

He refers you to a fire of 1855,

"which burnt easterly to the shores of Lake Timiskaming, up the Montreal River to its source, and westerly along the height-of-land for over 200 miles, to near Michipicoten." Two thousand square miles were devastated. I give these brief quotations as a slight indication of what has taken place.

Particularly since railway construction began, the greater portion of this tract has been, and is being, repeatedly burned over. If you look through the car windows as you travel through it, you will see stretches of bare and rocky hillside followed by *brulés*, followed again by tracts upon which extensive young forests of jack-pine rise to the height of ten, fifteen and twenty feet. But over this country fires are repeatedly passing, and the territory is quickly and surely getting to the point when every vestige of forest will be gone. Following this comes the stage in which, robbed of the protection of the trees, the vegetable mould and moss, which is the only covering of the rocks, dries out and becomes inflammable. Then it burns. It is happening every year. I could show you places which, within thirty years, were covered with forest, where the successive steps have taken place, and nothing remains but the bare rocks. There is nothing more absolutely certain in nature than that, unless steps are taken to protect it, the whole territory mentioned, with the exception of the few and small tracts fit for agriculture, and occupied as such, and small settlements along the railway, will be completely denuded, not only of trees, but of the soil, within the lifetime of men now living. No one can tell the physical effect on climate of such a catastrophe, but, apart from that, the mind shrinks from the very idea of such a rocky waste in the heart of the country.

My information is to the effect that the fires are almost wholly caused by railway locomotives. Fires occurring from any other causes can be pretty effectually prevented by stringent laws and effective enforcement by the Province, but Dominion railways must be dealt with by Federal legislation. The laws of Canada relating to fires caused by railway engines certainly require amendment. Upon what principle do we permit railways to spread abroad destruction of public and private property? The time may have been when the necessities of transportation and the comparative poverty of the railway companies made it impracticable to enforce stringent laws, but that time has surely passed, and I have no doubt the great companies will themselves readily realize their duty in this respect.

This question of prevention of fires arising from railways is a very large and difficult subject, but we must be prepared to face large and