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British Columbia's Forest Policy

SPEECH

BY THE

Hon. William R. Ross

MINISTER OF LANDS

ON THE

SECOND READING OF

The Forest Bill

LEGISLATIVE SESSION OF 1912

control. Provision was therefore made in the bill for the constitution of a Forest Board of experts who would keep in touch with and co-ordinate the many different phases of the work. Composed of practical men actually engaged in the service, the board, under the direction of the Minister, would carry out the vigorous policy that the Government had outlined. Under it a general investigation of th timber resources of the Province—both those under lease licence, reserve or in private ownership—would be undertaken, with a view to ascertaining exactly what timber the Province contained. There were reasons for believing that the timber now under reserve was much greater in extent than most people thought. In connection with this investigation, the Government would require all licences to be surveyed as soon as possible and at latest by 1918; and to facilitate and cheapen such surveys, simplified regulations had been introduced into the bill for the survey of timber lands. As the timber still unsold was ascertained, and as needed and desirable in the public interest, sales of Crown stumpage would be held.

Two facts had been kept in view in deciding upon the method of tenure; the first one was that the B. C. license tenure was the best yet devised anywhere; the second one was that uniformity of tenure throughout the Province was most desirable, since it avoided creating any commercial handicap between different classes of holders of Crown stumpage. Therefore, all through the Forest Bill every possible effort consistent with the existing rights of holders had been made to put all holders upon an equality. In accordance with this principle, all future sales would be sales of licenses, and the conditions of these would vary according to circumstances. Sometimes sales would be for immediate logging, for example to save burnt timber liable to spoil; some sales would be on the basis of bonus per thousand feet in addition to royalty, payable when the timber was cut, this being the improved Ontario method. Pulpwood timber would be sold under license, a few simple modifications being made in the conditions of the license to cover the question of the saw-timber included in pulp areas.

THE PULP AND PAPER INDUSTRY

In this connection the Minister referred to the well-known fact that the United States supply of pulpwood is hopelessly insufficient for the present needs of the great republic. Already that country imports one-quarter of the raw material for its pulp mills from Canada, and, in addition, Canada supplies to it over $4,000,000 worth of manufactured pulp. Already the industry has begun a rapid growth in the West, six mills having been established in Oregon and Washington. In this movement British Columbia had not lagged behind, five mills having been already built within the Province. Upon the

large pulp and paper mill at Powell River, three million dollars had been already spent on mill plant alone, to say nothing of the necessary investment in logging, railways, etc.; a million and a half represented the investment at Ocean Falls; and mills had also been completed both at Swanson Bay and Howe Sound, the total expenditure to date being no less than $6,500,000 on plant alone. Small towns had been created on the mainland coast through this new industry, and future developments in this Province were most promising. At the great Powell River operations every man employed was a white man and Orientals were kept out. The Minister then referred to the report of the U. S. tariff commission, which showed that on an average the wood used in every ton of pulp cost five dollars less in Eastern Canada than in the U. S., and that, as far as the West was concerned, the 560 square miles of pulp concessions granted by former Governments of this Province give the companies who hold them a strong advantage over their competitors in the Western states as far as cost of raw material was concerned. The Forestry Commission Report dealt at length with the question of the saw-timber included in the pulp concessions granted in 1901, and the commission had recommended that a cruise and thorough examination of these concessions be made to ascertain the facts of the situation. The Government, in adopting this proposal, would detail trained experts from the Forest Branch to study the problem where it should be studied—that was, on the ground, on the pulp leaseholds themselves. In dealing with the extremely complex situation involved in the holding of this saw timber, the Government was guided by two principles, namely, that the good name of the Province must not be smirched by any repudiation of pledges given by former Governments, and that, at the same time, the interests of the public, as owner of the timber, must be fully protected.

ROYALTIES

Concerning the present rates of royalty, the Forestry Commission had made no recommendation, but widespread press reports had given the mistaken impression that rates had been altered in the present bill so as to levy royalty according to the grade of timber. Since these reports had been given currency, he desired to take the present opportunity of contradicting them, as well as the statement that the royalty on leaseholds had been raised to $1.50.

CREATION OF RESERVES

To facilitate the work of reafforestation, the Government had adopted a policy put in practice by Ontario, the Dominion and the United States Government—namely, the power to proclaim forest reserves over lands suitable only for the growing of timber. Much