

In connection with the experiments on the Central Plateau in the North Island, where there is an immense area to be settled, the Board are pleased to note that, in reply to our request that these should be continued, you have given instructions for this to be done.

RURAL EDUCATION.

The subject of rural education is one which has received a great deal of consideration from the Board. We had the advantage of a long and interesting conference with Professor Wood, Draper's Professor of Agriculture, Cambridge University, and Mr. E. S. Beaven, the well-known barley-breeder (who is working in conjunction with Professors Biffen and Wood, of the Cambridge University, as a plant-breeder), and we received much valuable information as to what was being done at that university.

These gentlemen came out here as members of the British Association which, it will be remembered, was sitting in Sydney when the war broke out. We had reports from Professor A. F. Woods, Dean and Director of the Agricultural Department, University of Minnesota (sent by Mr. Seth-Smith, of Christchurch); long reports of the investigations of Mr. Howell, Director of Christchurch Technical College, made in his tour round the world; reports from the gentlemen above mentioned in connection with the Cambridge University; from Professor Creelman, Director of Ontario Agricultural College, Canada, and from Professor Bailey, of Cornell University, State of New York, both of whom also visited New Zealand; a long and valuable report upon the whole subject of rural education from Mr. Hogben, late Director of Education; and much information from other gentlemen. A report was drawn out and adopted by the Board, and you were interviewed on the subject. You will remember that the interview was short, and nothing has been done since in connection with it, except that our President has drawn your attention not only to the report which the Board drew up, but to Mr. Hogben's contribution to the subject, and we trust you will go more fully into the matter at a more propitious time.

At the request of the Council of Agriculture the Board wrote to the Hon. Minister of Education urging that sections of land should be available where practicable near the various high schools for experimental purposes; also that a science master should be attached to such schools to supervise the agricultural education of the scholars, and to work in conjunction with the experts of the Department of Agriculture on similar lines to those that are being carried out at the Ashburton High School.

AFFORESTATION.

This important subject has had the Board's close attention, and careful consideration has been given to the reports we have received on the matter from Mr. MacKenzie (late Under-Secretary for Lands), from Rev. J. H. Simmonds, and from Mr. E. Phillips Turner, F.R.G.S., of the Lands Department. We realize to the fullest extent the utmost necessity for continuing reforestation, and we have urged time and again that the Government should extend this work. It has, however, always been pointed out that the war was the reason that planting to a greater extent had not been done. The Board's resolutions in connection with the subject, which have been passed on to the Government, are numerous, and there does not appear to be any need to repeat them here.

We would, however, like to draw your attention to the great probability that many returned soldiers might be prepared to undertake the work of reforestation, especially after having seen how much importance is attached to this matter in other countries, and the result in Turkish countries where the work has been neglected. Trees cannot be planted if seedlings have not been raised, and we would urge that more money be expended in this direction preparing for the time, after the war, when a much greater area will no doubt be planted than hitherto.

We are glad to say that, in response to our request, the Hon. Minister of Lands agreed to our proposal that the Rev. J. H. Simmonds be asked to write a pamphlet on timber-trees suitable for planting in New Zealand for both timber and shelter purposes, also to give his opinion as to how the trees should be planted.

The Board also passed a resolution asking the Government to retain Tauhara Mountain, near Taupo, as a scenic reserve, this being almost the last native bush in that neighbourhood which, unless protected, will year after year be damaged by fires. We have had no promise on this point other than that the matter will be considered. We would, however, again urge that the preliminary steps of survey should, at any rate, be proceeded with prior to the Government taking over this as a scenic reserve.

A committee of the Board also waited upon Mr. Brodrick, Under-Secretary for Lands (who is in charge of the forestry operations of the Lands Department), and urged upon him that even under the present financial strain there should be no curtailment of the usual planting in the face of the rapidly approaching depletion of our timber-supplies. Mr. Brodrick stated that it was not proposed to curtail forestry operations, but that there was no money available for expansion. The Board is of the opinion that there should be no check in these operations.

We also had several interviews with Mr. D. E. Hutchins, F.R.G.S., who is at present in New Zealand in response to an invitation sent to him by the Hon. Minister of Lands, at the Board's instigation, for the purpose of reporting on forestry here. Amongst other matters dealt with, the best means to be adopted to conserve our timber, and the various qualities and varieties of trees that should be planted in New Zealand, were discussed with him, and the Board feel confident that when his report is completed it will be found to be of the utmost value in the interests of forestry. Mr. Hutchins's special qualifications and experience fit him to report on our forests, reforestation, and future work, and we hope to see his report, when published, widely read.