

forests should be placed under the Crown Lands Department, some person who thoroughly understands the subject being appointed Director of Crown Forests, and intrusted with the organization and subsequent direction of what the Commission believes will speedily become one of the most important and satisfactory branches of the public administration. The valuable paper on Forests by Monsieur A. Lecoy, which has just been presented to Parliament, contains, in a compact form, all the information that is necessary in order to make a beginning in this direction, and the Commission would most earnestly recommend the Government to lose no time in adopting the suggestions there made. The Commission would venture to point out the undesirability of smothering this important subject under a load of costly officialism. They are of opinion that, by the exercise of a little energy and judgment, the management of Crown forests can be made to pay its own expenses from the very commencement. Only practical men should be employed in it, and all its operations should be conducted on business-like principles, such as would govern a private person in administering his own estate. The evidence before the Commission indicates the advisability of planting Government reserves in the neighbourhood of railways with various kinds of exotic trees, the products of which enter into the economy of many industries already established or capable of being profitably pursued in this country. Among these may be mentioned blue-gum, wattle, hickory, ash, oak, cork oak, and elm. Olives and mulberries might also be planted in situations where they can be easily looked after, by way of an experiment, with a view to the introduction of the olive and silk industries by private enterprise in the future. The aid of the various public domains, where an immense number of young trees are annually destroyed for want of some means of disposing of them, might be obtained in connection with the planting of Crown forests. The success that attended the planting operations of the Provincial Government of Canterbury, limited as they were, is testified by the existence to-day of woodland areas bearing trees which will soon attain a serviceable age. The Commission, in urging the forests question upon the attention of the Government, also commend to their notice the representations which appear in the evidence before them as to the advantages of using wood for fuel on the railways passing through forest districts.

COAL.

The Commissioners have not had an opportunity of ascertaining fully the position of this important industry; but they have, nevertheless, ample evidence that it is already assuming considerable dimensions, and proving of immense value to the country. The whole consumption is at present about evenly divided between the imported and the locally-produced coal; and it is merely a question of time when New Zealand will not only cease to import, but become a large exporter of coal. The Government have done much to hasten the development of the coal industry by insisting on the use of native coal on some of the public railways; thus demonstrating in a conspicuous manner that the local article is superior in point of quality and cheapness to the imported. It appears from the evidence, however, that there is still much to be done in this way, and the Government might with advantage use native coal in localities where the prejudices of the railway employés are still powerful enough to resist its use. The railway regulations respecting the carriage of coal are also stated to be very oppressive. Considering that the demand for native coal depends almost entirely on the price at which it can be delivered to the consumer, and that the facilities for carriage in many cases constitute the difference between working a mine profitably and working it at a loss, the Commission would recommend that native coal should everywhere be carried on the most liberal terms compatible with a due regard for the railway revenue. There are several applications for Government assistance to particular mines, by road-making or otherwise providing the means of access; but in the absence of fuller information the Commission are not disposed to make any special recommendation regarding them. They would point out, nevertheless, that a little timely assistance, such as the Public Works Department could render at a trifling expense, might in some instances be the means of developing a valuable coal deposit, which would otherwise lie waste for