

are the Departments of Lands and Survey, Scientific and Industrial Research, Agriculture, the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Council, the State Forest Service, and Catchment Boards.

A sound forest policy on soil conservation is felt at three points: firstly, the protection of the vegetation on steep sub-marginal country as a measure of flood control; secondly, the utilization of cleared marginal land for afforestation and the future supply of softwoods and the maintenance of indigenous forest cover on similar uncleared sites for the production of hardwoods under a permanent working plan; and lastly, the maintenance of forest cover on water catchments as a measure of the regulation and conservation of water-supplies.

The importance of the protection of exotic forests from fire is now firmly established, but the same appreciation is unfortunately not held in respect of indigenous forests, particularly milled forest and forest which is principally of protection value. There are many examples where repeated burning has completely destroyed the fertility of the soil, with the result that landslides are frequent and erosion is inevitable.

The forest fire laws are, however, limited in their application to the State forests and other forests, certain flax and gum lands, sand-dunes, &c., protected by fire districts; but an extensive territory equally in need of soil conservation and forest protection is unaffected, and it is in these lands that the greatest damage is done by burning, either deliberately or through carelessness; and on account of lack of organization and through the indifference of the occupiers, fires are allowed to burn themselves out.

In many instances where the land will not now hold grass or other vegetation, it is recognized that indiscriminate burning has been the agent which has impoverished the soil and caused the land to become derelict. The 1946 fire season demonstrated the inadequacy of the present fire prevention and control organization in the Dominion and the limitations of the existing law. With a view to remedying these deficiencies, steps were taken to review the whole position and to determine what legislative authority was necessary to deal with forest and rural fire prevention and control on a Dominion-wide basis. Proposals in this connection are embodied in a proposed Bill called the "Forest and Rural Fires Bill." These proposals have been examined by the forest-owners and other interests affected and dealt with in detail at two conferences held in Wellington. In all cases the principles of the proposals found unanimity, and modifications in detail only appear to be necessary to provide a measure which will be acceptable; and it is hoped that the proposals will form a Bill for consideration by Parliament during the 1947 session. In principle the proposals retain the provisions of the present law regarding the constitution of fire districts for the protection of the forest land or other land for which protection is required, but the control of each fire district will be under a committee called the "Fire Authority" appointed or elected by the owners of the property to be protected. In areas other than fire districts, soil conservation districts, and State forests, local authorities are authorized to take control, and provision is made for joint action and by arrangement for the exercise of the Fire Authorities' powers by a Catchment Board or other properly constituted organizations.

The extended fire control and enlightened land utilization by the State Forest Service, coupled with the improved conservation practices on farms as sponsored by the Soil Conservation Council, represent a major step towards the elimination of soil erosion from New Zealand.

10. *Forest Utilization.*—Before the inception of the Forest Service the country's timber resources were being recklessly exploited. Payment for standing timber was on a sawn-measure basis, so that only the best trees were logged and little incentive existed in the sawmills for the reduction of slab waste to a minimum. Special-use timbers such as kauri and white-pine were used for general purposes as well as for export. Consuming agencies further aggravated the position by imposing restrictive measures on the use of low grades and sap qualities of all building timbers so that much was wasted.