

League of Boys for Forest Protection

By A. de H. Smith
(Editorial Staff, The Edmonton Bulletin)

Boys plus Fire equals delight supreme. Likewise Boys plus Fire equals holes burnt in clothing, irate parents, and well-deserved lickings. Despite the Sword of Damocles for ever gyrating over their heads, it is apparent that boys do, and will always continue to poke fires to the end of time. Nothing will stop them; the primeval urge which causes boys to rejoice in a fire, however humble, will be with us to the Millenium. Hence the query arises, "Is it not possible to gratify their heart's desires, and at the same time cause them to become an assistance to the fast dwindling forests?"

As a Scoutmaster, I have had considerable to do with the boy mind, and have come to the conclusion that boys and fire are absolutely inseparable. Our troop possesses a camping place on the outskirts of Edmonton, far from the haunts of men, in the dense poplar brush, and there we are wont to foregather, build huge fires, and having warmed numerous potatoes on the outside consume them in this condition. Cookery is a considerable attraction but pales into insignificance when compared with the all absorbing attractiveness of the Red God.

Once we arrive on the scene of action we build fires, all day long we continue to build, and when the time comes to homeward hie it is a difficult matter to prevent the enthusiastic youths from remaining all night "to get the good of it."

Alive to the Dangers of Fire.

Throughout the summer on Saturday afternoons this procedure has been indulged in, but although I have had sixty or more care-free youths under my charge I have never had any trouble in respect to fires running, although our camping place was highly inflammable with brush, grass and all sorts of woodland debris. In addition, each group of four or five boys had a fire for their particular use and benefit. Prior to leaving, all fires were thoroughly quenched, the large sticks poked in the ground and "killed" and the smaller embers dampened and tramped out. I have never found any difficulty in impressing the boys with the gravity of the un-guarded camp fire and though happy-go-lucky persons, the lesson of the fire hazard apparently remained in their somewhat uncertain memories.

A Fire Badge Proposed.

Now if the boys must play with fire—and they will—it should be possible to satiate their desires and at the same time turn them into a corps of volunteer fire rangers. To this end I would suggest that

the Canadian Forestry Association offer some badge to be worn on the uniform of the Scouts who have proved themselves most proficient in bush fire fighting, or an annual team prize for the Troop showing the best results. In the majority of urban centres in the north and west where the forest fire hazard is greatest there are Troops of Boy Scouts, and if they re-

ceived some encouragement I feel assured that they would be of considerable assistance in the quenching of incipient prairie and bush fires. Naturally some training would be necessary, but doubtless if the various Scoutmasters were supplied with literature on the subject they could instruct the boys, and the whole would form an interesting Scouting phase.

Win the Boy First.

Naturally the greatest number of fires occur in districts where the scattered homestead population precludes the possi-

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