

New Plan to Stop Forest Fires

The establishment of a permit system whereby all sportsmen, surveyors, trappers, prospectors, lumbermen, and others, intending to pass over land leased by the Provincial Government as timber limits, be obliged to obtain a permit, was one of the subjects discussed at the Forestry Conference of the Quebec Forest Protective Association, held at Montreal, January 25th.

The discussion followed a paper read by Mr. R. P. Kernan, president of the Laurentian Forest Protective Association, Quebec, who in opening his address, emphasized the enormous area now devoted to forest reserves in the province of Quebec, the Government having established forest parks, the extent of which exceeded 165,000 square miles, exclusive of the Laurentides National Park, the entire acreage including this park being almost 110 million acres.

Statistics of known losses through forest fires during recent years were then reviewed. Reports of various forest protective associations which patrol 50,000 square miles of leased timber lands showed that during the period from 1917 to 1920, 2,902 fires were traced within the area so patrolled. Of these 325 were caused by locomotives and 328 by lightning, the other 2,300 fires being attributed to carelessness of sportsmen and workmen. These 2,300 fires swept over approximately 577,000 acres of which at least 273,000 acres were estimated to be green timber and young growth. It has been further estimated that 13 per cent of the territory patrolled was devastated and 6.7 per cent of green timber and young growth destroyed.

Mr. Kernan pointed out that one fire which found origin in a fisherman's carelessness last summer, burned over a tract of 112,000 acres in the St. Maurice valley. The speaker also pointed out that although no figures were available for unpatrolled sections of the forest, it was known that losses were even greater there.

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The speaker attributed much of the carelessness of sportsmen, lumbermen, and other workmen to an absence of any feeling of responsibility insofar as fires were concerned. The same condition had prevailed before the introduction of legislation dealing with brush fires, but since the enforcing of the permit system for brush fires, forest fires from that source had diminished to a minimum. In the opinion of the speaker the introduction of a permit system for all persons entering timber limits for any purposes whatsoever would have the same effect.

Among the methods suggested for the operating of the permit system would be

the issuing of permits by forest rangers and inspectors of the Government and the protective associations, the agents of the limit holders, the officers of fish and game clubs, and all persons authorized to issue fishing and hunting permits. It would be necessary, of course, to make it as convenient as possible for the person desiring to enter timber lands to obtain the required permit. Permits could show name and address of the holder, locality,

period and purpose for which issued, and a warning regarding fires.

It was generally recognized, said Mr. Kernan, that the permit system could not be enforced without legislation from the Government and that in the enforcement of such legislation there would have to be close co-operation between the Government and the protective associations.

In the discussion which followed the paper, Mr. J. Pressman, of the Wayagamack Pulp and Paper Company, Limited, described a system already in use by his

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