

DEMAND FOR TIMBER.

In common with every manufacturing country in the world, the steady increase in demand for timber for commercial purposes has been experienced in New Zealand, and the following table shows how the timber industry has grown :—

Year.	Number of Mills.	Hands employed.	Output for Year.	Cutting-capacity per Annum.
			Sup. ft.	Sup. ft.
1886	220	3,890	163,740,546	..
1895	299	4,055	191,053,466	..
1900	334	6,085	261,583,518	..
1905	414	6,912	413,289,742	704,930,600
1907	411	7,139	432,031,611	718,940,000
1909	423	7,414	413,868,919	755,465,480

To cope with the present demand taxes all the resources of the Dominion, as the supply of our indigenous forests is rapidly diminishing, as will be seen by the following estimates :—

Year.	Estimated amount of Milling-timber remaining in our Forests.
1905	41,723,574,800 sup. ft.
1907	35,785,873,467 ..
1909	33,060,883,437 ..

Judging from the vast quantity of forest that was not likely to be available for sawmilling, either through unsuitability of timber, difficulty of access, or cost of cutting and transport, and taking into consideration the loss annually experienced through accidental fires, and the fact that a large part of the timber stands on Native and private land which may be required for settlement purposes, thereby necessitating the felling and destruction of the timber, it was estimated in 1909 that the indigenous forests of New Zealand will not cope with the full demand for sawn timber for a longer period than from thirty-five to forty years, bearing in mind the fact that a certain amount of foreign timber will be arriving continually so as to ease the strain on local resources. Under these circumstances it will be understood why the Government deemed it advisable, many years ago, to inaugurate a system of tree-planting that would gradually take the place of the native forests and timber-supply.

INAUGURATION OF AFFORESTATION.

The problem before the Government was faced in a systematic and comprehensive manner. Three experimental plantations of various trees, aggregating about 15 acres, were started on the Kaingaroa Plains, between Taupo and Rotorua. Another plantation of 15 acres was started at Tarukenga, on the Rotorua Railway line, and another of 6 acres at Mamaku, not far away. These latter plantations were for the purpose of providing timber for railway requirements. Part of the Rotorua Town Belt was also planted.

Encouraged by the success of these preliminary experiments, a Forestry Branch of the Department of Lands was started in 1896, and three nurseries established, two at Tapanui and Eweburn in the Otago District of the South Island, and the other at Whakarewarewa, near Rotorua, in the North Island. The idea was conceived that, coincident with railway-extension, one or two central nurseries in each Island were sufficient for the growth of tree-plants, which could be distributed at various places in the district, according as circumstances warranted the extension of the system. Later on, another nursery was formed at Hanmer, in the Canterbury District (South Island), and attempts were also made to establish nurseries at Starborough, in the Marlborough District (South Island), and Ruatangata, near Whangarei (North Island), but from various causes these latter two nurseries, with the plantations attached to them, were not altogether a success, and have been discontinued.

It must not be overlooked that New Zealand was the first antipodean country to face the problem of State afforestation, and that it was only by means of continuous experiments and the greatest care and forethought that the Department was able to advance on satisfactory lines with due regard to economy and efficiency. It was inevitable that some out of the many species of trees planted should not have proved so great a success as others, whilst the rapid expansion of domestic trades and industries has demonstrated the inadequacy of the original operations, and induced the Government to enlarge its annual provision for the continued extension of plantations to a scale more commensurate with the exigencies of the case.

It must also be distinctly explained that if the present operations do not, in the opinion of some persons, represent that degree of magnitude that are deemed necessary in order to satisfy the whole of the future demand for timber in New Zealand, there are good and sufficient reasons for proceeding cautiously in the meantime. Although the foreign supply is more or less an unknown quantity, yet it is practically certain that the supply of eucalyptus from Australia, and pine from Siberia, Manchuria, and possibly Korea, together with the Douglas fir from Western Canada, will for generations to come satisfy to a very large extent the continuous demand for sawn timber in New Zealand, and that the remaining forests of the Dominion will also be available for some considerable time to assist in supplying the requirements of the commercial community. Moreover, it is essential that the characteristics of exotic trees planted in the State plantations, and their growth and progress in the climate