

came to this continent, found it an unbroken forest from the shores of the Atlantic ocean to the Mississippi valley. It was the home of a race of hunters who derived their existence chiefly from the chase, and for whom therefore the forest was a natural element. It was the object of our ancestors to turn this land into a fit habitation for a race of agriculturists, for the man whose civilization is based primarily upon agriculture. They had to clear their homes from the forest, but instead of attacking the forest with care and tenderness they looked upon it as an enemy to be got rid of with the axe, with fire, and with every mode of destruction. History tells us, and our own experience tells us, that they went at it most mercilessly. The forest had no friends whatever, because to clear off a few acres of land they would set fire to miles upon miles of the noblest trees that ever lifted their lofty heads towards the heavens. This, at one time or other went on in every part of the continent, and even at this day it is still going on in some part of the continent. These pioneers of former days, as the pioneers of these modern days, did not realize, did not appreciate that in the economy of nature forests are just as indispensable to the civilization of man as tilled fields. They did not appreciate that even from the point of view of agriculture unless tilled fields are furnished by forests with moisture and rainfall, they decrease in their productiveness accordingly, and that the efforts of the agriculturist will suffer in proportion. We have assembled here in order to devise ways and means, if possible, first of all to check this evil and to make every class in the community realize the great importance of maintaining, preserving and protecting our forests. What I would like to call the attention of this convention to, in the first place, would be the necessity of establishing, if it has not been done, and it has not yet been done, a preserve, a large forest domain. We must know, and the experience of those nations to Which His Excellency in his address has just alluded, teaches us that there are certain portions, certain sections of the earth's surface which, in the wise economy of nature, must always be maintained as forests, and that our watersheds must be maintained as forests. All the hills, mountains and plateaus which are the sources of flowing streams or rivers, should never be allowed for any consideration whatever, to remain anything else than forests. No consideration whatever should allow these portions of the earth's surface to be denuded of their trees. We know the consequences, and therefore it is needless for me to dwell upon that feature ; it is a mere truism.

But, what I want to call your attention to is that if these portions of the earth's surface in our own country are to be maintained as forests it is essential, in my humble judgment at all events, that they should form part of the national domain, that they should belong to the state. In Canada by the state I mean the provincial governments where the management of the public lands is left to the provincial governments, and the national government where the ownership of public lands is left to the national government. If it so happens, and I am afraid it has happened, that some portions of these watersheds have been alienated from the public domain and have been transferred to private ownership, it should be the policy of the national government and it should be the policy of the provincial governments to repurchase these lands and bring them back to the public domain.