

Additional reference to the man-power position will be found on page 25, paragraph 102 (Chapter XII).

73. *Equipment for Timber and Allied Industries.*—Limited deliveries of new equipment for logging operations, sawmills, and box-factories have helped in relieving the strain on the resources of the industry, but the quantity is still insufficient to avoid serious and prolonged interruptions to production. Worn-out plant which would have been discarded in ordinary circumstances must still be used. As must be expected, operation of this old equipment is taxing the resource and ingenuity of all millers who must be complimented on the way they have solved their problems in this respect.

Logging equipment is causing the gravest concern, due to the large number of tractors which the industry is compelled to maintain on productive work long after their economic life has been passed. Through repeated efforts to secure replacement of these machines, ten imported tractors were made available to the industry during the past twelve months, but these fall far short of minimum requirements, and if production is even to be maintained, let alone increased, an additional eighteen heavy tractors complete with blades and winches must be made available within the next twelve months. Failure to supply blades and winches, &c., on the machines recently imported caused some inconvenience until suitable equipment was located within the country, and it is imperative that these accessories be supplied with future deliveries of tractors for use in the industry.

The increased road haulage of logs has resulted in much improvization of trailers constructed from material available in the country. The axles, wheels, and tires of these single- or double-axle units have been in many instances inadequate for the work to be done, and frequent repairs were necessary to maintain production. Emphasis must be placed on the desirability of designing and constructing rugged trailer equipment capable of carrying the heavy loads involved in log haulage.

Messrs. Henderson and Pollard, Ltd., Auckland, have commenced operating their new veneer and plywood factory, and although full production has not been achieved, the output has assisted in meeting heavy current demands for plywood. The most interesting development of the year was the installation by Messrs. N.Z. Plywoods, Ltd., of a hot press for the production of resin-bonded plywood.

74. *Domestic Markets.*—Although the demand for timber for defence works in the Dominion and in the South Pacific war theatre decreased during the year, expansion of hospital and Air Force construction served to maintain timber-consumption at a high level. For the second year in succession continued efforts by the Office of the Timber Controller to have construction reduced to virtually the level of current production and thereby avoid undue depletion of stocks proved unavailing, with the result that when, for the first time since the entry of Japan into the war, housing came into prominence, the building industry, particularly in the North Island, reported on numerous occasions that programmes were being restricted by timber shortages and that individual builders were embarrassed by the difficulty of arranging a sufficient continuity of timber-supply to keep their labour fully employed. Had timber stocks been maintained at even 75 per cent. of pre-war levels, none of these difficulties would have been experienced.

There is no doubt that, in building-timbers, demand and supply in the North Island are out of equilibrium. To meet shortages of normal casemaking woods, rimu is being used to an appreciable and increasing extent. Primary producers are calling for abnormal quantities of timber not only for deferred and current maintenance, but also for the erection of new buildings and houses needed for increased production; local bodies, faced with deferred maintenance of bridges, &c., and unable to secure Australian hardwoods, are using rimu, matai, and totara in significant quantities; furniture-manufacturers, no longer able to obtain oak, &c., and veneers from overseas, are virtually confined to the use of rimu; urgent deliveries of South Island rimu approximate only one-third of normal, due to shipping shortages and bar-harbour difficulties, and the forward position in respect to both is far from reassuring; and lastly, stocks of building-timbers at less than 25 per cent. of their pre-war level render a satisfactory service virtually impossible and subject the wood-consuming industries to all fluctuations in deliveries occasioned by the intermittent transport shortages, bad weather, &c.

The position has been a difficult one for all wood-users, but more so for the building industry. A shortage of bricks and bricklayers has led to weatherboard houses being built to an increasing extent, and scarcity of more permanent materials has resulted in schools, hospitals, &c., being constructed in wood. For these buildings and for house-construction the grades of timber normally used include only a limited proportion of the log run of the indigenous building-timbers, but, what is even more serious, the grades usually acceptable are out of balance with their relative occurrence in the log. The disequilibrium is greatest in dressing heart grades, in which production averages only 10 per cent., whereas demand in the form of weatherboarding, flooring, joinery, &c., totals over 30 per cent. As disclosed in Chapter XII, this unbalanced demand was corrected by the Office of the Timber Controller, which arranged, by negotiation with the appropriate authorities, for the acceptance of various grades and qualities alternative to those normally specified and used.

The large expansion in kiln installation referred to elsewhere also enabled the wood-consuming industries in Auckland and Wellington to obtain the maximum service possible from the restricted supplies of dressing grades which have been available. Chaotic conditions with certain unemployment must have resulted in both cities if the timber trade had failed to increase kiln capacity. Its action has been the salvation of most users for whom thoroughly seasoned timber is essential.

The demand for timber for containers was maintained at a high level, and on numerous occasions local shortages occurred principally in those needed for the export of cheese.