

QUEBEC'S SYSTEM OF FUR AND GAME CONTROL

Special Measures Adopted to Regulate and Conserve Wild Life Resources in Quebec Have Been Found to Work Well; Fur Trade of Province \$1,500,000 Yearly

At the National Conference on Conservation of Game, Fur-Bearing Animals and other wild life, held under the direction of the Commission of Conservation on February 18 and 19 last, Mr. J. A. Belleisle, Inspector-General of Fisheries and Game for the province of Quebec, delivered an address on the subject of the special measures adopted in Quebec to conserve and regulate the fur industry and wild life generally. His address was as follows:

The province of Quebec possesses two great means of seconding the efforts of the Commission of Conservation, the creation of a number of fish and game reserves and the control of shipments of game and furs. Nearly 25 years ago the Department of Crown Lands created certain hunting reserves, which were leased both to individuals and to fish and game clubs incorporated in our province. The object and the aims for which these clubs were incorporated are, as provided for by law, to aid in the enforcement of the laws and regulations concerning the protection of fish and game in the province. These clubs may acquire and possess both movables and immovables necessary for their enjoyment of the privileges and the performances of the duties entrusted to them. They lease, for sporting purposes alone, certain fish and game reserves, which have been set apart for that purpose by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, and the first condition of such leases is an efficient surveillance of the territory at the expense of the lessee. Any neglect of this essential condition of the lease, or any utilization of the reserve for other purposes, involves the cancellation of the lease, as well as the prosecution of the lessee at the hands of the Department.

FISHING AND HUNTING LEASES.

Outside of the clubs, a certain number of individual sportsmen are lessees of fishing and hunting territories; these are bound to the same obligations as clubs, in regard to the protection of their reserves and to the limitations within which they may utilize the privileges granted them by their lease. The number of reserves thus leased to clubs and individuals is 425, and they cover an approximate extent of 8,000 square miles for hunting purposes. In addition to the 469 rivers, or portions of rivers which are under lease for fishing purposes, 1,444 lakes are also leased, but I must add that several clubs lease all the fishing rights within their hunting territory; and a large portion of these being unsurveyed, it is impossible to say precisely the number of lakes which we have under lease. However, it may be affirmed without any fear of exaggeration that the number of our leased lakes is at least 2,500. All these reserves are so many special parks, where the protection is most efficient and in which the game may freely multiply. Moreover, all these lessees are required to employ one or more guardians named by the Minister, and to pay them during the twelve months of the year. Many of them, in order to fully comply with their obligations, employ additional guardians during certain months of the year. For instance, during the two or three months of the winter, in which the great depth of the snow most favours poaching operations, the clubs usually furnish additional help to their guardians. The same remark applies to lessees of fishing reserves during the summer and autumn months, and especially in the spawning season. Some of the lessees of salmon rivers employ as many as eight or ten guardians during the months of September and October. If we add the number of special guardians of clubs to the fish and game war-

dens employed by the Department, we have a total of 600 officers scattered throughout the province. When it is considered that reserves are chiefly in the most accessible sporting localities of the province, and are consequently the most exposed to poaching operations, it will be seen that this system is a very great aid to the protection of the fish and game wealth of Quebec.

CONTROL OF SHIPMENT OF GAME.

The second of our great means of protection is the control of the shipments of game. Up to two years ago we limited ourselves to the control of big game shipments. At the commencement of 1917, the Department of Colonization, Mines and Fisheries, inaugurated the control of the fur trade. A law was passed obliging the fur traders to take out a license and to report monthly all furs or skins bought by them. In order to render this control more efficient, the Government imposed a royalty on each skin, which must be stamped before it is paid. From that date no skin could be put upon the market without being stamped and the royalty paid, and no skin could be shipped outside of the province without having been first stamped and the royalty paid thereon and this under a penalty of a fine and confiscation. The same regulations prevail for furs or skins which are shipped from one portion of the province to another, when they are sent from localities where the province has officers to mark them. The shipment of either game or skins, of any kind whatever, is prohibited unless the contents are plainly marked on the outside of the packet, box, valise, or other receptacle, containing them; and this is also under the penalty of confiscation and fine. This measure permits us, not only to control the shipments, but also to prevent the purchase and shipment of furs taken out of season.

LESS FURS ILLEGALLY TAKEN.

One of the principal results of this policy of control of all shipments is a very great diminution in the number of furs taken illegally; for it is now useless to buy them from the trappers, seeing that they could not be disposed of; none of our officers will stamp furs which have evidently been taken out of season. The fur dealers are the most anxious to second our efforts in this direction, because the purchase of furs taken out of season is a detriment to the fur trade. Furthermore, these changes in the law permit dealers to conduct the trade openly and to sell their furs like all other traders without fearing the surveillance of the government officers. They have only to buy their license, have their furs stamped, pay the royalty, and their trade is as free as that of any other branch of commerce.

The passing of this law, in the winter of 1917, gave us control last year over the shipments of 617 dealers in furs. This year, with the perfecting of our system, we have been able to control the operations of 793 licensed dealers, who report to us each month and thus enable us to trace and to follow every skin in the trade. In the first year of the operation of this new system, the Government stamped and collected royalty on the skins of 192,241 muskrat, 38,576 beaver, 9,846 marten, 33,869 ermine, 5,964 mink, and 7,350 deer, besides a large number of other furs and skins, but forming a grand total of 317,060 skins, representing a value of \$1,500,000. When we consider that this system is new and that the result just mentioned is that of its first year in operation, we believe that we are justified in considering it most satisfactory.

ALL FURS AND SKINS STAMPED.

The law imposing a royalty, and the obligation to have all furs and skins coming from the province of Quebec stamped, enables us further to ascertain

very approximately the different species and quantities of the furs taken, particularly in certain portions of province. Thus, the Lake St. John region has furnished considerable quantities, also the Saguenay, more generally known as the North Shore. When the system has been longer in operation we shall be in a position to say what species are most sought after; if there are abuses in certain localities; if it is necessary to regulate the taking of any species, because of its growing scarcity; to ascertain any necessity which may exist for modifying our hunting seasons, or to prohibit completely the hunting of some particular species of fur-bearing animals, in order to permit their greater increase. I do not pretend, however, that we have succeeded in preventing all poaching; ill-disposed shippers are still able to send packages through the mails, or may succeed in evading the vigilance of our officers in certain localities near our boundaries, and ship furs outside of the province in a surreptitious manner.

HELP OF NEIGHBOURING PROVINCES.

Once on the other side of our frontier we are at the mercy of neighbouring provinces and states, and as none of our neighbours has a similar law to ours, the control of these shipments is difficult. In this connection, however, I am able to testify to the good will toward us of which the authorities in the neighbouring provinces and especially those of Ontario and New Brunswick, have given proof. For some months past, whenever authorities of our sister provinces have ascertained that furs shipped from Quebec did not bear the stamp required by our laws, they have seized and returned them to us. We also benefit in the same way at the hands of certain officers of the State of New York. I am glad to say also that the postal authorities have given us their assistance in a certain measure to enable us to control the sending of furs by parcel post. This improved system only operates, however, in the cities of Quebec and Montreal, but I anticipate with pleasure the possibility of such control being extended not only to the large centres but to the country post offices. The postal authorities have shown themselves disposed to second our efforts, and I have no doubt that before long there will be complete control of the shipments of furs through the mails.

We have not yet discussed the question with the Department of Customs. This department, through its officers along the frontier between the United States and Quebec, is in a position to know everything that crosses the border. I have no doubt that when we have obtained from the customs authorities the assurance that no furs shall be shipped from Quebec to the United States, without being properly stamped, the different dealers who at present fail to observe the law, will completely cease their clandestine trade.

UNIFORM LAWS TO CONTROL FURS

I have already said that a certain number still succeed in evading the law in shipping their furs to the other side of the interprovincial boundary. These furs are then reshipped to the large fur houses of Montreal or Quebec as if they originated in New Brunswick, Ontario, or Manitoba, and with the exception of beaver and otter, the sale of which is controlled in Ontario by the Government, it is impossible for us to verify the point of shipment of these furs. The Government of Ontario, in order to avoid abuse, very properly compels merchants who receive beaver or otter skins with the Government tag, to return these tags immediately to the proper department; so that there are no means left to establish in a satisfactory manner whether or not these beaver or otter skins really come from Ontario. This inconvenience will be overcome when the other provinces have adopted a system identical with ours for marking furs, and will also control the shipments of skins taken in the limits of their respective provinces. I do not despair of seeing this system of control universally adopted some day, and when this is done we shall have an almost perfect protection of the wild life, which is, after our forests, one of the greatest sources of our revenue.

With this object in view, and for the securing of greater co-operation in

the regulation of the fur trade, I beg to move the following resolution:

CO-OPERATION IN FUR TRADE REGULATION.

That in view of the increased impetus given to trapping operations by the high price of furs, and by more active competition in the trade, there is now much greater danger than hitherto of a very serious decrease in the supply of some of our most valuable fur-bearers, and even in some cases of their entire disappearance.

That experience proves that valuable statistics of much of the wild life of the country, so desirable for ensuring by timely action the perpetuation of declining species, may be best secured by a departmental control of the trade in raw furs.

That, this desirable control, instead of being a burden, may be made a source of income by the imposition of a small royalty on new skins; and that nothing is more reasonable than that such small royalty should be contributed to the State from the vast fur industry, based mainly upon the wild life of the public domain.

That, one of the chief difficulties encountered in controlling the trade in raw pelts, the royalties paid thereon and the statistics thereof, as in the enforcement of all wild life, is to be found in the efforts to evade the law by the lawlessly inclined, who take advantage of the differing provisions of law in contiguous provinces and states to ship the products of the chase through territory imposing less rigorous conditions than those of the province or state whence they originally come. Therefore, be it

Resolved, That while fully recognizing the complete control belonging to each province of the Dominion over the entire wild life in its own territory, it is the sense of this convention, that so far as possible, uniformity of laws and regulations regarding such wild life, and especially with reference to the control of the trade in raw furs, is extremely desirable as well as the utmost measure of reciprocity in the enforcement thereof; and further that even in the absence of a complete uniformity in such laws and regulations, most desirable results have been proven possible by a neighbourly reciprocity in enforcing them, as illustrated in the reciprocal return to their place of origin of raw furs and game, which when seized for illegal killing and shipment are declared to have been shipped from another province.

The resolution was adopted by the convention.

Hickory Supply Exhausted.

Hickory is Ontario's most valuable structural hardwood, and the supply is now commercially exhausted in the province. The wood is used chiefly by makers of vehicle supplies and tool handles. The wood is a very valuable one on account of its extraordinary hardness, strength, toughness and elasticity, in which it excels all other native hardwoods. Only 83 per cent of the hickory used by the manufacturers was reported as having been purchased in Ontario, as stated in a bulletin on the subject of wood-using industries of Ontario, issued by the Forestry Branch, Interior Department.

Trades Union Membership.

Trades union membership in Great Britain during the year 1918 showed an increase of 1,449,733 over the previous year, the total membership reported being 4,532,085. In the United States the American Federation of Labour reported a membership of over 3,260,000 at the close of 1918, a gain of more than 273,500 during the last eight months of the year, according to the July number of the *Labour Gazette*, issued by the Department of Labour.

Late Potatoes Look Well.

Throughout the province of Ontario, the crop of early potatoes has been seriously reduced on account of unfavourable weather conditions. The acreage of these is comparatively small and the yield generally light. Recent rains have made conditions more favourable for late potatoes, and the crop is looking well, according to reports received by the Fruit Commissioner's Branch, Department of Agriculture.