

(3) While the conservation of our actual supply of merchantable timber is important, yet of equally great importance is the treatment of the land, properly described as forest land, upon which there is at present no merchantable timber standing. These lands are many times larger in extent than those occupied by merchantable timber. They are, at present, excepting a few districts like the Algonquin Park, very largely neglected. The presence of a forest growth upon these lands is an absolute essential to the continued prosperity of the country. They conserve and regulate the water supply of our rivers. Without them we shall have, as they now have in many parts of the United States, destructive floods in the spring, followed by low and contaminated water all summer.

Without the protection of the forest growth and vegetable covering upon the soil the regular and even flow of our rivers will be forever a thing of the past. This is not a problem of the far distant future; it is a problem of the present. We have already reached the beginning of the results of deforestation promiscuously carried on. Within a few years we have seen on the St. Lawrence, Niagara, and Ottawa, extremes of high and low water of which we should take notice. The Federal Government is even now constructing extensive conservation works at the head-waters of the Ottawa. Artificial works, however, can only supplement, never supply, the place of nature in the regulation of stream flow.

There are some practical steps which can be taken at once, and which are of the utmost immediate importance. At the last session of Parliament the select standing Committee on Forests and Waterways investigated the question of the flow of water from the east slope of the Rocky mountains through the plains of Alberta and Saskatchewan. It was shown in evidence before the Committee that, to preserve the water-supply of those Provinces, it was necessary to prevent the destruction of the timber upon the east slope of the mountains. It was shown that the destruction of the timber meant the disappearance of the regular water-supply of those Provinces, the agricultural production of which is the pride and the hope of Canada. It was further shown that by proper steps, not only can the present available supply of water be conserved, but that it can be greatly increased. Accordingly, the Committee recommended that practically the whole of the forest lands of the east slope of the mountains, which are still under the control of the Government, be formed into a permanent forest reserve, be placed in charge of a competent warden with a sufficient staff of assistants, and that it be governed by careful and stringent regulations.