

Address by the Chief Forester to the
Forestry Committee of the British
Columbia Legislature, Nov. 15, 1938.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen:

It is a pleasure to appear again before this Committee, whose actions last fall indicated a sincere desire to unite in supporting a progressive forestry policy in British Columbia.

Since our last meeting together this Province has passed through some experiences that should leave a lasting impression on us. In order that we may fully understand the lessons conveyed by them I desire first of all to refer briefly to the forestry situation presented to you last year at this time, copies of which I am placing on the table for your further consideration.

The history of the lumber industry on this continent has been one of migration. From the East to the West the wave of exploitation has extended itself until the last frontier has been reached. In its wake millions of acres of barren lands have been left but the agricultural and industrial possibilities of the East have greatly tempered the reaction and prosperity has not departed. Today we find the lumbering industry of Canada centralized in this lower coast region of British Columbia, with limited agricultural possibilities and with comparatively few industries not dependent upon the forests for their raw material. What of tomorrow?

Three definite facts have been established:

- (1) That at the present rate of cutting our Douglas fir lumber industry will be definitely on the downhill grade within 15 years.
- (2) That we're overcutting in this lower coast region, regardless of species.

- (3) That satisfactory regeneration is not following on our cut-over lands in this region.

These three factors combined contain a definite threat to both our forest industries and our recreational interests.

We proceeded to point out, in our forestry review of last fall, that the first remedial measures to be applied should aim at securing better regeneration on our cut-over lands. This was to be through the medium of:

- (a) Slash disposal,
- (b) Snag-falling,
- (c) Leaving of seed trees,

accompanied by better protection from fire. The necessary legislation was passed, although with little extra financial provision for putting it into effect.

The foregoing is, in brief, our presentation of the forestry situation to you a year ago. I am not attempting to review all the statements made at that time as you will find the details on reference to my brief of last year, which I resubmit to you as an accurate statement of the forestry situation of this Province. What you are now interested in is a review of our experiences of the past year and what they suggest with respect to forest policy of the future.

For the purpose of implementing our strengthened slash legislation we carried out some reorganization of our personnel and appointed two experienced forest protection officers to spend all their time on the work, to be assisted from time to time, as required, by two research men who were specially qualified to pass on matters of regeneration. The work proceeded satisfactorily, although slowly, on account of the number of operations involved and the misunderstanding of and prejudice against our new legislation.

An example of the educational work necessary was that of a meeting held with the sportsmen of Vancouver Island. The members of the Fish and Game Clubs passed a resolution against our slash-burning regulations. We held a meeting in May at Duncan which was largely attended. We explained our new legislation, the problems involved, and that no blanket rule with regard to slash-burning applicable to all areas could be laid down, as each operation was a separate problem calling for a decision on its own merits. Probably 1,000 examinations would be involved. We stated that conditions were now ripe for a second Merville Fire on the Island and that our own interests in forest protection and in securing regeneration on cut-over lands were their interests. Game Commissioner Butler sat with us on the platform and supported us. The meeting broke up satisfied, I believe, with the soundness of our policy.

Unfortunately, our slash-disposal preparation work was soon interfered with by fires and from then on fire-fighting occupied our staff almost to the exclusion of everything else. A brief review of four large fires proves enlightening:

Fire No. 1: Burned an area of 12,000 acres, destroyed much game and the fire was a summer-long hazard. Cause: Logging operation, the operator, disregarding our regulations, operating without the required fire protection appliances and, without our permission, starting logging again after the fire started. We secured convictions on both counts in a local court and the fine, gentlemen, was only \$50 on each count.

Fire No. 2: The large Campbell River Fire. Burned over 75,000 acres, cost over \$200,000 to fight, did an estimated damage of \$800,000. Total cost:

about \$1,000,000. Since lawsuits are pending in respect to this fire I do not care to discuss it further.

Fire No. 3: Burned over 3,600 acres. Reported a couple of hours after a logging machine ceased work at noon. It is believed that the watchman lay down on his job. Apparently labour shares some of the responsibility for fires.

Fire No. 4: In a rather difficult part of the Island to get at. We had to fly a large number of men in to the fire. It burned 6,900 acres and cost \$28,000 to fight. Some fisherman or camper was undoubtedly responsible for this fire.

These four large fires were all on Vancouver Island, burned a total of nearly 100,000 acres, did over one million dollars worth of damage, and cost \$275,000 to fight. A pretty expensive summer for Vancouver Island--to say nothing of the loss in tourist trade.

The lessons taught by these fires are many. Weather was of course the biggest factor--always was and always will be--the summer was undoubtedly an extreme one in that respect. Since we can do nothing about weather except to prepare for it, wherein did we lack?

(1) Those fires were all the result of carelessness or lack of consideration of the public interest--on the part of someone. They denote the need of increased care with fire in the woods on the part of everyone (this means public education); and indicate the necessity of a firm administration of our fire regulations and the closing of the woods to logging operations and travel in hazardous weather.

(2) The large contributing factors to the spread of these fires were the existence of snags and slash. True, the fires on occasions spread rapidly over lands where the slash had already been burned; but the slash and snags were the real hazards with which the fire fighters had to contend.

In short, these fires constitute an endorsement of our representations of last fall regarding slash, snags, and concurrent subjects. Every forester and experienced operator knew that conditions on this Island and on portions of the Mainland were ripe for conflagrations, weather permitting, and are ready for further conflagrations when we have another dry season.

Coming now to the post fire season, we report a very successful slash-burning programme in which nearly 60,000 acres were burned and during which we received a very considerable degree of co-operation from the operators themselves.

This past summer has improved our vision of the problems ahead of us. We made a splendid start with our slash-disposal work but only got part way with it. Next year we must extend the work to cover all the hazardous areas in the Douglas fir belt.

Practically nothing was done with respect to snag-felling, an amendment covering which we secured at the last sitting of the Legislature. Last summer's fires proved the vital necessity of getting the snags down. It is going to cost money and naturally there will be many objections on those grounds. In the State of Washington the snags on 75% of the areas are now being felled by the operators--voluntarily.

The subject of leaving seed trees is a still more difficult one and a start was made this year on this problem on only one or two operations. It will require a great deal of study and has decided limitations on account

of the cost involved. Many of the large operators in Washington are already voluntarily laying out their operations to leave trees for seeding purposes.

This brings up the subject of planting. Only after we have failed to secure natural regeneration by practical measures should we plant on a large scale, and then only if we can give the plantations reasonable protection from fire. Under our present allotments we cannot give this protection.

Last summer we put into effect a total closure of logging operations and travel in the woods for a period of several weeks. It worked a hardship in many cases which could not be avoided. It was an absolute necessity. I regret the fact that even in seasons of extreme hazard we have no control over prospectors travelling in the woods. It seems inconsistent that, while whole logging operations can be closed down and travel in the woods prohibited, special exemption must be given to prospectors. Closure measures must become the rule rather than the exception in future in seasons even less hazardous than last summer if we are to adequately protect our forests from fire. I trust we may iron out many of the difficulties involved through the co-operation of the operators and the woods-using public.

The wise and firm administration of all these various measures will require an enlarged staff--experienced men are necessary and our mistakes will surely be pointed out, to our embarrassment. I deplore the present overload of work on our forest officers. It is impossible to devote sufficient time to the studying of our problems and the planning ahead of the work. Right now snag-falling should be under way on our logging operations of this district and we have done very little about it as yet because of the arrears of current work. We hope, however, to make a start soon.

That may suggest to someone that snag-falling is merely a matter of circularizing the operators and penalizing those who fail to comply. It is not so simple. In the first place, satisfactory compliance with these and other regulations must be based on a certain amount of good will and mutual understanding between the operators and the Forest Service. We have hundreds of operators to interview and areas to inspect while our regular tasks, such as collecting revenues and selling timber, remain undiminished.

We seek first to work with the industry--not against them. The spirit of most of them is willing but the flesh is weak. It is natural for them to cling to freedom from regulations. We hope to apply these regulations with a practical understanding of the operators' own problems. Progress will necessarily be slow but the regulations must be enforced. The public interest demands it, the operators themselves will benefit, and the regulations are sound. The fact that they may increase the cost of \$13.00 logs by 10% or 15% per M. does not justify any apology being offered for them.

I wish particularly in this connection to express my appreciation of the wonderful backing I received from my Minister, the Honourable Mr. Gray, in a most trying year. I shall always remain grateful for the loyal support he gave me.

So much for the events of the past year. I should now like to have you consider the broader problems of forestry.

Three steps are necessary in laying down an adequate policy for British Columbia:

- (1) The establishment of the main basic facts.
This I think has already been done.
- (2) The setting up of legislation adequate to deal with

the situation. Our legislation, with minor amendments, is ample for our present needs.

- (3) The providing of the necessary money. This has not yet been done and I believe that this Province will not inaugurate a policy of forest management that possesses the necessary degree of permanency until the principle enunciated by the Royal Commission of 1910 regarding financing, and set aside for many years, be implemented.

This report, in effect, stated that forest royalties were not revenue and not until the needs of forestry were first assured should any surplus pass into general revenue.

When the time for making out estimates comes around in these Buildings; when budgets must be balanced; when the needs of the immediate present obscure those of the future; when those whose livelihoods are chiefly affected are still in our schools or yet to come, it is just too much to expect of human nature to voluntarily leave sufficient of that forest capital to perpetuate the resource. And so, in the past 25 years, seventy-five per cent of our revenues, amounting to over 50 million dollars, has gone to finance other government activities, while the safeguarding of the forest resource has been inadequately financed.

I make these statements as facts, not as criticisms. No doubt other urgent demands on revenues made a compromise necessary in the allocation of expenditures. If the advice of the Royal Commission is sound, the remedy is an amendment to the "Forest Act" giving these forestry needs first claim on a certain percentage of the revenue. At present it should be about 50% of forest revenue. This would give an added degree of permanency to our forest policy.

I have been fortunate in securing recently a most interesting compilation of the forest revenues and expenditures of the various Provinces

in Canada.

Taking the past five years as the basis of comparison, it showed British Columbia as contributing the lowest percentage of its forest revenue of any Province in the Dominion; this is in spite of the fact that the forests mean much more to British Columbia than to any of the other provinces.

Here are some of the figures:

Ontario	spent 98%	of her forest revenue on her forests.						
Manitoba	" 89%	" " " " " " " "						
Saskatchewan	" 131%	" " " " " " " "						
Alberta	" 81%	" " " " " " " "						
British Columbia	" 25%	" " " " " " " "						

It should be noted that British Columbia's 25% also pays for all her land inspection work and furnishes a public fire brigade for the protection of private property.

Let us take the item of Forest Protection. A few years ago the late Chief Forester, Mr. Caverhill, made a most exhaustive study of the forest protection problem in British Columbia in all its ramifications. He came to the conclusion that one million dollars was the minimum amount needed to put forest protection on an adequate basis in this Province. Remember we have 75,000,000 acres of productive forest land to protect.

Several years later the Economic Council under Dr. Carrothers made an economic analysis of the same subject. Permit me to read four of their conclusions on the subject:

"That so far it has not been possible, mainly for financial reasons, to develop an adequate policy of forest protection.

"The inadequacy of the financial provisions of the Forest Protection Fund has led to the development of emphasis on fire fighting, rather than fire prevention.

"That it would appear that the Fund which has been pro-

vided in the past is inadequate to provide for a proper programme of fire protection on the preventive side.

"That in order to provide adequately for such a programme, it would be necessary to have sufficient funds budgeted ahead of their actual requirements, so as to enable the Forest Branch to develop a permanent programme."

I take it that the Government of the day is reasonably satisfied with the findings of the late Mr. Caverhill and Dr. Carrothers, as I find in their report to the Rowell Commission an estimate of one million dollars as the minimum expenditure needed for forest protection.

The experiences of this past summer further confirm the inadequacy of this fund, the story of which has been one of almost continuous deficits accompanied by unnecessarily large losses in forest wealth. I do not delude myself as to the main cause of the people's concern over fires this past summer on the Island; they were thinking, quite naturally, of the hazard to private property, of the interference to the tourist trade and to their vacations. The public does not realize how close we came to a major disaster. Some day the real result of 100,000 acres burned over on this Island may become evident --but I wonder if the next generation will be the first to perceive it.

The Forest Protection Fund is at present made up of a 4¢ per acre tax on alienated timber land yielding about \$140,000 this year, plus a \$440,000 contribution from the government. The Government contribution is still \$40,000 below the amount contributed prior to the depression. This fund is solely for the protection of forest values but the public is insisting on the protection of private property, such as settlers' homes, mining buildings, etc., for which there is no contribution to the Fund.

We started in at the beginning of the fiscal year with a \$62,000 deficit and it will probably be in the neighbourhood of \$350,000 by the end

of next March. What kind of shape is that in which to tackle a new fire season? History is simply repeating itself in a fund of almost continuous deficits, preventing the proper planning of protection facilities and laying the emphasis on fire-fighting rather than on prevention. The regrettable part of it is when fires like last season's do occur the safety of life and private property demand that the fires be fought almost irrespective of the expenditures involved. Fighting large fires is always a wasteful method.

The lower coast was not the only region responsible for last summer's heavy expenditures. Conditions were also extremely bad in the Kootenays. We spent \$83,000 there in fighting fire, compared with \$15,000 the preceding year.

The attempts made by the Legislature in the past two or three years to rehabilitate this Fund are commendable, but increased contributions are a necessity.

In our discussion today we are mainly stressing the situation on the coast--not because the forests of the interior mean less to the residents of the interior; not because we should be any more interested in their proper management and protection on the coast than in the interior; but because our failure to make adequate provision for their perpetuation is here most evident and here large industries must continue to find their supplies or go out of existence.

Since I have quoted the opinion of an outstanding economist, Dr. Carrothers, permit me to add to it the advice of an outstanding scientist and a former member of this Committee, Dr. Harris. In a recent report to the Honourable the Minister of Mines, not yet published, he states the

following:

"Since there appears no doubt in the minds of those whose business it is to keep in touch with world trends, that there is going to be an increased use of cellulose products, irrespective of whether wood will eventually be used as a structural material as lumber, as synthetic boards, or as chemical products, it is absolutely essential that in order to maintain her political economy British Columbia must have forests. Thus we must be prepared to undertake:

- (a) Adequate fire protection.
- (b) Immediate initiation of a programme of re-forestation, with the ultimate aim of placing at least the Vancouver District on a sustained-yield basis."

In the future we must think more than ever of forestry, not merely in terms of growing timber, but also of promoting the many varied uses of our forest areas, keeping always in mind that use or uses that will mean the greatest good to the greatest number.

Some forest areas should be developed primarily or exclusively for recreational purposes. A wise, balanced forestry administration will do much to increase the fish and game life and to promote the tourist trade. The development in this Province of one sport alone--skiing--is an outstanding recreational need and it has a decidedly commercial aspect also.

Our winter relief camps and summer training camps can do much to develop the recreational uses of our forest areas. We believe, however, that in the summer forest protection projects must receive the first consideration for the time being.

Undue publicity has been given to the subject of Christmas-tree cutting. Representatives of American firms are over here endeavouring to have Crown lands opened up for the cutting of these trees. The creation of a needed payroll around Christmas time is commendable but the cutting of

Christmas trees is not, in general, good forestry practice, except perhaps on certain dry areas in the Interior valuable only for grazing. The trees we want thinned out are not suitable for Christmas trees. There is much waste in connection with it and we have not the staff to supervise it. The State of Washington is so opposed to it that they recently levied a prohibitory tax on trees cut on their lands of \$1.00 per tree.

I do not believe that the people of this Province yet realize the influence of our forests on their livelihood. Time and again statistics have been presented showing that in the matter of employment, of government revenues, of car-loadings, of water-borne freight, and in many other ways, the forests far exceed every other natural resource in importance. Many of our agricultural communities would cease to exist if it were not for the farmers being able to earn money through work in the woods. Every year over \$300,000 is distributed along the C.N.R. east of Prince Rupert for hewn ties and cedar poles alone. Just think what this means to the farmer and small storekeeper.

Last summer we thought we would tackle this subject from another angle--that of the individual community--so we took Duncan as an example, including with that city as the centre the whole of the Cowichan drainage basin, part of the Koksilah and most of the Chemainus River basins, but not including the saw-milling town of Chemainus. The total population of the district was estimated at 9,450 and 60% of them were dependent upon the production, manufacture and transportation of forest products for a living. 2,200 men found employment in the woods and mills earning \$2,000,000 in wages and producing \$6,000,000 of forest products.

There are 100,000 acres of cut-over lands in that district; 16,000 are already under cultivation or put to some use; a large portion of the remaining 84,000 are non-agricultural and 6,000 cut-over acres are being added to it yearly, practically all of which is absolute forest land.

Year by year back go our edges of timber, leaving 50-75% of the cut-over land barren or with only a poor crop. Gentlemen, the essential fact is that we are dealing with a crop, and are we to have another crop or not? That is the issue in front of you.

The areas suitable for agricultural development on the coast are limited and the cost of clearing land heavy. With respect to the whole Province, I note that the Government's report to the Rowell Commission estimates less than 4 1/4 million acres are arable. This is less than 2% of the total area of the Province. No, the crop of British Columbia is her forests, with the subsidiary crops of fish and game and that which she can sell and still retain--her scenery. How we shall manage this crop is one of the big problems facing this Province today.

The thoughtlessness of our people fifty years ago left the public of today possessors of not one single cathedral grove along our hundreds of miles of main roads. Monuments of beauty that nature took three centuries to build--ten times the years spent in building the Great Pyramid of Egypt and 50 times the length of time to construct the great Boulder Dam. Can we not be content with reaping the mature harvest without leaving the forest farm unproductive?

The essential forestry facts are established and the legislation is on our books. Whether we are financially unable to do other than deplete our forest capital is a question I am not qualified to answer, but

let no one cast doubts on what the situation actually is today. Neither private persuasion, public oratory nor selfish interest should be allowed to cloud the issue or misrepresent the facts of the situation. The great essential now is adequate financial provision to ensure a permanent forest policy--and this must be combined with a firm administration of regulations, based on sound forestry practice and vision for the future. If out of the ashes of last summer's disasters these things arise, we may yet turn reverses into gains.

