

tario takes no such precautions, although representations to that effect have been energetically made to the Government year after year. The settler is allowed to burn precisely as carelessness or ignorance may dictate and annual holocausts will remain possible until that "liberty" is sensibly curtailed.

The settlers going into Northern Ontario have a perfect right to demand that their lives and property shall be guarded by the Government to the best of its power. The recent fires doubtless helped to clear some land for agriculture, but for every acre so assisted, probably four or five acres of non-agricultural tree-growing land were affected disastrously. Certainly the danger of future fires has increased, as the areas of fire-killed timber widen, so that in a year or two, a mass of windfallen debris will present a perfect target for fresh conflagrations. If forest protection was needed early in 1916, to prevent the tragedy that has now occurred, it will be needed vastly more to offset a recurrence on a far worse scale in years to come.

If evidence were needed that the forest protection system of Ontario requires a far-reaching and determined overhauling, that evidence will be found in a perusal of the 1915 report of the Ontario Department of Lands, Forests, and Mines. Both by what the report states and by what it neglects to state, may be judged the wisdom of the Canadian Forestry Association's efforts to cause a re-organization of the Ontario ranger service, and place forest guarding among the creditable performances of the provincial government.

Two or three facts stand forth clearly: Neither the Ontario Government, the wood-using industries, nor the general public have more than a remote knowledge of the annual losses from forest fires. Only in patches of the forested area, most-

ly along the railways, is any consistent effort made to more than note the **number** of fires. The character of the timber destroyed, its acreage, etc., are immeasurably the most important features and under the present system are not reported on by the rangers and supervisors in anything even approaching an adequate way.

Why This Difference?

The Ontario limit holders are paying for their fire ranging considerably more than twice as much per acre as the limit holders included in the St. Maurice or Lower Ottawa Protective Associations of Quebec, although the protection afforded the latter is superior.

It is a well-established fact that railways, taken as a whole, are no longer the main source of timber losses throughout the Dominion. This is, to a very large extent, directly due to the increased efficiency of the railway fire protective organization, working under the regulations of the Railway Commission. These regulations impose stringent requirements in the direction of fire protective appliances on locomotives, control of right-of-way clearing operations, patrol of forest sections, action by all regular railway employees in reporting and extinguishing fires, etc. As a result of all this, both the number of fires caused by locomotives and employees and the amount of property destroyed is decreasing rapidly.

Having regard to these facts, note the representations of the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests, which should be an accurate and complete mirror of forest losses and their causes during the year under consideration, 1915.

Out of a total of 430 fires of all kinds, reported to the Department by its own patrolmen and rangers in 1915, 317 fires were reported by rangers patrolling just two railways