

Commission of Conservation

CANADA

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CONSERVATION is published the first of each month. Its object is the dissemination of information relative to the natural resources of Canada, their development and the proper conservation of the same, together with timely articles covering town-planning and public health.

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MUNICIPAL IMPROVEMENTS

Almost without exception the municipalities of Canada are passing through a period of financial strait, when local improvement work has been curtailed and the strictest economy must be exercised.

The capital invested in so-called permanent improvements, totals a very large sum, and represents a great proportion of the taxes collected from the people. With this large expenditure in mind the question naturally arises "Is the money invested in local improvements being expended to the best advantage?"

In the matter of roadways, pavements and sidewalks, this question is causing a great deal of thought on the part of students of municipal problems. In many cities the streets are becoming sample sheets of the various kinds of paving materials. The influence or persuasive ability of salesmen may introduce new systems of roadway construction without number. These compositions are adopted and used, regardless of climatic conditions or suitability for the traffic requirements. Each municipality depends upon its own engineering advice. In rare instances only is any testing equipment available. The result is that no uniformity of value in paving or sidewalk material is secured.

Canada has reached the stage when municipalities should have available a Bureau of Municipal Research, as part of a Department of Local Government in each Province. The need of such a source of information is urgent. Municipal government and municipal

engineering are being conducted in too haphazard a manner for the general and permanent public good. This Bureau should deal with such questions as the testing of materials and the adoption of standards. These standards would be based upon the practical requirements. For instance, while a business thoroughfare with heavy traffic requires a certain surface material and depth of foundation, a residential street with a minimum of traffic does not demand the same wear-resisting surface nor sustaining foundation. In like manner, also, sidewalk standards should be adopted suitable to traffic requirements.

The question is a large one: Millions of dollars of the people's money are being spent annually and the credit of municipalities is being pledged to carry out work of a supposedly permanent character, in the hope that it will prove satisfactory. In the absence of any definite information to the contrary, advice or prejudice in favour of certain materials cannot be offset. No doubt if more accurate data were available, the money now spent on many of these improvements could be made go much farther by more judicious selection of methods and materials.

SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT

The Sixth Annual Report of the Commission of Conservation, which was issued recently, serves to indicate the wide range of interests with which the Commission is concerned. The address of the chairman, Sir Clifford Sifton, presents an excellent summary of the work undertaken during the past fiscal year. It is of special interest to those whose time may be too limited for more detailed reading.

Although some aspects of the Commission's work have been unavoidably hampered by the war, other branches of the work have proceeded in a gratifying manner. This is perhaps especially true of town planning. Following the National Conference on Town Planning which was held in Toronto in 1914, the Commission secured the services of Mr. Thomas Adams, a town planning expert of international repute. Mr. Adams' services are much in demand throughout the country and his work in behalf of town planning in Canada is certain to be of lasting benefit.

In connection with forestry, steady progress is being made. Reliable inventories of Canada's forests are being prepared expeditiously and for the first time. Fire prevention is being urged especially along railway lines, and in this, with few exceptions, the railway companies are co-operating heartily.

The value of the agricultural surveys and illustration farms inaugurated by the Commission some three years ago, is adequately outlined in the report and an inter-

esting paper on recent aspects of agricultural instruction is also included.

The conservation of minerals, the protection of sea birds, the water power problems arising from conditions along the international boundary are each considered by well-known authorities.

The report is well illustrated and a carefully prepared index makes it of unusual value for reference purposes.

Fish Scrap as Fertilizer

Extensive Demand for Commercial Fertilizer—Financial Difficulties

Artificial fertilizers are meeting with an increasing demand in America. This, added to the sudden shutting off of the supply of German potash, has focused the attention of the governments of the United States and Canada upon their respective sources of commercial fertilizers. The three elements chiefly sought are phosphates, potash and nitrogen. These ingredients in varying proportions are used by farmers as fertilizers or "soil amendments."

One excellent source of potash and nitrogen and to a lesser extent of phosphates is fish scrap. This material is manufactured from the offal at canneries and other fish curing establishments. As yet but a comparatively small proportion of the waste in connection with the fisheries is utilized, owing chiefly to the economic problems of manufacturing. The fish reduction industry is carried on only for a few months each year and, as a result, the capital invested is unproductive for a considerable portion of the year. To overcome this, efforts have been made to couple the industry with some other that would make it possible for the longer periods—possibly for the full year. In this connection, the work of the Federal government at Clark harbour, Nova Scotia, is worthy of note. For several years, the Department of Marine and Fisheries operated a fish reduction plant there chiefly to provide a market for the dog fish which infested the neighbouring waters. During the past summer the plant was placed under the control of the Department of Agriculture and extensive experiments were undertaken to ascertain the possibility, commercially, of utilizing the extensive kelp beds found off the southern coast of western Nova Scotia. The investigations, while not complete as yet, show much promise. These kelps, rich in potash and nitrogen, make excellent fertilizers. If, by combining the kelp industry with the fish scrap industry, the two can be placed on a commercial basis, a very serious waste will have been turned to excellent account.—A.D.

Brush Piling and Burning

Fire Hazard Materially Reduced by this Means

The veteran Ottawa lumberman, Mr. J. R. Booth, has caused the piling, ready for burning at a safe time, of inflammable debris on a narrow strip of his limits parallel to a portion of the Canadian Northern Ontario railway, east of North Bay. This progressive action in connection with forest fire prevention will materially reduce the fire hazard to valuable timber lands in the vicinity. Similar action by other limit-holders would undoubtedly be a paying investment.

Some of the governmental fire-protective agencies have given attention to the general situation caused by the accumulation of logging debris in proximity to railway lines. The Forest Act of British Columbia provides that the Provincial Forest Board may declare inflammable material which endangers life or property a public nuisance, and may order its removal.

In Quebec, the provincial government has under consideration the issuance of an order-in-council requiring the holders of licenses on Crown lands to dispose of inflammable debris on a strip one hundred feet wide, adjacent to railway rights-of-way. Such action will well accord with the progressive attitude of the Quebec government toward the conservation of its forest resources.—C.L.

FORESTRY WEEK AT SAN FRANCISCO EXHIBITION

The week beginning October 18 will be forestry and lumbering week at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition at San Francisco. On Monday, October 18, will be held a meeting of the Society of American Foresters. The following day will occur a largely-attended meeting of the Western Forestry and Conservation Association, at which will be discussed questions relating to better methods of forest protection, forest taxation, etc. On Wednesday, October 20, the American Forestry Association will meet, followed on October 21 by a meeting of the Pacific Logging Congress. The last two days of the week will be devoted to an excursion to the redwood logging camps, at Eureka, California. It is expected that these meetings will be attended by representatives from all parts of the United States and Canada.—C.L.

The state of Massachusetts has appropriated \$90,000 for the purchase of waste lands and their reforestation. The work of planting of the areas so acquired will be under the direction of the State Forester.