

REPORT.

The UNDER-SECRETARY FOR LANDS to the COMMISSIONER OF STATE FORESTS.

SIR,—

Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 21st June, 1917.

I have the honour to submit herewith the annual report of the Forestry Branch of this Department. As the report deals this year more fully with our Native forests than previously it has been divided into Part I (State Nurseries and Plantations) and Part II (Native Forests). Tables are appended showing the receipts and expenditure, the imports and exports of timber, for the year ended 31st March, 1917, also the amount of timber cut during the year ended 31st March, 1916.

I have, &c.,

T. N. BRODRICK, Under-Secretary.

The Right Hon. W. F. Massey, P.C., Commissioner of State Forests.

PART I.—STATE NURSERIES AND PLANTATIONS.

TREES RAISED AND AREA PLANTED.

DURING the year ended 31st March, 1917, 5,848,930 trees were raised at the four State nurseries, and during the same period 5,419,569 trees were sent out to the various State plantations and 314,467 to outside places.

In the eight plantations where there was still planting-land available a total area of 2,764 acres was planted. The total area planted to date since the start of operations in 1896 is now 29,992 acres. The following table shows the area planted prior to the 1st April, 1909, and the area planted yearly since that date:—

	Planted before 1st April, 1909.	1909-10.	1910-11.	1911-12.	1912-13.	1913-14.	1914-15.	1915-16.	1916-17.	Total Area.
	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.
North Island ..	7,802	1,807	1,575	1,664	776	1,288	1,416	1,913	1,918	20,159
South Island ..	3,291	891	1,025	902	828	537	749	764	846	9,833
Total ..	11,093	2,698	2,600	2,566	1,604	1,825	2,165	2,677	2,764	29,992

PRISON LABOUR.

No work was done by prison labour in the South Island. At Rotorua the average daily number of prisoners employed was 34·81; more could easily have been employed, but the Prison Department could not spare the men, as they were required for roadmaking and other works which that Department was undertaking. The total value of the work done by prison labour at Rotorua during the year was £3,119 6s. 8d. The total value of the work done by prisoners in the North Island since 1900 is now £44,485 18s. 8d.

STATE ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS IN TREE-PLANTING.

In order to give greater publicity to the fact that the State now supplies trees to farmers for planting for shelter, timber-supply, firewood, &c., County Councils were circularized and advertisements put in the *Journal of Agriculture* and weekly papers. The result was that there was a largely increased number of applicants, and the stock of available trees becoming exhausted before the end of the planting season, many applications had to be declined. There is a rapidly growing appreciation of the value of tree plantations on farms, and it is proposed to raise in the future a much larger stock of trees for this very important purpose. The total number of trees disposed of was 310,967.

SALE OF THINNINGS.

At the North Island plantations, where a considerable amount of thinning of the larch areas has been done, a large amount of timber was disposed of locally as firewood and to the mining companies as mine-props. In the South Island only a small area has been thinned, but the thinnings were either used on the plantations for fencing purposes or profitably sold as firewood.

GRAZING STOCK ON FIRE-BREAKS.

It is pleasing to state that the grazing of stock in the fire-breaks in the South Island plantations has been a complete success; the grass has been kept down, expense of ploughing saved, and a most satisfactory profit derived from the sale of wool and sheep.