

British Columbia Forest Branch.

Outline of the Organization of this New Service and Results of the First Year's Work.

The establishment of the British Columbia Forest Branch under the Forest Act, framed by Sir Richard McBride and his confreres, after the investigation held all over the Province by the Royal Forestry Commission appointed to look into the matter of existing forest conditions, was received a little over a year ago with the greatest enthusiasm by forest conservationists in all parts of the country. Now that the Forest Branch is approaching its first anniversary it is interesting to note the advances which have been made by the executive staff appointed by the Hon. W. R. Ross, Minister of Lands.

From the middle of last summer continuously without a break up to the present time Chief Forester H. R. MacMillan and his board of four lieutenants, have been devoting themselves unstintingly to the work in hand, and it may be said that the results achieved are in keeping with the enthusiasm with which they addressed themselves to their task. Whereas under the administration prior to the establishment of the Branch there were only two departments which concerned themselves with the management of the forest resources of the Province, with an executive staff of perhaps twenty men, there is now an executive force of about fifty exclusive of the two hundred fire rangers appointed for the dangerous season.

The organization is divided as follows: under the Minister there is the Forest Board of five members, viz., the Chief Forester, in whom final authority under the Minister rests, the Chief of Management, to whom falls the carrying out of the 'timber sales' which have taken place of the old 'special license' established in 1907 and discontinued in 1909, when the Government of the Province placed complete embargo upon the alienation of timber; the Chief of Operation, with whom rests the work of fire protection; the Chief of Surveys, who has charge of the various reconnaissance and other surveys and land classifications under the Forest Branch; and the Chief of Records on whom devolves the collection of revenue and the maintenance of statistics in the Branch.

For the purposes of proper administration the Province has been divided into eleven geographical districts. These are as follows: In the south from east to west, Cranbrook, Nelson and Vernon districts. North of these is the Railway Belt, administered by the Dominion Forestry Branch. North of this from east to west are the

districts of Tête Jaune Cache, Kamloops, Lillooet and Vancouver. The districts farthest north from east to west are Fort George, Hazelton and Prince Rupert. The remaining district is Vancouver Island.

The location of each of these districts is fairly well given by its name. The areas in acres embraced in these districts are as follows: Cranbrook, 7,325,000; Nelson, 5,259,000; Vernon, 6,963,000; Tête Jaune Cache, 4,698,000; Kamloops, 6,619,000; Lillooet, 11,431,000; Vancouver, 15,755,000; Fort George, 28,785,000; Hazelton, 13,786,000; Prince Rupert, 18,723,000; Vancouver Island, 6,463,000.

With the enormous quantity of timber which the Province possesses (it is estimated that fully three hundred billion board feet of merchantable material, or half of that standing in the Dominion is within the borders of British Columbia) the main problem is that of protection from fire. To this end every possible precaution is being taken by the Forest Branch to keep down this item of loss. The constant effort is to secure as forest rangers men of ability and experience in order that the system of patrol will work with the regularity of a machine in the dangerous season. Great anxiety is being felt on all sides lest the great growth of grass which was the result of the unusually wet spell at the close of last summer may produce conditions of unusual danger to the forest growth. This year will certainly be one of the most difficult in the history of the Province.

One of the advanced means of protecting the forest from fire adopted by the Branch is that of placing eight power launches on waters adjacent to large bodies of timber. On the coast, there are to be four 36 ft. launches and two 54 ft. launches with a power calculated to give ample speed in cases of emergency. In some cases it would be impossible to reach by land a fire in some of the rocky districts near the sea. Rapid water transportation, however, is expected to solve the question of getting men and supplies quickly to the point of danger.

The Chief Forester notes in his annual report that the scarcity of trails, telephone lines, and other permanent improvements for the use of the fire protective force will greatly hamper the movements of those to whom is entrusted the work of keeping down fire. In many parts of the country where the timber is largest and the fire risk greatest, there is, as yet, no means whereby a large force of men can be placed