way to success in this direction depends absolutely upon the ground organization.

In regard to radios; it would appear that a central receiving and sending station, with a range of approximately 250 miles, would meet most needs. The aeroplane would also be equipped with a sending and receiving apparatus which would also have a long range. The rangers on the ground could then be supplied with small portable receiving and sending sets having a range of, say, 45 miles. With this equipment I feel that the rangers would be able to attack a forest fire in a most aggressive manner, and they would have exact information, from time to time, as to the result of their efforts and the general movement of the fire.

The great advantage, however, that would accrue from the use of aeroplanes would be that fires would be located before they had reached any considerable magnitude and operations could be immediately carried out to locate and subdue the conflagration.

I put forward these proposals with a certain amount of diffidence and would like to have the opinion of your readers on the points raised herein.



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