

Responses to Mr Lyne's letter
in Australian Forestry Journal Vol 1 No4 October 1918 -
(text below facsimile)

FAVOURS CONTROLLED FIRES - R J Madden
INUTILITY OF FIRE-BREAKS- A J Gallagher

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hard to deal with all possibility of the fires getting out of control.

"With regard to our forest areas the burning up, as a safeguard against bush fires, of all litter, from the forest floor, and thereafter continuing such burning at intervals when sufficient litter had accumulated to carry a fire, would, in my opinion, not be resultant of the best future advantages.

"Fire is an essential factor in the proper management of forests; but to insure, in the broadest sense, the best results from the forests, and at the same time provide to some extent for their protection against uncontrolled bush fires, only to a limited extent should it be used.

"All heavy litter, such as large fallen limbs and tree trunks and dead, standing trees, should be cleared up and always kept so. With the heavy litter demolished by packing in heaps and burning—not by running fires over the surface generally—there would remain the mat of fallen twigs, leaves and decayed herbage to conduct a fire, but it would not be of so severe a nature, except under the most adverse circumstances, as to not be combatable by the use of fire-breaks.

FAVOURS CONTROLLED FIRES.

Mr. R. J. Madden, Forest Officer, Nowra, is an advocate of controlled fires. He writes:—

"Mr. Lyne appears to have arrived at the only possible solution to prevent fires from doing material damage to forest growth in the Coastal Districts.

"I would suggest that forests be fired periodically by specially appointed men, the most important points being to clear the fallen heads of trees and other rubbish from the standing timber, and to select a time when the conditions are not too dry.

"Fire-breaks may be very well in a way, but where is the Australian that has not seen a bush fire in drought periods during a westerly gale, that would defy any fire-break even ten chains wide?

"Fires, properly controlled, will do much less damage than those started owing to dry conditions, burning through a bush that has been exploited and where heads of trees and fallen timber generally are lying against the standing trees indiscriminately.

"There is sufficient evidence that a fire through a forest will assist in checking the abnormal increase of insects and other destructive elements, and at the same time if systematically controlled will not materially damage the young growing timber."

INUTILITY OF FIRE-BREAKS.

Mr. A. J. Gallagher, Forest Guard, Nowra, writes:—

"I have no hesitation in stating that any endeavour to minimize the risk of fires by clearing fire-breaks, etc., would be futile and a waste of time and money. I am firmly convinced that the results achieved would not provide adequate remuneration for the expenditure incurred.

"It is questionable whether fires in maiden forests, or areas partially depleted of timber, are not more beneficial than detrimental to the production of timber, as all useless undergrowth is checked or destroyed, and the matured trees immediately derive the benefit of increased sustenance, owing to the extermination of this scrub.

"It is very rarely that a healthy growing tree is totally destroyed by a forest fire, unless it be surrounded by much inflammable material."

MOVING FORESTS.

Trees growing and flourishing on moving glaciers is one of the remarkable things seen by visitors to Alaska.

Dr. B. E. Fernow, Dean of the Toronto Forests School, describing these moving growths on his return from a trip to the Ice Territory, says:—"At the foot of the Lucien Glacier on Yakutat Bay, the stream which runs in a wild torrent from the glacier has cut a veritable canyon through the ice, exposing an ice bank 100 feet high. This ice is overlaid with moraine material a foot or more in depth, and this is sufficient to support a dense cover, not only of herbaceous but of woody vegetation, a thicket of the ever-present alder, with an occasional willow and even spruce does not find the substratum too cold."

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