Overseas Timber Trade

(1) *Timber Imports.*—Total imports were much higher than the figure for the previous year, but this was entirely due to very large shipments of railway sleepers. Of the total inwards timber traffic of 45,000,000 board feet, almost 23,000,000 board feet were sleepers. Sleepers, of course, have been in short supply for some years, but imports for the past year are the highest since the peak in 1924. The volume of the import trade was due to a very marked improvement in the shipping position.

Sawn timber accounted for only 16,000,000 board feet, as against 20,000,000 board feet in the previous year; Douglas fir was very much less, due to the scarcity of dollar funds, and cedar also was slightly less. Redwood, on the other hand, showed a significant increase. One of the important developments in the import trade was the reappearance of Japanese oak for the first time since Japan entered the war, the popularity of this timber for furniture-manufacture being such that at 730,000 board feet supply was very much below demand. Total imports at 45,000,000 board feet are the highest since 1930. Long-term import statistics are given in Appendix V.

(2) *Timber Inspection.*—Evidence of injurious insects entering the country in imported timber, despite inspection at the source of shipment, has shown the need for meticulous care if New Zealand is to be protected from serious depredations by introduced insects. Termites entering the country in poles, sleepers, and other hardwoods imported from Australia have been giving cause for concern, and during the year a Timber Inspection Branch was set up with full responsibility for carrying out control measures at ports of entry. All timber imports are inspected, inspection being carried out both at the ship's side during all hours of unloading and also at nearby holding-yards approved for this purpose. Quarantine yards were established at Auckland and Wellington, and several sites were inspected at Tauranga preparatory to the establishment of a yard at the latter port. At other ports the owners of infested produce have it treated under the supervision of a Timber Inspector. Infested material is treated by two main methods:—

(*a*) Creosote treatment as laid down in the basic inspection directive.
(*b*) Pressure treatment with wood preservatives composed of chemicals of proven toxicity. (This treatment has been tentatively approved for large quantities of infested produce that cannot be handled by a quarantine yard or the staff at present available for this work.)

Great care is exercised during the inspections, and a very high degree of immunity from termite infestation is secured. With the present precautions being taken—*i.e.*, import inspections by the Forest Service and destruction of established colonies by the State Advances Corporation and various local bodies—it is unlikely that there will be any significant increase in the termite menace. It appears that this pest is fairly successfully controlled at present, and the longer these precautions are in force the more successful control will become. It is highly improbable that an epidemic situation will result from introduced termites, as conditions over the greater part of New Zealand are against the establishment of the various Australian species. A reduction in the termite colonies that have become established has already been achieved by local bodies as a result of conscientious application of sound control measures. There is no evidence that termites present a serious threat to New Zealand forests.

(3) *Timber Exports.*—Exports reflected the marked improvement in the trans-Tasman shipping position and also the buoyant level of timber-production during the past two years. The total quantity of sawn timber shipped from New Zealand was 23,000,000 board feet, practically all of which went to Australia. This improvement in reciprocal trade has materially assisted this country to secure greater quantities of hardwoods from Australia. The largest single item was sawn insignis pine, 13,500,000 board feet, which was almost treble the previous year's figure. Rimu, matai, beech, and