

## Criminal Waste

(An Editorial in the Montreal Star)

CANADA is wasting one of her richest natural resources with a prodigal extravagance that is criminal.

Canada is not only taking no trouble to conserve her timber wealth, but the policy she is pursuing is helping to deplete her forests with thoroughness and rapidity.

It is not on the present generation that the disastrous effects of her neglect and short-sightedness will rebound but on the citizens of the future. The Federal and Provincial Governments, who are trustees of the natural resources of the Dominion, are selfishly wasting their substance without any regard for their responsibilities, without appreciation of the trust that is morally laid upon them.

In a striking letter on this page Mr. Frank J. D. Barnjum submits a few of the main heads under which our forest riches are being wasted. He points out that insects which attack our trees destroy one billion feet of merchantable spruce. The pulp and paper companies are denuding our forests and the toll of the axe for all purposes amounts to an annual shrinkage of fifteen million acres, while the loss by fire—largely due to criminal carelessness and inefficient patrolling—amounts to several million acres more.

Canada is cutting and burning her merchantable lumber just as if her citizens were a handful of settlers set down in the midst of a wide-reaching and seemingly limitless virgin forest. The limit holder and the land owner are not the chief sufferers from the policy of negligence and indifference that is being pursued. Perhaps if they were we should have pressure brought to bear upon the Government to put a stop to this national tragedy. As the visible supply shrinks, the price of lumber and pulp, reacting to the changeless law of supply and demand, goes higher and the increase is passed on from the concessionaire and the leasing company to the ultimate consumer. It is the man who buys the wooden box, the kitchen chair, or any one of the innumerable articles made of or derived from wood that will have to pay the price of public carelessness and folly.

"There is wood enough for us to cut and burn," say the limit holders, and the forest owners—let the generations to come look after themselves. What crass ignorance. What wrong-headed stupidity! Such an attitude is reminiscent of the notorious pacifist statesman who boasted that if war was declared upon his country a million men would spring to arms over night. They would have the spirit perhaps, but they would not have the arms, the equipment or the training. So the generations to come who find timber scarce and the cost of cutting high owing to its inaccessibility, may have the will and the urge to cut more, but they will not have the raw material.

Armies do not spring up full statured over night, forests do not lift themselves from seedlings to great trees at a magic touch. Nature builds perfectly but slowly and not all the wishes or even the necessities in the world can in an instant add a cubit to the stature of a forest sapling.

It is high time that Governments ended this period of criminal lethargy and bestirred themselves to the adoption of a policy of reforestation, of planting and of protection.

Much of the damage that has been done is irreparable, but with the facts clearly before us we shall deserve, and receive in full measure, the censure of the generations of Canadians yet to come if we delay any longer in staving off a national calamity while there is yet time.

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