

What's in the Way of a Wood Fuel Supply?

Editor's note: Recently a well known company forester in Quebec was asked by us for his ideas on a practical scheme for utilizing the enormous quantities of hardwoods to ease Canada's bills for anthracite coal. His reply follows:

MOST of the large cities like Quebec, Montreal, and I suppose your Ontario cities as well, have practically very little firewood available within hauling distance; the wood would all have to be railed in, so far as this Province is concerned. Many of the towns are already receiving their wood from distances as great as 10 or 15 miles. Last winter, when there was much unemployment here, the Municipality tried to buy a tract of land on which the unemployed could cut hardwood, and there was only one 100 acre lot which had enough good firewood on it to make it worth while. Crown hardwood forests seldom lie within hauling distance to a large city, but there are many acres in Quebec which are near enough to the railroad so that the wood could be economically delivered by cars. The freight rate on hardwood is almost prohibitive, the wood running about 5300 to 5600 pounds to the cord.

Operating companies are very loth to undertake contracts for the delivery of firewood. Then, too, we must be very sure that large quantities of firewood are needed, and that coal will not come in and leave the wood on the hands of those who have agreed to cut it. In New England, during the last fuel famine, thousands of cords of wood were cut and stacked along the railway lines and never used, and can be seen rotting at the present time.

You might also call attention to the fact that wood cut now will be green and practically unusable until next year, as green wood burns very poorly and people are very unwilling to use it.

The only feasible plan that I know of would be to send men out through the rural districts as near the villages and cities as possible, and make contracts with farmers owning hard-

wood lots. These men have very little work in the winter, and using their time and horses, would be able to deliver the wood much cheaper than anyone else. As soon as the wood was hauled to the railroad, it would have to be paid for, and could then be left alongside the track to season for next winter, or could be shipped to the cities and stored. Large areas of storage space would naturally be necessary.

No plan is feasible for an immediate supply, very few people having any stocks of dried hardwood for sale.

The matter of municipal forests for a future supply is a most excellent one, and should be pushed with all possible encouragement and speed. We are busily at work on that here, and I hope before spring to have the municipal forest started.

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