

One Way to Block the Exodus of Population

If One Settler is Worth Hundreds of Dollars, is a Forest Workman Worth Fifty cents Worth of Fire Prevention?

By Robson Black, Manager, the Canadian Forestry Association

THE exodus of population from Canada to the United States, as unpleasantly reported from official sources, represents the natural flow of workers to the points of high wages and what they conceive to be better living conditions. Artisans and farmers, urgently needed by Canada, have moved south at a rate which would be disquieting were it forgotten that sooner or later a northward trek will bring many of them back home.

In all the talk of exiled population, it seems to have been wholly overlooked that the Forests of Canada, past and present, have been steadily pulling population into the Dominion. The pulp and paper industry alone has drawn to this country, directly and indirectly, tens of thousands of home owners. The lumber industry, in turn, has established thousands of small communities, all built upon the security of the forest resources. Emigration to the United States has not been fed by the forest industries of this country. On the contrary, the army of 120,000 well-paid Canadian workmen, employed in forest manufacture, has not only held its own but has added to its numbers during the past two or three years of our national experience.

What Lies Behind a Job

The street-corner economist and not a few of the politicians see a procession of workmen in a pulp and paper town as a product of localized activities—a water power, a factory, and good financial management. They do not appreciate that every penny of wages, every dollar of capital, every carload of product, is a creation of the living forest. They do not know that the 'life expectancy' of a square mile of timber is automatically the measure of just so many jobs, so many tons of production. They do not know that the human use of the land on which the timber grows is at an end for perhaps a century once the timber growth is destroyed.

Eighty per cent of the habitable portion of Canada, said the late Dr. Fernow, is of no agricultural value.

Sixty-five per cent of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia is fitted only for growing timber.

Of Ontario and Quebec, by no means is the proportion of arable

Empire Forestry

Canada and its forests will this summer be visited by a large number of guests from all parts of the British Empire members of the second British Empire Forestry Conference. The official meetings will be held in Ottawa, and visits will be paid by the delegates to the various forest regions of the country.

The first Empire Forestry Conference convened at the Guildhall, London, England, in July 1920, and besides the sessions in the metropolis visits were paid by the delegates to the forests in various parts of the British Isles. Delegates were present from the mother country, the principal Dominions—Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Newfoundland—and India. The principal Crown colonies such as Ceylon, in Asia; Nigeria and Uganda, in Africa and Trinidad, in South America, were also represented. The forest resources of the Empire were reviewed, and matters of moment to forest administration throughout the Empire discussed.

The delegates to the 1923 Conference will comprise not only men connected with the administration and management of the forests of the various parts of the Empire, but also men prominently connected with the timber trade. The visit of the delegates will undoubtedly be of much advantage to Canada in familiarizing men from other countries with the extent and quality of the timber resources of this Dominion, and in promoting trade in forest products among the various parts of the Empire.

land thirty per cent and British Columbia shows much less than that. The prairie provinces, taken as a group, have not more than a third of their area as potential plow land.

Why Population Remains

What population is this eighty per cent of Canada to attract and hold unless it be a population associated mainly with forest industries? How shall forest industries be attracted and held unless the forest itself is

rigorously protected and maintained?

Eliminate the forest resources from New Brunswick and at once the means of livelihood of probably two thirds of New Brunswick's municipalities is shut off, with no possibility of substitution from other activities. The main source of employment is forfeited. The foremost source of provincial taxation is cancelled. Other provinces would stand the loss of forests but little better than New Brunswick.

From the standpoint of the right use of public-owned lands, the momentous consequences of our present steady deterioration of the forest resources stands in an equally unfortunate light. The one and only crop that the greater part of our national area will produce is timber. To surrender the forest crop to destruction by fire means a wait of sixty to one hundred years, during which time the Canadian people are deprived of all economic dividends from that area. It is a wholly mistaken, although widely held, notion that when forests go farms follow. The sequence was true enough—in 1850—but the common rule of 1923 is that when forests go, a barrens follows, and keeps following, far into the days of our grand children.

Keep Canadians at Home!

"Keep our present population," sounds louder and louder in current editorial comment.

The answer is not in terms of a budget speech or a roving commission. It is no more complex than a child's set of building blocks. Since the forest resources are the keystone of population in Canada, the exclusion of forest fires is an obvious and vital method of perpetuating the advantages that forests give us.

The most direct and result-giving method of "Keeping present population" is to apply public monies to outlawing the menace of forest fires.

If five hundred dollars, or two hundred, can be spent on attracting one settler to Canada's shores, surely a fifty cent piece can be spent on forms of forest fire prevention that with perfect certainty will retain for Canada a half dozen workmen whose presence depends upon a never-failing crop of timber.