

THE MACKENZIE RIVER BASIN.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Room 34,

January 30, 1907.

The Select Standing Committee on Agriculture and Colonization met here this day at 10.30 o'clock a.m., the chairman, Mr. McKenzie, presiding.

The CHAIRMAN.—Gentlemen, we have with us this morning Mr. Elihu Stewart, Dominion Superintendent of Forestry, and I have much pleasure in introducing him to the committee.

Mr. STEWART.—Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—I have had several opportunities of appearing before this committee before and for that reason it will perhaps not be necessary for me to go over all the ground that I otherwise would. I shall endeavour to be as brief as possible and to give as much information as I can regarding the work under the Forestry branch of the Department and after that, a résumé of a trip I took last season down the Mackenzie river.

PROTECTION OF FORESTS AGAINST FIRE.

As you are aware, a few years ago the department undertook the work of guarding timber on Dominion lands. The system worked out then was, that the government should appoint fire rangers and the cost of the work would be divided between the Government and the holders of timber licenses, the Government paying the whole cost of that upon unlicensed territory. The reason of this will be apparent. It would be unfair, of course, and even absurd, to charge the limit holders for any territory which they had no claim on, and on the other hand the Government having an interest even in the licensed timber, it was considered that the system that had been followed in the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario would be a fair one: that is the limit holders should pay one half the cost of guarding this timber. During the past season we have had 74 regular rangers employed and the total cost of the service was \$28,809. Of this number 26 were in British Columbia and 48 east of the Rockies. In addition to this a number of extra men were employed for short periods to quell bad fires. I might say that these rangers, who are regularly employed, have authority, in case of a disastrous fire occurring, to call out additional assistance for a short time, the accounts being vouched for by the fire rangers before they are presented for payment. In addition to this work, during the past season ten men were employed in making a careful examination of the Riding Mountain reserve at a cost of \$2,532. The object of this work on the reserves that have been set aside by Act of Parliament was in order that we might know what we actually had on these areas. Examinations were conducted in the Moose Mountain reserve and in the Turtle Mountain reserve last year. The data collected has enabled us to locate and map the timber, to ascertain the extent of fires on the reserves, and the roads or trails needed for the protection and administration of the reserves, also an estimate of the amount of fuel and saw material available for use.