

and control measures which will be instituted. Similarly, consents given to the applicant sawmillers are subject to conditions requiring the installation of a sawmill containing reasonably suitable equipment under war conditions for the economical conversion of the timber and the submission of details of fire-prevention and control measures to be undertaken. In both matters the approval of the Timber Controller is required.

The advice and co-operation of officers of the Service in dealing with these matters are freely given when desired.

109. *The Timber Position.*—Never before in history have New-Zealanders been made so acutely aware of the adage that timber follows man from cradle to grave. Few, however, realize that consumption is not very much out of step with production. What actually creates the shortage—and an acute one at that—is the virtual non-existence of timber stocks either at mills or in merchants' or manufacturers' yards. This is the direct result of the unfortunate failure of those in charge of defence works to better equate consumption with production and thus allow the maintenance of adequate stock balances. Repeated efforts by officers engaged on both building and timber-control activities to ensure that contracts were let in accordance with such a policy proved abortive, but with the ever-present threat of Japanese aggression this can be understood. Had New Zealand only 75 per cent. of the stock which existed prior to the war, and amounting in the two Islands to over 100,000,000 board feet, there would be little, if any, timber shortage. Such stocks normally function as a fly-wheel to the timber trade and absorb all current fluctuations due to shipping dislocations, immobilization of winter production owing to bad roads, unbalanced production of grades and qualities, &c. It is therefore an inescapable conclusion, that, no matter how much timber-production is likely to increase, for obviously this must be limited by man-power and equipment considerations, a shortage will still continue until substantial stocks have again been assembled. For this reason careful control of the distribution of timber is imperative, and an appeal is made to all wood-users to strictly limit their requisitions for the immediate future to absolutely essential requirements so that the stock position may be gradually improved and their later wants well serviced.

To ensure that timber available is used to best advantage, End-use Committees representative of both distributors and users were set up during the year in Auckland, Wellington, and Palmerston North to supervise sales and usage of timber, and further Committees are shortly to be established in other parts of the North Island. In order to economize grades in shortest supply, the Office of the Timber Controller also supplied builders, sawmillers, and timber-merchants in the North Island with particulars of the highest grades which should be used for different parts of house and building construction, requesting that delivery of superior grades be refused. This step has brought forth an excellent response from members of the organizations concerned, and as a result the unnecessary use of grades in heavy demand has been corrected to some extent.

The End-use Committees are a reflection of the basic policy adopted by the Office of the Timber Controller from the inception of hostilities, whereby control of production and distribution has been effected by voluntary arrangements between the various interests affected and every effort made to avoid resort to gazetted regulations. New Zealand, in fact, is believed to be the only country within the British Commonwealth and the United Nations which has not resorted to detailed permit control of timber distribution and usage, but it would be unwise to ignore the possibility of its institution should the End-use Committees fail to stop the leakage of timber to non-essential construction and maintenance. As indicative of the rigid control imposed on timber usage in Great Britain, it should be noted that fines of £500 have been inflicted for the misuse of £5 worth of timber. The effect of small and seemingly insignificant orders or demands for timber is insufficiently appreciated. Consider, for instance, that if each of the 80,000 farm holdings and the 380,000 houses in the Dominion is to be supplied with only 100 board feet of timber during the next year, there will be absorbed in total 46,000,000 board feet of timber, or sufficient to build over 4,000 all-wood houses. This will emphasize the fact that, unless all users refrain from ordering timber other than for absolutely essential purposes, the time may come when no timber whatsoever can be purchased except by permit and after a searching investigation into the necessity for its use.

As a further step towards the objective of transferring as much as practicable of timber-control activities to the trade and users, the North Island sawmillers have been encouraged to set up an organization to control in accordance with general policy direction from the Office of the Timber Controller, the detailed distribution of their production to the various End-use Committees.

Incidentally, the timber shortage has been very much more severe in the North than in the South Island, which has had for many years a surplus production of about 40,000,000 board feet for either export to Australia or shipment to the North Island. With defence works largely concentrated in the North Island over the 1942-43 period, the annual contribution of 30,000,000 board feet from Westland, &c., proved invaluable and allowed the transfer also of many South Island building artisans to expedite urgent war projects. Unfortunately, however, with the Greymouth Harbour largely out of commission since last year, timber shipments have fallen to about 20 per cent. of normal, and the resultant shortage of over 10,000,000 board feet of building-timber over the last