

- b) *Exotic Timbers*.—An increase of 3½d. net was granted throughout the Dominion to cover increased wage costs.

The Tribunal decided that price-lists should be amended to remove certain anomalies in sawmillers' lists, approving for this reason a premium of 2s. for 100 board feet on certain sizes and grades of building timbers. It is to be hoped that this premium will curb the tendency of some millers to cut timber to large sizes rather than incur the increased cost of cutting to building dimensions in common demand.

On the 5th January, 1949, a new New Zealand Timber Workers' award came into operation providing for increased wages and also travelling-time. As from the 8th March, 1949, the Tribunal granted a price increase of 15·4648d. per 100 board feet net for indigenous timber produced in the North Island and Southland, and 11·1614d. for Marlborough and Nelson. An increase of 10·956d. net was granted for exotic timbers. Prices for white-pine produced in North Auckland have been placed on a basis "ex mill yard." Corresponding increases were granted to timber-merchants, who also in some cases received approval to pass on increased yard costs.

The rate of increase in prices has accelerated during the year, and it is to be noted that prices for indigenous timbers increased more than those for exotic timber. This trend is desirable in view of the pending decline in indigenous-timber production, and the desirability that prices should reflect the true relative worth of indigenous and exotic timbers. It is also inevitable if indigenous timbers are to be extracted from the more remote areas. Indeed, to ensure proper utilization, prices for indigenous timbers should be considerably above present levels.

(3) *Utilization*.—Although production of indigenous building timbers again increased substantially, further progress was made during the year in their substitution by insignis pine, larch, white-pine, and tawa. The concentration of carpenter labour on housing led to the building of approximately double the number of dwellings erected annually during the peak pre-war years, and this was largely responsible for the scarcity of rimu, matai and totara, and their partial replacement by other timbers.

Good progress was made in the use of insignis pine for house framing above ground-floor level, and growing interest was shown in this timber for weatherboarding and flooring. For these latter purposes users generally demanded that the timber be treated with preservatives, but for scantling, although some treated insignis pine was used, the bulk of supply was untreated. The Forest Service lost no opportunity to stress the necessity for adequate precautions in handling and storage if insignis pine is to give satisfactory use without preservative treatment.

White-pine and tawa when used in first-class housing work were invariably treated with preservatives. In most instances these timbers were used to replace rimu and matai for flooring.

It is somewhat anomalous that the greatest use of insignis pine and other woods in substitution for timbers usually used occurred in towns which had the best supply of rimu and matai. In Taranaki, Wairarapa, and Gisborne, where indigenous building timber is generally in acutely short supply, progress in the use of substitutes has been much less than in Auckland. It is true that none of the districts named possess a single dry kiln or adequate facilities for timber treatment, but failing provision of such services locally it is inevitable that timber-users in those areas will have to rely to an increasing extent upon drying and treating facilities in other provinces.

The abnormal housing programme has entailed such an increased usage of timber that other industries have been compelled to seek substitutes for the general-purpose indigenous timbers, particularly rimu. Joiners, cabinetmakers, and furniture-manufacturers have found it necessary to vary their normal customs of timber usage and to accommodate their designs and technique to the use of insignis pine to an increasing extent. In these fields good progress was made during the year, and it can now be said that a solid foundation has been laid for the permanent substitution of rimu by insignis pine for a wide range of cabinet work and furniture.