

Must Move Forward

Forestry in Canada has now arrived at that dangerous stage when all men speak well of it; as one leader recently remarked, 'If there was only some expressed opposition to forestry we could more readily make real progress'. Ten years ago Forest Conservation in its now generally accepted sense was practically unknown. Today everybody knows of it and has an idea, in a general way, that it is a good thing. But the difficulty is that now there is so much spoken, written and printed about conservation that far too many people believe that the work is progressing satisfactorily and that the volume of talk represents work done. In fact, public opinion is by the very frequency of the mention of conservation being lulled into false security. People believe that all governments, institutions and persons connected with forestry are alive to the dangers of deforestation, and have taken protective measures accordingly. As a matter of fact, as everyone knows who has looked beneath the surface, we in Canada are just about ready (or ought to be) to begin to do something.

People who read in the papers these days a great deal about Conservation imagine that all is well with Canada in this respect, and that, since the watchmen are awake, they can sleep comfortably in their beds. On the contrary, if they will take up the report of the Minister or any other official in charge of the public forests, they will see that instead of there being cause for complacency the situation is actually critical. From every one of these comes the same report, that at present he is concentrating what men and means he has on the problem of fire protection, but, in spite of this, fires are constantly destroying the

best timber areas. Even where the officials have for years been able to keep out fire, the cutting of the best species of trees is giving opportunity for the growth of inferior trees, so that the whole character of the forests is undergoing a steady change for the worse, and the result will be that from a timber-producing standpoint they will in a few years have little or no value at all.

This is not intended to be an alarmist article, but simply to emphasize the point that, whereas the average good citizen believes that Canada is doing all that is required to protect and even increase her timber resources, the plain fact of the matter is that in this regard we are doing nothing at all. As stated before, the responsible authorities tell you they can only endeavor to protect what remains of the virgin forests from fire, and that for this they have very inadequate means. In regard to the re-stocking with valuable timber of lands unsuited for agriculture, however, there is practically nothing being done from Nova Scotia to British Columbia. There are millions of acres of lands belonging to the state which are fit for no other purpose than to grow trees. They bear no timber trees today and in fifty years, if present methods continue, they still will be lacking in merchantable timber. The great Miramichi fire took place in 1825; today after eighty-six years that once magnificent pinery has scarcely a timber tree on it, while pine has practically disappeared, not only from that district, but from the rest of New Brunswick and from large sections of Quebec. Now, if the other millions of acres of cut-over and burnt-over lands in Canada are not to be in the same useless condition at the end of another eighty-six years, then we must take warning and see