

MAY FIGHT FIRES FROM AIRPLANES

Government Considers Plan for Aviator Patrols Over Northern Woods

With aviation making such rapid forward strides in civilian pursuits, now that the war is over, consideration will be given to the possibility of using airplanes or hydroplanes to patrol northern Ontario for fire protection purposes. Gen. Sims, who was a few months ago appointed Agent-General in England, succeeding the late Col. Richard Reid, has shown great interest in devising means to protect the northern forests, and he has secured much information on the subject which has been submitted to the Government.

Gen. Sims consulted the headquarters of the Canadian Air Force in England, getting the opinion of the experts there as to the possibilities of successfully using hydroplanes in northern Ontario. Having been in that part of Ontario for a time before going overseas in a military capacity, Gen. Sims has a first-hand knowledge of the obstacles that up until this time have prevented the Government launching an aerial patrol system. The information which Gen. Sims secured has just reached the Prime Minister's office, but consideration of the proposal has been delayed because of sessional business occupying the attention of the Government. It is the intention to consider the reports in detail at the first opportunity.

Fight Fires From Air.

Hon. G. Howard Ferguson, Minister of Lands, Forests and Mines, who has charge of the fire protection service in the north, has had the matter of airplane patrols before him for the last couple of years. The situation was carefully canvassed, but it was found that the cost at the time the investigation was made would be prohibitive, and that the present method, which has been brought to a high state of efficiency, could well be continued for the present.

The cost was only one of the objections to the scheme. The extensive forests and the rugged nature of the entire northern districts presented the difficulty of finding landing places. It was felt at the time the matter was previously considered that it would be impracticable to send 'planes out as patrols because of the difficulty in making suitable openings to permit of a landing, and the danger to the aviator of having to descend in some place where it would be practically impossible to reach ground safely.

It is understood that the information submitted to Gen. Sims by the Canadian Air Force estimated the cost of such a patrol would be about \$375,000 a year, and an initial expenditure of \$351,000. The experts in the service believe that much of the fighting of fires could be done from the air.