

PRESERVATION AND PROTECTION OF TIMBER

Treatment of Timber.—In collaboration with the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and others concerned with the processing and use of timber, the Corporation has assisted in extensive research work, from which we are pleased to report there is now a rapidly growing appreciation of the need for adopting measures that will enable the utilization of the maximum quantity of available material. As part of the Corporation's policy of providing long-term loans particularly for home-builders, it is required that buildings to be erected with loan-moneys shall be constructed of high-grade durable materials. Unfortunately, during recent years heart building-timbers have become increasingly difficult to obtain and the Board of Management has, as a consequence, actively fostered and encouraged the development of wood-preservation with a view to the utilization of lower-grade timber.

One of the first processes of wood-preservation which has been developed in New Zealand consists of immersing dressed timber, which has been previously kiln dried, in a bath of preservative liquid until maximum absorption is achieved. Some 4,000,000 super feet of lower-grade timber has been processed in this way. By this means a large proportion of this timber is being used for flooring in State rental houses. The technical limitations of the immersion process were realized from its inception, and the Corporation has therefore consistently encouraged the establishment of commercial pressure impregnation plants as an alternative means of preservation. The Corporation's technical officers, with the assistance of overseas technicians, have investigated various aspects of the pressure treatment as applied to both indigenous and exotic timbers, and as a result of this work it has been possible to draw up a specification for the pressure treatment of building-timbers which both the Corporation and the Housing Construction Department have accepted. It is pleasing to record that, working under this specification, a British firm has now established its first pressure preservation plant in Auckland, and this is already in production. The establishment of this extensive and costly plant in the Dominion so soon after the termination of the war speaks well for the initiative and drive of British industry. The Corporation confidently expects that further pressure plants will be installed in the near future and that, as a result, a supply of pressure impregnated timber will be available in all the main centres of building activity.

Termites Act, 1940.—The Corporation is also responsible for certain administrative and technical duties under the Termites Act, 1940. This Act was introduced for the purpose of initiating and conducting methods of control against subterranean termites, which have unfortunately become established in some parts of this country. In the Poverty Bay district, where termite infestation was discovered, active steps were taken by the Waikohu County Council in co-operation with the Corporation, and as far as can be ascertained the active colonies of termites in that area have all been destroyed. This work is also proceeding satisfactorily in Auckland and New Plymouth, these being the only other districts where this destructive insect is known to be active. The infestations within these centres are still being confined to comparatively small areas and the damage to dwellings and other property is not widespread. Nevertheless, owing to the large amount of timber within the infested areas that is vulnerable to the activities of this pest and the reproductive capacity of the insect, it is apparent that the termite-control work must continue for some years.

A danger which may accompany the importation of Australian hardwoods has been emphasized by the discovery of further colonies of termites in such timbers, both in Auckland and Wellington. These timbers, especially transmission poles, are distributed throughout the country, and if they should be infested by termites there is a very real danger that these insects will become established over a much wider area. A system of inspection of all hardwoods entering this country from Australia has been initiated and the responsibility for this work has been accepted by State Forest Service, which is the authority mainly concerned with the importation of timber.