

Guarding Ontario's Northland

BY E. J. ZAVITZ,

PROVINCIAL FORESTER OF ONTARIO.

Thirty-Five Districts Created, 85 Towers Erected, Over 1000 Rangers Employed.

The Forest Fires Prevention Act passed by the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario in 1917 places the administration of forest fire protection under the Forestry Branch of the Department of Lands, Forests and Mines.

Without going into the details of this new Act it is of interest to point out the new features which are added to Ontario Forest protection. Control of the setting out of fire within forest regions is given through Regulations passed by Order-in-Council. It is necessary between the 15th of April and the 30th of September to obtain a written permit in order to set out fire for the disposal of slash or other debris. This written permit is issued by the fire ranger or other duly authorized official and contains certain restraining conditions. The ranger is given special instructions in reference to the conditions under which the Permit is issued. For example, the ranger may find it advisable to name the exact hour at which burning shall start or that some special protection be provided while burning is being done. The issuance of the permit requires the personal inspection of the ranger.

Another feature of the new Act is the provision for the disposal of fire hazards. Wherever conditions exist which are a menace to life or property the Act provides for definite action by which such danger may be removed.

Field Organization

The forest region of Ontario, subject to the Forest Fire Act, is divided into 35 Districts, each of which is in charge of a Chief Fire Ranger. During the past season we have had 34 Deputy Chiefs assisting the Chief Fire Rangers where areas were large or difficult of access.

The maximum number of rangers for any one period of the past season was 1039.

In addition to the above organization we have had 12 Railway Inspectors, whose duties were to carry out the provisions of Order 107 of the Board of Railway Commissioners for Canada.

For inspection purposes the forest region was divided into three Inspectoral divisions with a Superintendent in charge of each division.

To sum up, during the past season the entire force required in the field, for the carrying on of this work, was 1123 men. You will readily understand that with a territory so large it will require time and experience to work out the most satisfactory field organization.

85 Towers Erected

Forest fire protection cannot rely alone on the ranger or patrol system. The 1000 men in the field as rangers are helpless if not backed up by modern detection methods.

During the past season the lookout tower on high points has been introduced into nearly all of the districts. The Nepigon Reserve had previously adopted this method and found it a great assistance in the detection of fire. During the past season 85 towers have been built at a cost of over \$10,000.00. These towers are permanent structures located so that communication may be had by telephone with outside assistance.

In addition to the permanent tower, rangers are instructed to clean out trails to high vantage points. These observation points frequently command the view over vast areas and are of great assistance in locating fire.