

## THE FOREST FIRE LOSS.

The Dominion of Canada suffered a loss of fully \$10,000,000 through forest fires during 1915.

It is obvious that destruction of such dimensions cannot continue indefinitely. New growth does not equal more than a minor portion of the amount abandoned to smoke nor do the iniquitous effects of the 1915 fires end with an estimate of ten millions of cash. The burned areas of this year too often mean a second fire in a few months or years with the ultimate vicious consequences to the productivity of the soil and the ruin of young growth and seed trees. It is fair to say, therefore, says the Canadian Forestry Journal, that the estimated ten million dollars loss set down for 1915 is only the beginning of the bill chalked against the country.

That ten thousand forest fires occur every year in Canada, or over 1,400 a month between snow and snow, is an estimate based upon actual figures for the various provinces. Some of these fires are small and do little harm. Others denude large areas of magnificent growth.

Statistics regarding forest fire losses in Canada are complete only in relation to localities. So long as some of the provinces compile no estimate of their forest destruction annually, the total for the country may only be approximated. It is an unfortunate habit of some of those responsible for forest guarding to make their announcements in pleasant generalities, giving the public the idea that forest protection is amply looked after by perfected fire ranging systems, and requires no further public agitation and no radical house-cleaning of official attitudes.

### AN INDICTMENT OF NEGLECT.

The plain fact is that a ten-million dollar annual loss in standing timber and young growth makes an excellent testimony to the half-thoroughness of forest protection organizations in any and every part of Canada. No one will dispute that Quebec and British Columbia have made remarkable progress in building up forest-guarding systems, appointing conscientious overseers, and striking at the evil from every angle within their reach, but the fresh strength required for further rapid progress must to a large extent come from an awakened public. No minister, however determined, can plan and spend very far ahead of Public Opinion. And one must admit, in considering the forest legislation and administration of Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia, etc., that the departments dealing with forest matters in those provinces have proceeded probably faster than public sentiment urged.

A telegraphic despatch makes the following statement:

"Throughout the Dominion last summer forest fires caused losses valued at no less than \$9,536,867. The loss by forest fires is considerably lower this year than it was previously. Quebec province during the eight first months of 1915 lost through forest fires \$2,254,115, which is a good deal lower than the losses in Ontario, where, although the forest areas are considerably smaller than Quebec's, the losses by fire reach the figure of \$3,694,823. British Columbia with its vast forests, only lost \$913,125, due largely to its forest fire-fighting organization. The small loss by forest fires in Quebec province is attributed to the protective

measures employed by the government to prevent, fight and control fires."

### ONTARIO SUFFERS.

In Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick and British Columbia 85 per cent. of the losses were due to settlers' fires. Quebec and British Columbia have secured splendid results from their "permit" laws, by which all settlers are obliged to obtain the supervision of a forest ranger before setting out their clearing fires.

Ontario has no such law, and has suffered serious consequences, but it is recognized that the Minister of Lands, Forests and Mines has the problem under consideration, and may evolve an adequate remedy in the near future. New Brunswick has already made a good start in the regulation of settlers' fires, and will presumably spread the plan across the entire province.

Perhaps the outstanding fact of the season's forest destruction is the absence of any serious loss along the lines of railway governed by the Dominion Board of Railway Commissioners and their forest protection regulations. Before the imposition of these laws, the Canadian railways were pointed out as the chief offenders in burning of forests. Now, however, the non-government lines under the Board's control are annually presenting a record of fire immunity which places them permanently among the minor causes of damage to the country's timber. As a matter of fact, only two or three fires of over ten acres in extent were attributed this year to those lines where the system of the Railway Commission has been put completely into effect. On two railways of relatively small mileage, to which the board's regulations do not apply, no less than 200 fires were reported. Many of them were serious in extent, and at least 600,000 acres were burned over by fires due either to locomotives or men travelling along the right of way of these two roads.

### MANITOBA'S LOSS.

Manitoba lost more than \$1,000,000 in damage to mature timber and young growth in 1915. The total area burned over was 800,000 acres, according to official reports thus far received. Final reports will probably show an increased loss.

The fires in Manitoba took place mainly in the latter part of May and the early part of June, and were particularly destructive in the vicinity of the Hudson Bay Railway.

In the Province of Saskatchewan the most destructive fires took place during the same period as in Manitoba, but the fires were confined more to the areas under effective patrol, and the total destruction is not so great. The present figures indicate a total burned area of about 160,000 acres, and a total damage of \$170,000.

In the southern portion of Alberta there has been an exceptional amount of rain throughout the season, so that the fires reported from the region south of the Peace river country and Athabaska Landing are comparatively small in number, and covered only about 25,000 acres, on which the damage is estimated to be about \$1.00 per acre.

### B. C. RAILWAY BELT.

In the valleys of the Peace river, the Lower Athabasca river and the Mackenzie river conditions have, on the other hand, been phenomenally