

According to the sawmill registration returns, the total production of sawn timber for the year ended 31st March, 1946, was 344,000,000 board feet (341,000,000). It is a tribute to both employers and employees that, despite the difficulties, the year's output was slightly above the 1944-45 figure, and $8\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., or 27,000,000 board feet, above the quantity of timber sawn in 1938-39, the last year when reasonably normal conditions prevailed.

Detailed statistics prepared by the Government Statistician for the year ended 31st March, 1945, are included as Appendix VII of this report. It should be understood that there is an unavoidable time lag between the close of the year and the collection and compilation of these statistics, so that even under the most favourable of circumstances the detailed statistical summary always relates to the year preceding that covered by this report. Sawmill-registration forms do not contain the detailed information later available to the Government Statistician, but they do furnish figures of vital interest—viz., the quantity of timber, by species, sawn during the year immediately past. Experience has shown that there is complete agreement between these figures and those compiled later in greater detail by the Government Statistician: but, as the latter are the only authoritative statistics covering the sawmilling industry, the production figures compiled by the Forest Service are subject to confirmation by the Government Statistician.

71. *Species cut.*—Marked changes continue to occur both in the relative quantities of the species cut and in the geographical incidence of production. The most conspicuous change is the phenomenal increase, both relative and actual, in the output of insignis pine, which has risen by 55,000,000 board feet from 42,000,000 board feet in 1938-39 to 97,000,000 board feet in 1945-46. The incidence of production, in fact, is moving from the indigenous to the exotic forests, for over the same period the output of indigenous species declined by 28,000,000 board feet. In 1938-39 insignis pine accounted for only 13 per cent. of the total cut, while in 1945-46 the proportion had risen to 28 per cent.

Rimu is still the predominant timber species, but production at 174,000,000 board feet for the year was 15,000,000 board feet less than the cut in 1938-39. The progressive decline in the production of kahikatea, which commenced prior to 1939, continued throughout the war years, the cut in 1945-46 being, as for the previous year, only 17,000,000 board feet, or one-half of the 1938-39 figure. Totara remained constant, but matai was 3,000,000 board feet less than in 1938-39, and kauri fell to an all-time low production of 1,779,000 board feet, or less than 30 per cent. of the cut in 1938-39. Tawa was the only indigenous species in which any appreciable increase in production was secured, for, whereas during 1938-39 only a little over 100,000 board feet were sawn, in 1945-46 the output was over 5,000,000 board feet.

72. *Man-power.*—The cessation of hostilities, and the subsequent release of men from the Armed Forces, has resulted in a considerable influx of men to the timber industry during the past year. Nevertheless, there has been a loss in skilled personnel, who have been drawn to occupations which, temporarily at least, appear more attractive: their positions will be difficult to fill satisfactorily in the meantime, as during the war years few junior recruits were available for training. There have been other personnel losses as well, but mainly in men who have been carrying on during the crisis though well past normal retiring-age. As a result of all these factors, the number of men employed in the industry is by no means adequate to enable production to be increased in accordance with the continued heavy demand. It is estimated that an increase of approximately 1,500 to 2,000 men will be necessary before the required production budget can be attained. To make the work more attractive, constant attention is being given to improving the living and working conditions at sawmills and logging operations. It is hoped that progress in this direction will steadily encourage skilled workers to return to their pre-war employment, and will also encourage young men to find their vocation in the timber industry.

Considering the man-power shortages, particularly in skilled bushmen, production over the war years was maintained at what must be regarded as a very satisfactory figure; every year of the war, in fact, showed a substantial increase over the output of 1938-39. Additional reference to man-power will be found in paragraph 102.