

States Can Get Help to Save Forests

THE LAWS of many states must be changed if they as commonwealths are to qualify for help in prevention and suppression of forest fires, under the Clarke-McNary Act passed during the closing hours of the last Congress. The new law authorizes the expenditure by the national government of a sum not to exceed \$2,500,000 annually in co-operating with states which have adopted efficiency methods of handling forest fires, and for the purpose of studying systems of forest taxation. The object of the study is to establish more equitable principles for taxing growing forests. This should have a far-reaching effect in making the growing of timber a profitable business, according to the American Forestry Association, which has started a campaign to encourage appropriate state legislation looking toward country-wide application of the Clarke-McNary Law.

In the November election the citizens of California voted on a constitutional amendment placing immature forest growth in the same class with fruit trees and nut-bearing trees, which are exempt from taxation for the first four years after planting in orchard.

Wisconsin voted on an amendment to her constitution providing for the participation of the state in acquiring, preserving and developing of forests, and for appropriating money for this purpose within certain limits. This amends the accepted policy of Wisconsin against state participation in "works of internal improvement." It is the second exception to that policy. The other one, which was voted in 1908, affected highway construction.

A committee of prominent men in South Carolina, including representatives from lumbering, agricultural and other industries have fostered the introduction of a bill in the present session of the legislature of that state which provides for a state forestry department to be supported by a severance tax on forest products.

Pennsylvania voted in the last election upon the issuance of \$25,000,000 in bonds to be used for the purchase of more state forests. A conservation council made up of interested organizations is pushing this issue as a sound measure for the strengthening of one of the best state forestry systems in the country.

In Oregon the state land board is expected to approve the exchange of numerous isolated sections of timbered school land for a single tract now under control of the federal forest service. The area contains 70,000 acres and will be designated as a state forest.

Idaho chambers of commerce are at work on a campaign for a state forest policy which will secure federal co-operation under the Clarke-McNary law. A bill embodying their recommendations was recently introduced in the current session of the Idaho legislature. Similar activity is under way in Arkansas.

In Georgia the Rountree-Haddock Bill,

providing for a state forestry department and a forest fire protection system, may be passed during the present legislative session.

There are fourteen states which have no forestry departments. The most heavily timbered of these are Florida, South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi and Arkansas.

As the owner of one-third of our remaining forests in this country, the farmer is recognized along with the lumberman in the recently enacted Clarke-McNary Bill. He is to be given encouragement in the growing of timber as a crop.

Through the ages, wood from the forest has been the lever by which man has lifted himself up the ladder of knowledge. With limbs and leaves from the trees he learned to kindle fire, and with the tough and straight-grained wood from certain species he learned to make the bow and arrow. Therewith he rescued himself from a state of savagery, by mastering the arts of supplying himself with food and clothing. With easily workable wood, he stumbled upon the principle of the wheel which is basic to almost every machine or mechanical conveyance of the present age. He learned the art of plowing the soil and pursue more intensive agricultural development through the happy discovery that wood could be easily fashioned into crude plows.

Modern electricity sprang from Pliny's discovery that fossil resin from prehistoric coniferous forests possessed the inexplicable power of attracting straws when rubbed. Trough the simple and ready adaptability of wood, man learned the art of home-building and architecture, to bridge rivers, to construct ships and master the seas, and now, within a decade, he has conquered the air by the initial knowledge acquired through the handcraft of forest materials.

Although the airplane body may be built out of metal, the wings are constructed of wood in almost all the newer types, and many designers and manufacturers still use wood everywhere in preference to metal. The world's largest airplane, the Barling bomber, which was assembled at Fairfield, Ohio, in 1923, is built altogether of spruce. The Barling bomber is 120 feet broad from wing-tip to wing-tip. It is driven by six Liberty engines and carries 2,200 gallons of gasoline. It can carry a load of 10,000 pounds of passengers or freight. The smallest airplanes ever built are also made of wood.

We who in the summer months complain of hot days in our homes, or offices, or stores, or whose work take us into the heat of shop or field, know little of the toiling, red-eyed, choking army of forest fire-fighters who put in the long desperate hours to save the woods, waters, industries, and even homes and human lives, from the hand of carelessness.

Who are these fighters? Depending

on the region, they may be lumberjacks, ranchers, summer resort employees, water company men, road crews' section hands, from the railroads, Mexican laborers, prospectors, cowboys, or just ordinary men from towns and cities, out on a vacation or drafted under one or another of the state laws as able-bodied.

Who leads them? The forest ranger? In most cases, yes; but there are scarcely more than 2,500 rangers in the whole fire-stricken region, and many a hardy rancher, lean engineer, or mine or section foreman has to take a hand.

In some parts of the West fire-fighters must walk long distances, carrying heavy packs and tools, to get to a bad fire. Sometimes early in the fight they can rest a little, making the attack at dawn with the hope of beating the late forenoon winds; more often they must start work at once, even travel. At best, if the crew reaches the fire by truck, with plenty of water, provisions, and tools, there are long, strenuous hours of quickly planned cutting of lines with the hope of starving out the oncoming flames in the cases of a ground fire, or backfiring when the situation is more serious. Brush hooks and axes for cutting, and shovels for cleaving the ground of needles or duff—these are useful in the hands of strong and determined men, only, who, when there is no crew to relieve, catch a few winks as they can and stay on the job.

Not the least difficulty is in maintaining morale. It is not easy to overcome the discouragement which follows when a fire jumps a man-made line, a stream, or other natural feature upon which the crew has pinned its faith. Lots of bread, meat, strong coffee and tobacco help, but morale plays a big part.

The thanks of the American public should go to the men who do the actual hard, grinding work on the fire lines.

Recently thirty students of the Hollywood, Calif., High School made a trip into the Angeles National Forest, built camp fires, and left several of them unextinguished. The local forest supervisor, upon complaint from one of the rangers, addressed a letter to the principal of the high school, calling his attention to the seriousness of the offense, and of the necessity of impressing care of fire on high school adults. The letter was read to the boys in the party, who immediately inaugurated a fire prevention week of their own at the high school to square themselves. Every one of them soberly assumed responsibility and put before the school some angle of fire prevention or suppression every day for one week. This was long after the proclamation for a National Forest Fire Prevention Week. Fortunately for the boys and the Angeles National Forest, the fires which were left did not escape control. The campaign staged in the high school is convincing evidence that one fire pre-

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