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The Case for Nova Scotia's Forests



By ROBSON BLACK

Secretary Canadian Forestry Association, Ottawa.

A national institution of 7000 members concerned in forest
Conservation—not identified with any government or
commercial interest.

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"THE CASE FOR NOVA SCOTIA'S FORESTS"

(Supplementing "Nova Scotia's Stake in Forest Protection," "A Partnership Offer," and other publications issued by the Canadian Forestry Association).

Nova Scotia is essentially a forest province. By that, one does not under-rate other lines of activity or suggest that the forest must flourish at the expense of other provincial interests. The facts are precisely to the contrary. A productive forest trespasses upon no soil desired by the farmer. It has no quarrel with the apple grower, the fisherman, the miner, the shipbuilder, manufacturer, or merchant. To each it supplies essential raw materials. To each its unflinching revenues give stability and confidence. When every citizen shares in the profits of maintenance, when every citizen pays dearly for neglect, the assertion is well justified that forest protection and the cause of Forestry are Community Business.

Facts that
Cannot be
Glossed Over.

Apple barrels have increased in cost by 100 per cent. in the Annapolis Valley during the past four years. Wood materials for fishing boats, boxes, barrels, sheds and houses record a painful advance in price. Pit props for the coal mines are scarcer and much dearer. Western Nova Scotia lumber mills that were able to export 25 per cent. of a cargo in 12 inch lumber, fifteen years ago, were forced to reduce the proportion of bigger lumber to 10 per cent. during the succeeding ten years and today are shipping out cargoes in which the larger timbers are inconspicuous. The significance of these facts to Nova Scotia's export trade is at once obvious. The scarcity of larger timber and its increasing inaccessibility in certain sections places a handicap upon the ability of provincial lumbermen to sell to the United States, West Indies, South America or the United Kingdom. The class of timber in greatest demand cannot now be delivered as formerly. This obviously ties the hands of the exporter. Industrial re-organization cannot remedy it, for the root of the trouble is in the Nova Scotia forest. The big timber simply is not there in quantities or locations to justify operating. The whirling saws of Western Nova Scotia mills do not in themselves create wealth. They give new utility and market value to the raw materials of the forest. Where the forest fails to support the mill, the mill is as useless as a disconnected turbine.

Nova Scotia's
future depends
on this!

Export trade in forest, farm and sea products is the main hope of large provincial development. It is the magnet to new population, the trump card in the vastly keener competition of post-bellum days when Nova Scotia must either send superior goods, produced at low cost, to foreign shores or find foreign-made goods battling home-products out of its own market.

Wood products in themselves form a chief item of present export, capable of vast development. Forest depletion not only negatives the growth of Nova Scotia lumber and pulp mills, but must pull down to mediocrity the wooden ship building industry and its expectation of home cargoes. It does more than that. The ability of the apple grower to sell abroad profitably depends upon his ability to produce cheaply. If he cannot obtain coopeage material or can obtain it only at high cost, his importance as an exporter is diminished to that degree. So with the fisherman.

The present condition of the Nova Scotia forests, taken as a whole, indicates a progressive decline. Fires have taken a monstrous toll of what originally was an endowment of incalculable worth. To be sure, the *cutting* of timber was not managed on a principle of continuous reproduction, but fires undoubtedly have been the chief degenerative factor. Had fires been debarred by modern protective means and by cultivation of a conservation sentiment amongst persons who cause the fires, there is no doubt whatever that lumber mills instead of reducing activities would have added to plant and to number of employees, developing their towns, providing new demand for farm and fisheries products and taking more vigorous hold of export trade opportunities. There is, of course, small satisfaction in basing a forecast upon impossible premises. The original forest wealth of Nova Scotia has largely been forfeited. Today not more than 100,000 acres of virgin forest remain. Two-thirds of the forest area has changed from the pine, spruce and other conifers, on which the modern mill exists, to the secondary hardwoods which form a minor item of commerce. This is the unfortunate situation of the permanent timber crop covering about *eighty per cent.* of the entire provincial area. As that eighty per cent. is non-agricultural, the greatest problem now facing the people of Nova Scotia is to block the forces that are leading the main portion of the provincial estate to the edge of ruin and then to institute such measures as will hasten its restoration. No question that can possibly confront Nova Scotians has more than a fraction of the urgency associated with this enterprise of repairing the forest foundations that uphold the walls of prosperity.

**An Opportunity
to Double the
Timber Yield.**

"Here is a natural resource," states Dr. B. E. Fernow, director of Nova Scotia Forest Survey, "capable, under proper management, of forever producing by annual increment, as interest, at least twice as much as is now being cut from capital stock."

The Forests of Nova Scotia, in Dr. Fernow's estimate, represent a potential capital of at least \$300,000,000. And yet, "it is now largely in poor condition and is being annually further deteriorated by abuse and injudicious use."

This is Public Business!

It is to the State we are compelled to look for initiative and continuity of policy in the care of forest lands. The long time-element involved in the maturing of timber crops is constantly at war with the natural human desire for "present profits." The latter consideration, however, is properly divorced from the function of governments. In nearly all well-organized lands, the public administrator is regarded as the natural custodian of the forest properties—most easily destroyed of all the material resources. The Nova Scotia of 1979 is to a considerable extent in the hands of the Government of 1918. If the forest possessions are not husbanded today, there will be no tomorrow in which to husband them.

**What Other
Governments
are Doing.**

What are other Governments doing to maintain their forests?

New Brunswick last year created a new Forest Service, at the head of which is a Provincial Forester and a staff of technically-trained Foresters and fire rangers. The service will cost New Brunswick about \$100,000 a year but will repay the cost many times over.

Quebec has a Forest Service, with a Provincial Forester and more than forty technically-trained assistants, besides a splendidly-organized set of "forest protective associations," which are rapidly subduing the plague of forest fires.

Ontario has a Provincial Forester, with more than a thousand fire rangers and inspectors, costing \$500,000 a year. And it pays!

The three prairie provinces are under the Dominion Director of Forestry, with a large staff of subordinates, engaged in fire prevention.

(5)

British Columbia has a strongly-organized Forest Service with a Provincial Forester and a group of District Foresters and Rangers.

Nova Scotia What of Nova Scotia?

Legislature

endorsed Pro- Nova Scotia has no Provincial Forester, although the
vincial Forester. need of such an organizer and authority is quite as acute as in
British Columbia or New Brunswick. That such an officer
is essential to the province was recognized by legislation
passed in May, 1913, providing for his appointment.

What would be the duties of a Provincial Forester in Nova Scotia?

1. To properly organize and develop the present fire ranging plan. Nova Scotia has excellent legislation already in existence for prevention of forest fires and the forested areas are so located as to make fire protection relatively easy. What is required, therefore, is that the existing legislation should have thorough and expert application. Only a technically-trained Forester can accomplish this.

The natural rate of forest growth in Nova Scotia is so favorable that, with fires excluded, restoration of the timber values must taken place over very large areas.

2. The day of haphazard lumbering is over in all parts of America. While the virgin forest remained, the incentive to conservative lumbering was anything but imperative. Now the virgin forests of Eastern Canada are mostly cut out. The pulp and lumber companies are reaching out for technical guidance in the management of their forests so as to perpetuate the supply and save their huge investments. To assist with expert counsel the Provincial Government in the management of the remaining Crown Lands and to co-operate constantly with the private woodland owners, whether mill operators or farmers, would be another important part of the Provincial Forester's duties.

The Power of 3. To this officer would naturally fall a third highly
Education in important function which is surely a government's function—
Forest Guarding. to campaign against carelessness with fire. The 'average
man' who leaves his camp fire burning or throws away lighted
matches and cigarettes is not malevolent by intention. He merely does not
"think" because amongst all the impressions he gathers in a day's journey he
may never encounter a suggestion that camp fires cause great conflagrations.

The act is not mentally associated with the idea of vandalism. Educational propaganda against forest fires, tackles this 'average man' by skillful appeals to common sense and selfish interest. It is to forest protection as hygiene in disease prevention. It modifies the careless attitude, puts out the *match* before a hundred rangers are asked to put out the *holocaust*.

A Provincial Forester in Nova Scotia, by public meetings, lectures, work in the schools, newspaper publicity, distribution of literature, etc., can do a remarkable service in the provincial interests.

**Cut Down
Railway Fires by
Co-operation.** 4. Yet another most valuable consequence of the appointment of a Provincial Forester for Nova Scotia would be the lessening of timber waste from forest fires caused by the railways. As has been true in all forested provinces of Canada, the task of guarding against fires set from railways requires special organization and unremitting vigilance.

Since the Dominion Board of Railway Commissioners undertook the direction and supervision of railway fire protection in 1912, the destruction of timber areas contiguous to the private-owned railway lines has materially lessened. In the case of the public-owned railways, (not under the Board's jurisdiction), cooperative arrangements have in some cases been worked out, usually through the provincial governments, by which patrol work and right-of-way clearing and inspection of smoke stacks and ash pans on locomotives have been developed with excellent results.

The Dominion Board of Railway Commissioners, however, has worked largely through existing forestry organizations, as in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, British Columbia, and on Dominion lands in the West, conferring upon certain of the forestry officials a special authority, as inspectors for the Board, to check up the fire protection work of the railway companies.

In Nova Scotia, however, there is no special provincial forestry organization, and no Provincial Forester. The Railway Board, therefore, has been unable to extend the benefits of its railway fire inspection to the railways of the province to the fullest extent because its own immediate staff is inadequate to provide the necessary degree of close and continuous inspection required for the best results.

Should Nova Scotia follow up the legislation it has already adopted and appoint a Provincial Forester, that officer would immediately be constituted a representative of the Dominion Board of Railway Commissioners for purposes of railway fire protection, with all the authority that goes with such designation.

The Board of Railway Commissioners, however, is handicapped to a certain extent in securing improved results in railway fire protection by the lack of a local inspector. This lack could be most readily and logically supplied as an incident to the appointment of a Provincial Forester, with resulting benefit to the business interests of the province in general.

Benefits

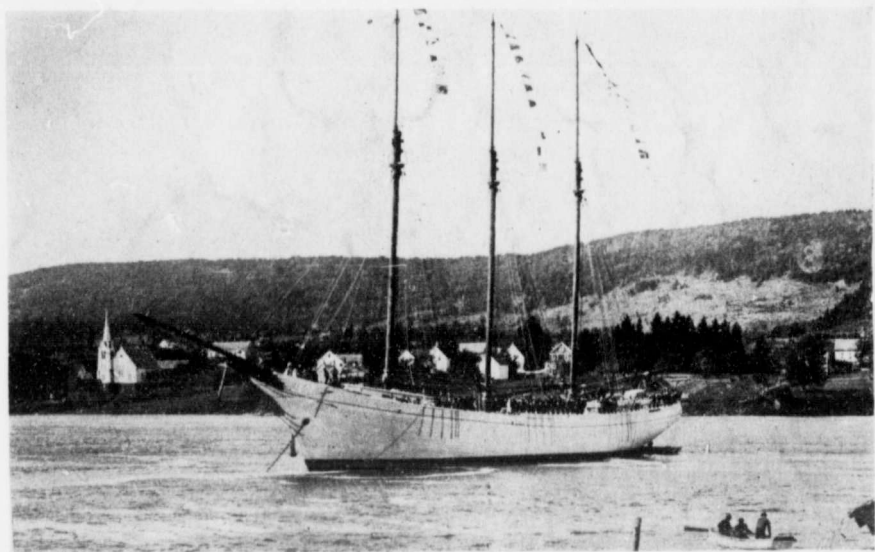
Suspended until

Province Appoints

a Forester.

It is but just to recognize that the railways in Nova Scotia have shown an interest in forest protective work and have issued excellent instructions to their employees dealing with fire prevention. No doubt the latter have had effect, but experience has shown that railway employees closely engaged on duties directly connected with their positions cannot be expected to give fire protection as much attention as if they were in personal contact with a special inspector.

"The Board of Railway Commissioners," states Sir Clifford Sifton, Chairman of the Commission of Conservation, "has arranged for cooperation in the handling of its railway fire inspection work, with governmental fire-protective organizations, in all the forest provinces, with the single exception of Nova Scotia. In that province . . . active cooperation is still pending, awaiting the appointment of a Provincial Forester. Fire protection in general and the railway situation in particular would benefit greatly by the early appointment of a qualified man to the position."



A Nova Scotia schooner, completed in October, 1918, at Annapolis Royal; 95% of the material in the hull is Nova Scotia spruce.



Logging with oxen near Bear River, Nova Scotia.