

Relation of Indians to Wild Life Conservation

BY

DUNCAN CAMIBELL SCOTT

Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs

IT would take a good deal of time to deal fully with all branches of the subject which you have allotted to me; therefore, I will only say something of what the Department of Indian Affairs is actually doing to conserve wild life by endeavouring to induce the Indians to obey the laws.

Sympathy for
the Indian

We should have a good deal of sympathy for the Indian. He is the original fur-hunter of the country, and, when he was alone in that industry, he had everything his own way. When the fur-traders came, everything was changed, and, looking back over the old days, and reading records of that time, one cannot help wondering that any Indians now remain to hunt or to be subject to restrictive regulations, considering the stormy period they went through in their first relations with the white man. The Indians were then debauched by liquor supplied to them by government employees, military officers, and fur-traders, until the middle of the last century—1850 or thereabouts, when laws were enacted, providing that no more liquor should be given to Indians. Then a halcyon period for the Indian set in, when he could not get whiskey in trade, and when the fur-trade was in the hands of one or two great companies. The fur-bearing animals were carefully conserved by the companies and by the Indians themselves in their own interests. The number of skins to be taken was limited, and the trade was very carefully regulated. These conditions prevailed until the independent fur-trader made his appearance upon the scene. Now the trade is so divided and parcelled out between hunters, who are not Indians, and many companies and individuals who are engaged in buying furs, that the Indian finds it, year by year, increasingly difficult to support himself and make way amidst competition and the restrictive regulations which he is expected to recognize and obey.