

Now, according to statistics, the lumber cut from 1888 to 1904, inclusive (17 years), aggregated 2,569,756,262 feet—a mere nothing compared with the grand total—and taking the average yearly cut for the 17 years, we find if that average were maintained for the next 200 years, our forests would still be far from exhausted. This is a hopeful outlook for the people of British Columbia, and the new provinces lying east of the Rocky Mountains, whose inhabitants must look to us for their supplies of lumber, but even with what seems at first blush an embarrassment of riches, we must not assume that this forestry treasure is inexhaustible. Prudently managed it will last to the end of time, but if wasteful lumbering methods (so general in the past) are persisted in, and fires allowed to run unchecked, our magnificent forest heritage might be dissipated in a generation or two.

In the Colonial period of British Columbia's history the question of forest preservation was given little, if any, consideration. What settlements existed were confined to the sea coast and the banks of the Fraser River. The great hinterland was unknown—a pathless wilderness—the home of a few scattered Indian tribes, and dotted here and there with the trading posts of the Hudson Bay Company. The policy of the Government of those days was to clear the land in and about the settlement at any cost, and the methods used were decidedly not in the line of forest preservation. The gold seekers came next, and in their eager quest for treasure, they naturally regarded the forest as a barrier to success and unhesitatingly destroyed it in order to clear the way for their mining operations.

It was not until 1874 that the Government of British Columbia took steps to preserve the forests. In that year what is known as the "Bush Fire Act" was passed. It provided that any person convicted of igniting fires in the woods during the months of June, July, August or September, and failing to thoroughly extinguish the same, should, in the case of damage resulting, be liable to a fine of \$100.00, or three months' imprisonment. The same punishment was provided for persons allowing fire to spread from their own property to that of their neighbours, or to adjacent public lands. This Act was inoperative, however, except in districts of which two-thirds of the residents petitioned the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council for its enforcement. In 1887 the "Bush Fire Act" was made general throughout the Province, and in 1896 the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council was given power to define any portion of the Province as a fire district, and it was made unlawful to set out or start fires between the first of May and the first of October, except for the purpose of clearing land, cooking, obtaining warmth, or for industrial purposes. Provisions were made in this Act, and subsequent amendments passed providing for safeguards against the spread