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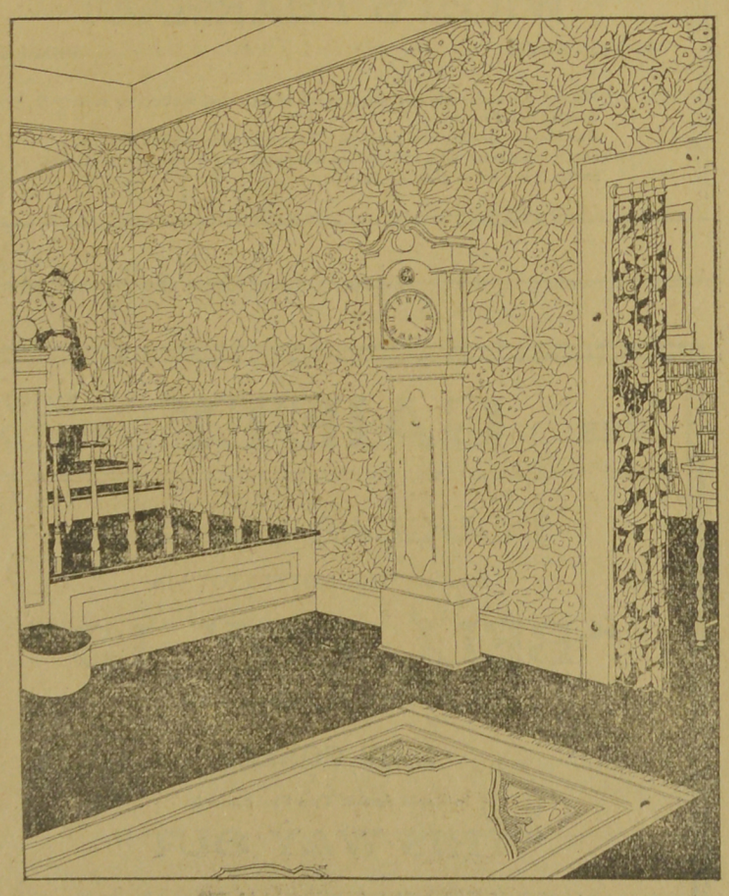
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MR. SIFTON FORSEES AN EXODUS OF PEOPLE BY RUIN OF FORESTS

(By Hon. Sir Clifford Sifton)

It seems self-evident that if the plague of forest fires in Canada is permitted to continue, the exodus of population from our timber growing areas cannot very well be prevented. We have a large percentage of Canada's habitable area unfit for farming. That percentage must produce timber and mines or be eliminated from our slate of assets. From the point of view of fire damage we may omit consideration of mines. Thus, if we allow the ravages of forest conflagrations to continue at the present pace, it is only a question of a relatively few years until we force from our northern areas the great body of population and all municipalities subsisting on forest manufactures.

I regard the forest not as a mass of trees but as the raw material of industrial expansion and of prolific employment, and as the mainstay of our thousands of municipalities dependent on wood-using industries. It is much more intelligent to discern in a 'bush fire' the destruction of a multitude of pay envelopes. It drives the plain facts home when we visualize every human-caused forest fire as a blow to our national well-being that will require three quarters of a century to repair. As the situation now stands, Canada should gain enormously from the simple fact of possessing great spruce areas with excellent water powers to make utilization effective and relatively cheap. To the south we have a partially deforested nation, exhibiting an insatiable demand for the products of a spruce forest, chiefly newsprint paper. Even as England's coal served to enrich her during the last century or more, so Canada's spruce and pine forests should be taken as representing a commercial counter almost unmatched by anything else we possess except agricultural land.

Are we to tolerate a condition where, with every forest area on a rising market, our own citizens with a false notion of personal license, shall continue to start four thousand forest fires a year, killing the very resource from which the industrial workers of Canada stand to profit most? I believe the provincial governments could well afford to spend on forest fire prevention every dollar of their forest revenues up to a point where the forest capital ceases to show an annual depletion. If even one half of the millions of forest taxation were spent on the most modern systems of forest protection we would rapidly dimish our shocking annual losses of timber and go far toward placing the timber resources on a business-like basis.

NO ROOM FOR THREE GROUPS IN PROVINCIAL POLITICS

(Toronto Globe.)

The experience of four years of group system in the Ontario Legislature and the character and conduct of the present campaign confirm the view that, in Provincial politics at least there is no logical room for three or more parties. At Ottawa the tariff question divides Parliament into right, left and centre, though the Liberal centre and the Agrarian Left find a measure of co-operation necessary to get things done that are desired by both parties. In Ontario there is conceivably no issue that can warrant such an alignment. The only public policy on which opinion is sharply divided is that of prohibition. Electors and candidates are either for or against the law—there is no middle ground. During the last election the new party found much of its support in the hostility of the rural community to an extensive program of Provincial highways. The hard-surface road—derided by Mr. Drury as a "slab of concrete"—was disliked particularly in the countryside at that time. But farmers have since seen the need of permanent surfacing to stand up against heavy motor traffic, and the present government has launched into a highways scheme much more ambitious and expensive than anything in the past. As to the complaint that the old parties paid too little attention to agrarian interests, even a U. F. O. Government has not found scope for any appreciable increase of expenditure on agriculture. The plea that a third party was essential to more economical government has been dropped in view of the swelling proportions of Mr. Smith's Budgets.

Obviously there are no conditions or issues in the Provincial sphere demanding more than two parties, unless we accept the class or occupational idea advocated by Mr. Morrison. The theory that the basis of representation in the Legislature should be economic involves the formation of numberless groups, each speaking and acting for a particular interest, and it is argued that out of this conflict of interests somehow a balance of general advantage would be struck. It is doubtful whether many farmers in Ontario, a sensible class, would push the doctrine to its logical conclusion as would Mr. Morrison in Ontario, or Mr. Wood in Alberta. Mr. Drury has publicly and vehemently denounced it, describing it as a species of Sovietism. His broadening out plea was a protest against it, but, unfortunately, he has not had the courage of his convictions. He threw his professions overboard rather than meet the active hostility of Mr. Morrison in the election campaign. The false position in which he has placed himself as an argument against the multiplication of parties. He himself is unable to give a single reason or point to a single issue which justifies the present divisions among the electorate.

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