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Percy E. Melis, chief of the Indian Bureau's Branch of Forestry for the past three years, will become area director for the Bureau at Billings, Montana, on June 15, Commissioner Glenn L. Emmons announced today.

George S. Kephart, assistant chief of the Forestry Branch, will succeed Melis as chief.

In his new assignment Mr. Melis replaces John M. Cooper, who retired March 31. He will be responsible for supervising all Bureau activities in Montana and Wyoming. Before becoming forestry chief in 1953, he served for about a year as area forester for the Bureau at Window Rock, Ariz. Prior to that he had 17 years of experience with the United States Forest Service in responsible positions throughout the Western States. He also served for eight years in forestry work with the Indian Bureau in the State of Washington before joining the Forest Service in 1935. Following his graduation in logging engineering from Oregon State College in 1924, he worked three years for the Office of Blister Rust Control at Spokane. He was born at Mist, Oreg., in 1898.

Mr. Kephart, a native of St. Louis, Mo., has been engaged in forestry work for the Indian Bureau since 1934 and held positions at Minneapolis, Minn., Klamath Agency, Oreg., and Spokane, Wash., before coming to the central office in 1944. He is a veteran of World War I and a graduate of Cornell University in forestry. From 1919 to 1934 he held numerous jobs in private business.