

Undoubtedly there has been a feeling of antagonism to forest expert treatment on the part of timber-cutters and dealers, but this has generally resulted from ignorance of what expert treatment of forests really is.

By the efficient forester, the sawmiller and his employes are regarded as "aids" to forest conservation, the object of their presence on the reserves being to remove matured timber as soon as it is fit for conversion with as little damage as possible to the trees left standing.

The sawmiller should be encouraged to place his mill in such a position as will insure the readiest means of cutting out timber in "rotation blocks," marked out and shown on working-plans, to provide for the removal of one block per year, a sufficient number of blocks being so laid out as would enable the miller to carry on work continuously for a stated number of years. The exact number, of course, depends upon the length of time required to bring the young trees, either planted by hand or growing up naturally, to maturity. Such sawmill sites should, in the first instance, be let by tender, and no more than one mill should be allowed to operate on the same series of "rotation blocks." The effect of this system would be to check that undue competition by close proximity of several mills which results in too close a cutting of the forests. It would also insure greater care on the part of the sawmiller, by giving guarantee of permanent occupation for the stipulated period. The annual output could be gauged by the work of previous years at each mill, and thus the size of blocks required for an annual supply could be determined. This briefly describes the "rotation" system of cutting, which should be carried out on a working-plan approved at head-quarters, and from which no deviation should be allowed.

In connection with the adoption of a practicable scheme of forest conservation for New Zealand, great and valuable preliminary work has been done by Professor Kirk, whose reports of 1886 suggest a satisfactory basis.

Not having at hand a copy of the New Zealand State Forests Act, I am not in a position to comment upon it in detail. If, however, it has been framed on the general lines laid down by Captain Campbell Walker and Professor Kirk I am satisfied very slight alterations will be necessary to bring it into line with up-to-date forestry requirements. I will therefore briefly summarise the suggestions which I think should be carefully considered in dealing with this important subject.

1. A new Act, or amendment of Acts now in force, should be passed to create a Forest Department, and fix the status, duties, and emoluments of its officers. Power should be given—(1) To make permanent and inalienable existing reserves, no curtailment of area being permitted except such as is sanctioned by both Houses of Parliament; (2) to permanently reserve such other areas as from time to time may be found necessary. Political interference with the actual working of the forests, apart from State policy, should be specially guarded against. The Conservator should manage the forests from a scientific and national standpoint, giving due consideration to all interests involved. All technical work should be left to his expert and trained judgment, and in no case remitted to the political chief, who should as far as possible give the Conservator a free hand with regard to his professional duties.

2. No new settlement within the area of State forests should be permitted, and where such have been established the settlers should be bought out.

3. Areas should be so reserved that each forester could supervise one large or a group of smaller forests, except in sparsely-timbered districts. State forests should not be of small area; such are relatively more expensive to supervise and work than those of large extent.

4. It is absolutely essential that the chief officer, or Conservator, should be a trained expert, otherwise the principles of scientific forestry cannot be carried out, and the work of the department must end in failure.

5. The Conservator should have absolute authority in all matters of technical or professional detail connected with plantation, conservation, supervision, &c.; also over the employes of his department. To this end, he should have special powers, and be entirely free from political pressure or interference of any kind.

6. Apparently, the only means of making this officer independent of political influence would be the creation of a powerful buffer between him and the Minister who presides over his department. Such a buffer could only be provided by constituting a Forest Board of three Commissioners, with the Conservator as *ex officio* chairman. The Trust should be non-political, and meet once a month, members receiving a stated fee for each attendance. The duties of these Commissioners would be—(a.) To safeguard the forests as national property against all attempts at encroachment by private individuals or local bodies. (b.) To act as a board of advice to the Minister on questions of forest policy, such as royalties, increase or reduction of forest areas, and generally to strengthen the hands of the Conservator. (c.) To submit an annual report upon the work of the department during the past year. Among the clauses framed to constitute this Board and define its duties and powers should be the following:—

- (1.) The State forests shall be permanently reserved and inalienable equally against Her Majesty as against other persons. All forest buildings, nurseries, plantations, fences, and improvements of any kind whatsoever shall be vested under joint control of the Commissioners of Forests, or (as an alternative, if thought advisable) in the Minister and the Commissioners of Forests.
- (2.) Commissioners (including the Conservator) shall be appointed by the Governor in Council, *aut vitam aut culpam*, subject to removal from office only with the sanction of Parliament. Upon all questions relating to general policy, the alienation of, increase of, or excision from State forests, to royalties, &c., the Commissioners shall make suggestions to the Minister, who shall cause such suggestions to be laid upon the table of the Legislative Assembly. After the expiry of fourteen days these suggestions, or such amendments as Parliament may make, shall be formally approved by the Minister, and, after being gazetted in the usual way, shall become law.