

The increased utilization of timber formerly little used is scarcely noticeable, although some of the mills which have permanent orders for box-timber are cutting anything which will make a log.

In spite of the extremely dry summer and autumn, the district has been practically free from fires. This is partly accounted for through the persistent warning of sawmillers, bushmen, settlers, and the general public as to the danger of lighting fires. Although late in the day, it is felt that the Forestry Department might do much in the way of educating the public generally to appreciate the value of the forest and why it should be protected.

Apart from native forests, there are some magnificent plantations of *Pinus insignis* and gums (*Eucalyptus*), many of which are now of commercial value, and have reached the stage (owing to age, deterioration in value, and liability to be blown down) at which they should be milled; but no plantation should be allowed to be cut without an equal area being planted.

The question of afforestation and tree-planting is one that should be pushed on energetically not only in this district, which is to a great extent treeless, but throughout the whole Dominion. Native forest should be conserved and scientifically worked for the timber, particular attention being given to the protection of the young growth, and suitable lands should be acquired and planted.

As far as this district is concerned, there are parts of it which have great advantages over other districts as far as the replanting is concerned. For instance, there are large areas of land of low value in the Sounds County which might be resumed and planted. The cheapness of water carriage, the working of the forests, and protection from fires, makes the Sounds district somewhat unique for the purpose of forest-planting, to say nothing of the enhanced beauty it would give to these fine waterways, the hills surrounding which are to-day practically bare and an unsightly lot of poor farms. There is also a large area along the sea-front of the Wairau Plain which should be placed in the hands of the foresters. It is low-grade land which could be acquired for very little.

NELSON.

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The timber industry during the year under review has been quiet, and returns show a decrease in output of about half a million feet over last year's figures. Mills, however, which closed down on account of shortage of labour due to war conditions are now in some cases starting again, and this, with several new mills in course of erection, will bring the industry back to normal, and will no doubt be responsible for a considerable increase in output. More labour is becoming available as men are released from the camps and Expeditionary Forces, and the outlook in timber circles is much brighter. The chief timbers milled are rimu and beech, very little white-pine being available.

The number of mills working is approximately eleven, and the ascertained output is—Beech, 468,921 sup. ft.; rimu, 2,661,402 sup. ft.; silver-pine, 14,647 sup. ft.; white-pine, 60,700 sup. ft.; and cedar, 400 sup. ft.

The royalties and rents received from the various classes of land are—State forests, £106 4s.; national-endowment areas, £799; and Crown lands, £377.

The prices ruling in the city for ordinary building and clean heart are as follows: Rimu: O.B., 22s. 6d. to 27s.; all heart—unseasoned, 31s. 6d.; seasoned, 34s. Matai: Rough heart, 25s. 6d.; clean heart—unseasoned, 32s.; seasoned, 34s. 6d. White-pine and red-beech: O.B., 22s. 6d. to 27s.; all heart—unseasoned, 31s. 6d.; seasoned, 34s. Brown-beech, 31s. 6d. Totara piles, 10d. per foot.

Taking as a basis the amount of timber cut during the year, it is estimated that the supply of timber of commercial value will last from twenty-five to thirty years. This is a matter upon which it is difficult to make any definite pronouncement, as forest is always liable to destruction by accidental fires in seasons of drought, and the area of timber of value may thereby be diminished. The estimate is, too, contingent upon the energy with which the industry is carried on. The duration stated is based on present output, but if the industry received a fresh impetus whereby cutting was prosecuted more energetically, then the duration of supply will be consequently more restricted.

No timbers formerly wasted are now being utilized, but millers have a demand for smaller sizes, the supplying of which considerably reduces the wastage which was formerly unavoidable.

I am pleased to be able to report that little if any milling-bush has been burnt by accidental fires in this district. The only fire of any consequence was about three years ago, which was caused by a settler burning his felled bush in the midst of timber country.

In the case of timber on lands within a mining district it might be advantageous if millers were compelled to give timely warning to the Warden of their intention to surrender their holdings. The Ranger would then have an opportunity of making an inspection before tram-lines and machinery were removed, and this might be the means of ensuring a more thorough cleaning-up and removal of any timber found on the land and which should have been milled.

The above remarks apply mostly to the Reefton and Buller districts. In the northern part of the land district the timber industry on Crown lands is rapidly approaching exhaustion, and is not calculated to last more than three or four years for the more valuable timbers such as rimu, totara, matai, and kahikatea. There is, however, a large supply of beech, both black and brown, but this timber is not much in demand. The better classes of timber are brought from the Pelorus Valley, in Marlborough.

The timber still standing is becoming more difficult of access, and this fact renders operations in this portion of the district more unsatisfactory. It is not possible to obtain a complete statement of output, as most of the mills are working on private lands.