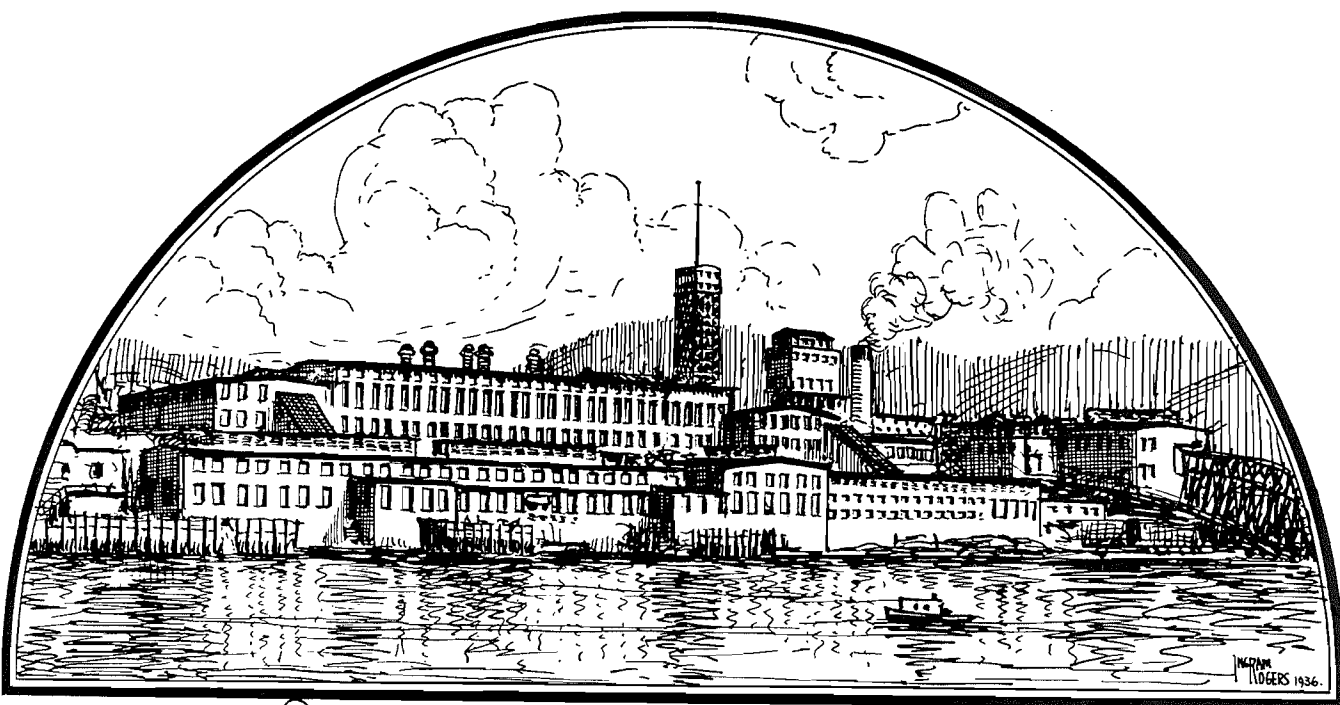




A wood pulp paper mill in British Columbia.

FOREST BRANCH NEWS LETTER

An entirely unofficial budget of news, nonsense, 'n'opinion compiled from time to time for the profit, amusement, and annoyance of the staff.

No. 19

Victoria, B.C., August 30, 1937.

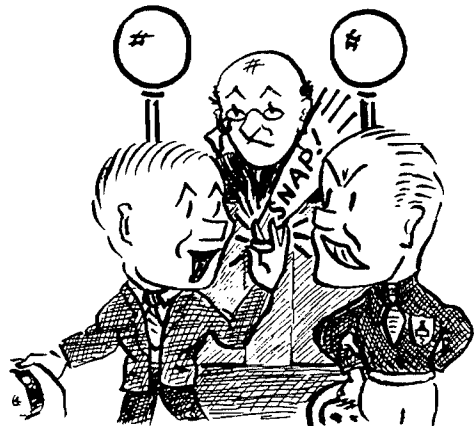
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"Research" is defined in our desk dictionary as "a searching for something especially with diligence." This is a broad definition and leaves us with less awe of Research than we had before. Under it can be classed all that deep thought, hard work, and ceaseless experimentation with gadgets, the result of which is seen in such inventions as Glassford's hose mast, Coles' truck box, Sharpe's hose winder and Holmes' water tank. In fact it would be hard to pick any one man in the Service to whom cannot be credited some improvement in equipment or practice--some profitable research.

At the same time there are problems in protection as well as management that require, for their solution, continuous study and voluminous measurement. Administrative staffs have not the time to do this work and, where scientific problems are involved, not all of us have the necessary training, and so research staffs are employed to develop the sound basis on which we can build our practice and improve our technique.

Forest Protection Research has been somewhat neglected but this year we have started on the trail towards more basic knowledge of the factors involved in fire control. The start has been a study and local application of fire-day forecasting as developed in the United States. Another borrowing has been the lookout eye tests developed south of the line and to which we hope to add practical field tests with standard smoke candles. Don't be surprised, nor too annoyed, if you find a brass hat of some sort waiting by the road when you chase up a fire report from the lookout. His smoke bomb may be the reason. It won't be done often enough to disrupt the organization.

As time allows research will delve deeper into the mysteries of fire behaviour, chemical aids to control, effects of various fuels on fire intensity, location of lookouts and organization, and whatever other studies will assist in cutting the fire bill. Knowing the field men as we do, it is with complete confidence that we feel they will continue inventing and improving and generally "searching for something especially with diligence." The combined result will undoubtedly be better fire control.



Rex vs. Popoff

Ranger Bill had a pretty tough little fire. His crew of five men had fought it, tooth and nail, for two days and were holding their own. Sometime during the second day Joe Popoff, one of the crew, decided he had had enough and popped off the job without saying anything to the Ranger.

The going got tougher after that and considerable line was lost. Bill thought that the lack of the one man made all the difference and was riled about it. With considerable right on his side, in view of the seriousness of the fire, he felt that something ought to be done to Popoff for popping off, and so he consulted his "Act".

Section 122 caught Ranger Bill's eye and subsection (2) seemed to fill the case. Popoff had certainly "failed" and so he was haled before the "Beak". Popoff pleaded "Not Guilty" and so it was up to Bill, whose evidence showed plainly that Popoff had certainly popped off without warning. On that Bill rested his case.

Popoff, however, was smart. He told how the Ranger had come along and asked him if he wanted to go fire-fighting. Being free at the moment Joe went along and fought the fire for two days. Nothing having been said to him about having to go or having to stay on the fire, he exercised his right as a workman to quit when he thought he had had enough. The magistrate called for the "Forest Act". He fished out his glasses and put them on the end of his nose, where all magisterial specs are supposed to perch, and he scanned the "Act".

Now magistrates are mostly discerning fellows and so our "Beak" saw in sub-section (2) the words, "when called upon...under this section." He looked back in sub-section (1) and saw that forest officers might "employ or summon". "To employ a person is one thing", said he, "and the employee has all the rights ordinarily accorded his position, including that of quitting when he feels like it. But to "summon" a person is another thing and much more definite. It smacks of "calling upon" a person." Ranger Bill could only admit the fact that he had not formally summoned Popoff nor warned him that he must stay on the job, so the "Beak" told Popoff to popoff as the case was dismissed.

All of which brings us to the point that we haven't a case against a man for quitting a fire unless he has been summoned to go or warned that he must not quit until allowed to do so by the foreman or forest officer.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The foregoing, printed as submitted, constitutes a very fair and unbiassed report on a recent prosecution. Contrary to the decision in this case, we have always felt that under this section we might either "employ" or "summon" (s.s. 1), that whichever we did the man had been "called upon" (s.s. 2), and therefore was liable to prosecution if he quit without notice or permission ("failed to render assistance"). Under our system of jurisprudence the law of the land is not only what is written in the statutes but involves also what the courts decide the statutes mean. Unfortunately (or perhaps, fortunately), we are neither judge, jury, nor lawyer, and if the court says you have to poke a man in the nose and tell him to highball out to a fire or spend a month in the cooler before we can consider that he has been "summoned" or "called upon", then in spite of what we may have always felt, that is what we will have to do.

A written order on a "242" should fill the bill. In the case of a fire camp some rewording of the "Notice to Fire Fighters" might put us in the clear, provided the Ranger doesn't forget to post the notice. A few words introduced into the Act would clarify the situation.

It is not very often that we want to prosecute a man for leaving a fire but occasionally a weak sister will put us in an extremely dangerous position if he doesn't stick. On the whole, where a situation is at all critical, or promises to become so, it would be wise to warn the crew that no one can quit without permission. Having done so we think we can quite safely rely on Section 122 as it stands.

Incidentally, note that Ranger Bill was up to the minute with his Section 122. If he had laid his complaint under Section 118, as of yore, Popoff, being a bright guy, would have been quick to have pointed out to the judge that the fire wasn't on his land, that he wasn't carrying on any operation, and that generally the case was all wet.)

Up to a short time ago the Forest Act was Chapter 93 of the Revised Statutes of British Columbia, 1924. Last year the Statutes were again consolidated and revised and the correct reference to the "Forest Act" is now Chapter 102 of the Revised Statutes, 1936. This fact is important. It has a constant bearing on our routine work and should be kept clearly in mind by all officers.

The Act itself as now published has incorporated in it all the amendments since 1924 and sections have been renumbered. As noted in the preceding item, for example, the old Section 118 is now Section 122. The new Section 117 has inadvertently been printed 177. It will require an amendment at the next session of the legislature to correct this. In the meantime we are advised to refer to this section in any official document, as in the case of a prosecution, as "that section of the Forest Act following next after Section 116 and numbered 177."

Our Mechanical Superintendent has just completed a trip covering Kamloops and Southern Interior Districts and reports equipment generally is in fine shape. Several highlights noted during his journey included Ranger Mayson's tool cache at Barriere, Ranger Boydell's new river boats at Revelstoke, Ranger Schupe's 30-man fire-fighting equipment neatly stowed in his panel sedan (and still room for a pump and its equipment) at Nelson, and Ranger Coles' three-way garden-hose attachment for hose and portable tool rack at Fernie. In Ranger Noble's district up the North Thompson he saw the only trees (balsam) in British Columbia growing upside down. Ocular evidence of this peculiar freak of nature is to be found at Albreda Summit and photographs are to be seen in the Nelson office.

Incidentally, at Kamloops Josh Wood, Y.M.F.T.P. Supervisor, was found trying to "jew down" a nice looking cashier on the cost of his lunch. Ranger Coles was out gunning for the telegraph operator who garbled his message to Waterton Park to read "Pat Rolman will scale logs", and made frantic endeavours to enlighten the logging operator as to whom he referred to when the Irishman didn't show up.

The new issue of Paramount and Paramount Junior pumps is just about completed and the field staff generally are greatly in favour of the new type as compared with the old. It still remains for us to find a satisfactory small unit, however, for the more mountainous country.

Work is progressing very satisfactorily on the new ranger launch now being built in Victoria. This boat, which is 49 feet long and equipped with a 100 H.P. Diesel engine, was evolved after long and serious discussion including the issue and reply to questionnaires sent to some 30 officials in the Branch, should be a decided advance in all ways over the older boats. The Naval Architect is Mr. Tom Halliday, Vancouver, and the contractor, the Victoria Motor Boat and Repair Works, Ltd., Victoria.



There is a lot of protection equipment we would like to experiment with but between an insolvent fund and insistent demands for this and that, we have had to watch our step when anything new has been suggested. Last winter, however, chance put us in possession of a "22" Cat and this spring chance left a few dollars in the kitty. Bringing the two together we now have one complete Cat unit that we have wanted to try out for the past few years. It consists of the Cat on which is mounted a small drum and cable for occasional use as needed, a Killefer plow, and two-ton truck and trailer on which the whole outfit can be loaded for easy and quick transportation over long distances.

Early in August we gave the outfit its first trials. Twenty-five minutes after the truck pulled up at the test area the outfit had been unloaded, coupled up, and had completed a short fire line enclosing an area of about 2 acres. This was on gravel-rock soil where line construction is almost hopeless with mattock and shovel. Later it performed well in young second-growth and in dense broom. In both these latter cases a lot of cleaning out would be required but all the drudgery was done at a rate of speed that would delight the heart of any fire foreman or Ranger. The men who watched the test estimated that the outfit built line as fast as a crew of 50 to 100 men and did a better job than any fire crew is likely to do.

The outfit has a limited field of use but both Cat and truck can be diverted to a great many jobs other than direct fire fighting and from time to time will prove to be a life-saver on the fire line. We can think of many a few where the cost of the whole outfit could have been written off.

Another interesting feature is the fact that it would appear that it will pay us to use the outfit on very small fires. We had thought that only the larger fires where miles of line were involved would warrant its use.

Unless we have a better fire season that we dare hope for we should know more about the capabilities of the Cat at the end of the year. If it turns out to be as good as we hope we will try to finance another one or two units next season.



1917 - When he entered the Forest Branch.

ALEXANDER HUNTER (Prince George), was born on a farm near London, Ontario, in an old Scotch pioneer settlement. Had ambitions to be a veterinary surgeon, and even went so far as to practice six months with a local vet. At that time his older brothers left the farm so he had to remain to assist his father. Was quite active in the winters, as there was considerable hardwood on the farm and he was kept busy making stove-bolts, and oak-heading and hauling cordwood to London, a distance of 18 miles. No report regarding the summer. When his father retired from farming, he (Alex), knocked around through portions of the U.S. earning his livelihood by any occupation that came to hand. He decided to come West and took part in the Edmonton real estate boom in 1909--worked for a company that put on the Wold Creek, Alberta townsite, where he was resident in charge.



1937 - after 20 years of fire-fighting.

Hearing about the wonderful possibilities which would follow the P.G.E. Railway about to be built to Fort George and the Peace River, he decided to get in on the ground floor. He took considerable part in the development of the Fort George townsite, getting a contract the second day after his arrival to slash certain streets. Took foremost part in organizing and incorporating the Fort George Agricultural and Industrial Association. He got caught in the land boom of those days and purchased and still owns 160 acres in the Salmon Valley which the optimistic agent described as "the Banana Belt."

Alex. is very proud of the fact that his father was a first cousin of David Livingstone. He has two sons, the name of one being Stanley Livingstone Hunter.

Since the Forest Branch got under way we have made more than 22,000 sales of timber, every sale the subject of a separate contract. We would have been something more than human if we hadn't made a few slips in piling up that number. Now and again we find that our upset price really was too high; that we were badly fooled in the quality of the timber; that boundaries should have been fixed quite differently; or that some modification of the slash-disposal clauses would be mutually advantageous to the Forest Branch and the Licensee.

We used to write in from the District recommending this or that contract adjustment, only to be told that the conditions of a contract couldn't be altered or that there was no authority for such adjustment, or both, and either statement made us equally mad. We reckoned we knew there was nothing sacred about a contract, that it could be changed by mutual agreement, and we couldn't find anything in the Act to say we shouldn't; or at any rate we thought we couldn't.

Then we came to Victoria and started writing to the Districts that we couldn't change contracts, and that there was no authority anyway for adjustments. But somehow the Districts do not seem to believe us and we continue to get from time to time recommendations covering this proposed change or that. The latest one had to do with balsam which turned out to be more than usually defective. Under the terms of the contract it must be cut. If cut it will be practically all cull. We collect no revenue and the licensee spends all his profit from other species falling it, so why hold him to the terms of the contract just for the sake of emptying his pocket and accumulating a fire hazard ourselves? Having duly written to the District that we couldn't approve it, it occurred to us that it is only recently that we began to see some reason for this unreasonable mania for maintaining contracts intact and that a few words on the subject might not come amiss.

In the first place, we still do not believe that this authority stuff has anything to do with the question. Section 16 of the Act says Crown timber is to be disposed of "by the Minister pursuant to the provisions of this Act and the regulations." And you have to get down to the last three words of the Regulations before there is any mention of anything resembling a contract. Contracts are altered every day in the private business world and we see no reason, so far as authority goes, why we shouldn't change timber sale contracts. Right here, however, it might be well to recall that this News Letter is "an entirely unofficial budget of news, nonsense, 'n'opinion." There are widely experienced officers of the Service who will be charitable enough to label this "opinion" and others who will brand it "nonsense." Either way it doesn't matter much because we believe the important consideration is one of policy rather than authority.

The Forest Branch is a public service and the usefulness of any public service depends to a great extent on public confidence in that service. Unquestionably there have been many timber sale contracts that could have been altered to the advantage of both the public and the licensee if nothing more than the individual sale and immediate results were considered. From a wider and long-term viewpoint the possibilities with which contract changes are fraught are alarming to say the least. In more than 22,000 sales the honesty and good faith of the Service has been questioned in so few cases, and those few have been so easily explained, that our record can be considered to be clean. That record could not be maintained past the second or perhaps the third adjusted contract. Contract changes would throw the door wide open to skull-duggery in a thousand forms, and, no matter how meticulous we might be, suspicion would lurk around every corner. In short order John Public would begin to wonder, audibly in many cases, what it was worth to Bill Forester to let Jim Logger lop that slash instead of piling it, or to leave without penalty that balsam he had contracted to cut. There is still another factor. Any change in the contract alters the value of the sale, conditions of which have usually been advertised. To countenance changes subsequent to completion of the sale would be rankly unjust to other competitors and would vitiate our whole policy of competitive sale as required by the Act.

So, authority or not authority, it all comes out to the same answer. You are at liberty to take down your hair and have a good cry with the licensee over iniquitous contract clauses, but unless you want the sympathy on the other foot, better leave contract conditions as is. (A little mixed that one, but at that you'd get your toes badly trodden on for any change.)

It isn't often that a "permit to burn" is issued to burn a ship, but within the last few years the Victoria Ranger has issued three for this purpose and the permits covered the burning of the "Princess Royal", the "Princess Mary" and the "Princess Patricia", all of the C.P.R.

These boats had passed their period of usefulness and were sold to wreckers, who, after stripping them of everything saleable, burned the hulls as an easy way to salvage the large quantities of iron and copper that were in them.

The last to meet her doom was the "Patricia", known to thousands of trippers as the "Princess Pat". They brought her up broadside to the beach at

high water and moored her securely. As the location was "within one-half mile of forest or woodland" a permit was necessary. They lit her up just before dusk and when on fire she was a wonderful spectacle but at the same time a pathetic and awe-inspiring one, and forcibly brought home to the spectators the awfulness of a fire at sea.

Our "Chief Camera Man" was on the job with the "peak of his cap turned aft" and secured some fine pictures.

It was quite a gala night on the beach, a large crowd turning out to witness the burn, and the firm that had bought her generously treated the crowd to hot-dogs and ice cream and pop ad lib.

We have a new definition for "over-run" supplied to us by one of the candidates writing at a recent interior scalers' examination. His reply to the question "What is over-run and how is it obtained?" reads, "Errors on the part of the scaler."

Pity the Poor Ranger!

The following is an extract from a final fire report recently received, and savors of Noah. The fire in question started from a burning house and the Ranger says in part: "The owner, who is a wild-animal exhibitor, had several animals burned. He was living in the same room with three full-grown cougars in a cage, one of the cougars was burned and the other two he let escape into the woods, two owls, two polecats, two rabbits, and four wild cats were also burned. Other animals were rescued." The report is not quite clear as to whether the polecats were also living in the room with the owner.

Ode to John Jardine (Chief Clerk, Prince George), from a Ranger to whom Form 23 had been returned for signature:

At last I trust this voucher's right.
This office work is a holy fright.
I work all day and half the night;
Please send me a clerk with lots of brains
To make out accounts and ease the strains.
My sympathy to you goes out
As your load of grief is larger, no doubt.
In future I'll have the damned things signed
So seek your rest with an easy mind.

SPOKESHAVE.

The bug survey initiated by the Dominion Entomological Branch has been progressing well since our almost complete failure in June. One Ranger complains that the boxes are too small--he put his under the tree, worked himself sick shaking the bugs off, and didn't get one in the box!

From Coast Patrolman's diary: "Steering gear flew apart so I tethered it to the available dry rot forward in order to make Vancouver."

Our latest "foreign" correspondence is a request from the Ontario Forest Service for a dozen plans of Jack Coles' car boxes, which we forwarded with due acknowledgment to the inventor.

G. A. Playfair is occupied installing radio equipment on five lookouts following experiments in past years on the coast and Marling's venture on Pilot Mountain. The standard sets developed by the U. S. Forest Service are being used. Lookouts being equipped this year are Texada, Mt. Shepherd and Bainbridge in the Vancouver District; Baldy in Kamloops, and Dome in Prince George.

Jerry Andrews (Surveys) has been trying to get some aerial surveying done on the Queen Charlottes but his plane keeps getting away from him and the sun refuses to shine, so he hasn't been having a very good time.

Ranger I. S. Grant (Campbell River), with the Service since 1920, has resigned. A. C. Langstroth has been transferred from Port Hardy to fill the vacancy created at Campbell River and Harry Stevenson replaces Langstroth at Port Hardy.

Harry Forse was married at Port Alberni on July 10th. He had been threatening for some months to get married sometime this summer if he could find time for the ceremony.

W. Batchelor, foreman at the Thurston Bay Station, is resigning his position at the end of September. Bill has been in charge at Thurston Bay since 1926. Now he finds it necessary to move to some centre where better schools are available. We are sorry to see him go and will have some difficulty in replacing him.

Extract from List of Publications received in the Forest Branch Library

July 6th to August 23rd, 1937.

- .146 A Forest Classification for Canada. W.E.D. Halliday - Forest Service Bulletin 89 - 1937.
- .05 Geographical Review - July, 1937.
From Canada to Coronation - With the compliments of Gabriel, Wade and English, Ltd., London, Importers of Empire Softwoods.
- .73 A Master Plan for Forestry in Washington - by the Washington State Planning Council - Dec. 1936.
- .31 Chemical Methods of Combatting Forest Fires. Translated from Russian.
New Methods of Fighting Forest Fires. Translated from Russian.
- .061 International Forestry Report - Translation 24 - from the German.
July, 1934.
- .911 Meteorology - Influence of a Forest on the Temperature of the Air -
Paul Seltzer - Translation No. 26 - from French.
Forest and Rainfall - H. Brolley - Translated.
- .913 Floods, Forest Regulation and Legislation - J.J. de Luze. Translation.
- .2537 Permanent Shelter Belts - P. Borch. Translated from Danish.
- .351 The Reduction in Forest Production Caused by the Wind, and Means of
Combat - Prof. Agnar Barth - Translated from Norwegian.
- .2539 Hedge and Shelter Planting - C.E. Flensburg - Translated from Danish.
- .2537 Shelter planting - Anton Handberg - Translated from Danish.
Planting Experiments in a Territory of Drift Sand. Haarup Sand-Drift
Near Silkeborg - Fr. Weis. Translated from Danish.
- .05 Monthly Weather Review - April, 1937.
U. S. Forest Products Laboratory - List of Publications Jan. 1-30, 1937.
Monthly List of Publications - U.S. Dept. Agriculture, June, 1937.
News Bulletin of Empire Forest Departments - First half of 1937.
- .1411 The Forest in the Service of Agriculture - Z. Goviadin - Translated
from Russian.
The Plan of Shelterbelt Planting in Raising the Agricultural Yield.
Translated from Russian.
Impressions from a Journey to Germany and Bohemia. Translated from
Danish.
Experiments in Preservation of Tree Seed and the Planting Value of
Preserved Seed. Translated from Japanese.
Water Utilization by Trees.
- .05 Fire Control Notes - August 9, 1937.