

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY

BY

The Monetary Times
Printing Company
of Canada, Limited

Publishers also of

"The Canadian Engineer"

Monetary Times

Trade Review and Insurance Chronicle
of Canada

Established 1867

Old as Confederation

JAS. J. SALMOND
President and General Manager

A. E. JENNINGS
Assistant General Manager

JOSEPH BLACK
Secretary

W. A. McKAGUE
Editor

Claim of Forestry in Reconstruction

Canada's Timber Resources Wasted by Carelessness—Need for State Supervision—New Growths Require long Period—Possible to Ensure Successive Crops For All Time to Come—Much of Canada is Fit Only for Forestry

BY ROBSON BLACK,

Secretary, Canadian Forestry Association

OF all the family of natural resources, the forest is the shyest advertiser. This has been damaging enough in a land where public policies go to the pushful. We cannot realize the national seriousness of it, however, until we thoroughly grasp the fact that the perpetuation of forests is primarily state business and that timber conservation in Ontario is more the concern of the Niagara school teacher and the Cobourg grocer than of the "lumber baron."

Canada's forests owe perhaps their greatest grudge to those who posed as their special pleaders. "Exhaustless forests," "forest resources scarcely scratched" have passed current even in this day as intelligent patriotism and what the sales manager calls "ginger talk." Moonbeams make insecure bracing for any reconstruction platform and the moonbeams of reckless estimates of Canada's tree farm have been not only intrinsically foolish but have acted as a standing invitation to nation-wide vandalism.

Happily the orator has been supplanted by the book-keeper and his adding (or rather subtracting) machine. We know now that two-thirds of the forest inheritance of Canada has been swept away by fire, that in the province of British Columbia, holding half the timber of all Canada, more than twenty-two times as much timber has been given into the maw of forest conflagrations than has been used in all the British Columbia mills. Through fairly precise surveys we know now that when the prairie provinces ask for the return of their forest resources from Dominion control they are really asking for a property which, while thickly laden with excellent timber in earlier years, is now so badly wrecked by fire as to cost any governments more than \$700,000 outlay annually for fire protection, with only about \$500,000 coming back in revenues. For long years to come, the prairie provinces forests, growing mostly on non-agricultural soils, cannot turn in a dollar of net revenue but must patiently be nursed back to productive condition.

Only when a detailed survey is made of Ontario forest lands will we know approximately the enormous robberies of timber from the public domain through the agency of forest fires. White pine, our most precious eastern wood, is far along the road to exhaustion, showing a progressively smaller cut from year to year. This is one of the dividends of our amazing disregard for the foundations of national wealth. Here are hundreds of mills with dependent towns and populations, cut off from future sustenance by the same suicidal thrust that severs a province from its vast legacy of white pine. The destructive fires continue. The old-fashioned methods of cutting with no effort to secure new growth—butchering without breeding—have shortened the span of life of some of the largest Ontario mills, as far as white pine is concerned, to 1921 or at most 1925. In face of these alarming facts, the first step has yet to be taken to ascertain methods of rehabilitating the white pine on areas cut over.

Fortunately the carnival of forest fires in Ontario has likely seen its wildest days. A strongly organized forest service with over 1,000 rangers and inspectors, generous expenditures on equipment and modern ideas of management, has been brought into being during the past two years. Nothing more creditable has been done by any Canadian government in such short time, and while it may cost half a million dollars a year it is cheap insurance. Fire protection, however, is but the first step in state supervision of public-owned forests. The interests of the province and of the lumber industry now call for a re-examination of present "regulations" in the light of modern experience, and the employment of technically trained woods managers in all cutting operations on the public domain. This may sound new; it is five hundred years old. It may sound like a fresh dose of state interference, but only this form of state "interference" can possibly rescue private industry from obliteration.

In Quebec, out of sheer necessity, the limit-holders have banded together to form fire protective associations. Their range of holdings now extends over 75,000 square miles, most of which may be said to be guarded by the best methods yet developed. A hydro-aeroplane will be added to central Quebec's fire-detecting machinery next spring; the device is experimental, but great possibilities are before it.

New Brunswick's acceptance of state responsibility in care of its forests has resulted in an excellent organization freed from political control, with a technical forester at its head. Nova Scotia has yet to create a provincial forest service, although the present condition of its timber supply and the disastrous consequences of further delay in methods of rehabilitation render such a public department even more essential than in New Brunswick.

Because much government machinery has been brought into being for the mastery of the forest fire menace, one must not conclude that the plague is subdued. It will not be until the economic and moral senses of the population are considerably honed up by aggressive education. Fire protection, however, is merely the primer stage of forest management, corresponding to the purchase of a sprinkler system in the art of making motor cars. Each is fundamental, like good health and macadam roads. But fire prevention is not sufficient to reconstitute the values in the denuded white pine or spruce forests of Ontario and Quebec. It is not alone sufficient to extend the life of the paper mills beyond the doleful "fifty years" guessed at by so many manufacturers during the recent paper inquiry. It will not arrest the persistent crowding out of the white spruce by the quickly rotting balsam, nor will it maintain the supremacy of the coniferous trees over the less important hardwoods.

This is the field of practical forestry. Once we have insured our forests against loss by fire, and that day is not far distant in some parts of Canada, the urgent duty of