

year only 26 per cent. was below 6 in. in width, the production in this size-class rose to 47 per cent. Concurrently, the quantity sawn in widths exceeding 9 in. fell from 33 per cent. to 20 per cent. The log-frame sawmill, which was operated to cut a maximum of wide timber for the box-factory, produced 46 per cent. up to 6 in. wide and 16 per cent. above 9 in. in width.

In addition to the increased needs of the box-factory being met, 4,968,000 board feet (3,049,000) of timber was sold to manufacturers, principally in the Auckland Province. Sales thus increased by 63 per cent. and comprised green timber, 3,851,000 board feet (2,703,000); kiln-dried timber, 982,000 board feet (311,000); and air-dried timber, 135,000 board feet (35,000). Over half of the kiln-dried timber sold—537,000 board feet (63,000)—was shipped to Australia, and assisted in filling the quota of softwoods which it was necessary to guarantee to the Commonwealth in order to assure New Zealand of its essential requirements in hardwoods.

Timber stocks on hand at the 31st March, 1946, totalled 2,804,000 board feet, a reduction of 9 per cent. on the record stocks of 3,076,000 board feet held at the corresponding date last year. The supply of railway trucks was somewhat erratic and week-end loading was resorted to on occasions to relieve yard congestion. During the spring and summer months, when railway-truck supply proved most difficult, conditions were ideal for sapstain attack, and to minimize loss it was necessary during the worst periods to arrange with the New Zealand Railways for a truck-supply priority for green insignis pine over the more resistant indigenous species.

Timber filleted for kiln-drying totalled 7,355,000 board feet (5,444,000) and for air-drying 2,486,000 board feet (3,366,000). The balance of 3,916,000 board feet produced was sold or used in a green condition. The kilns dried 7,827,000 board feet (5,683,000), of which 7,077,000 board feet (5,196,000) consisted of green timber and 750,000 board feet (487,000) partially air-seasoned stock. The increase in the quantity of timber dried is attributable chiefly to the operation of the fifth kiln, which was brought into use during June, 1945. Based on the assumption that the plant is capable of drying for 335 days of twenty-four hours, the kiln-operating factor for the year was 91 per cent. The quantity of timber dried per kiln hour amounted to 267 board feet (238).

A new dual dry-bulb recorder-controller was installed in November and has operated satisfactorily. There were no major breakdowns during the year, but several bearings failed and had to be replaced. A pressure-spray painting outfit proved very useful for repainting the kiln metalwork. Improvement in the drying of pith-grade timber was achieved by the adoption of much lower dry-bulb temperatures and a slightly lower humidity. The kiln-drying of scantling sizes is also being achieved successfully with a negligible amount of de-grade. Kiln-drying costs amounted to 3s. 6d. per 100 board feet, compared with 3s. 1d. last year. The increased cost is due to the drying of a larger proportion of 2 in. stock and the use of slower drying schedules to improve the quality of the finished product.

The profit earned by the sawmill and dry kilns amounted to £21,576, compared with £20,090 last year.

67. *Waipa Box-factory and Planing-mill.*—The box-factory operated on an average forty-eight-hour week throughout the year. Soon after the war ended heavy cancellations of orders for foodstuff and munition cases were experienced, but these were offset by increased orders for cheese-crates and fruit-cases. Concurrently, the shortage of indigenous timber led the building and furniture industries to compete with boxmakers for supplies of insignis pine, as a result of which most North Island boxmakers were unable to maintain sufficient stocks to meet the demand of primary and secondary industries. Fortunately, the Waipa plant, which possesses the largest kiln installation in the North Island box industry, was able to make available its full capacity of 700,000 board feet monthly of kiln-dried timber, and at short notice averted grave shortages by supplying cases unprocurable elsewhere. Fruit-cases were delivered as far afield as Nelson to assist in meeting an abnormal local demand during the January–April period.