

During 1920-21, a study was made of the quantity and distribution of the indigenous forests of the State; of afforestation activities; of New Zealand methods of forest administration and application by the Lands Department; of the sawmilling industry, domestic consumption and exportation of timber; of the silvical and ecological problems attendant on the regrowth of the indigenous forests, and of many other factors incident to timber and timber use.

The period April to August was spent by the writer in studying forest milling and industrial wood-consumption throughout the Dominion. In September a comprehensive survey traversing the whole field of forestry and forest activities was prepared and presented to the Minister in Charge of Forestry. After a deliberate consideration of the report a plan of administration was approved and steps were taken to bring into being the State Forest Service.

The central management and administrative control of the service briefly consists of the Director of Forestry (assisted by the Chief Inspector) and the Secretary, with offices at Wellington.

As decentralization and efficient stewardship go hand in hand it was decided to establish seven forest-conservation regions, each in charge of a competent regional executive, the Conservator of Forests. The conservation region is divided into several ranger districts, each in charge of a Forest Ranger who functions as local executant as regards cruising and appraisal of timber-sales, trespass, forest-protection, and generally all activities relating to the State forests. Provision was also made for the appointment of an Engineer in Forest Products, a Milling Expert, Surveyors, and the necessary clerical assistance.

It was not until the end of the year that the necessary appointments were made. At that time a Conservator of Forests was appointed for the Auckland, Rotorua, Westland, Canterbury Otago, and Southland Regions. Owing to financial difficulties the posts of Conservator of the Wellington and Nelson-Marlborough Regions were held in abeyance. Forest Rangers to the number of twenty-four were appointed to various forest districts throughout the Dominion, and the posts of Engineer in Forest Products, Milling Expert, and Land Surveyor were filled. The necessary forest clerks were also secured and assigned to the Conservators' offices. The Forest Service has been fortunate indeed in securing from a wide range of applicants a very fine personnel, and it is hoped that the high standard of efficiency that has been set and inaugurated will be continuously maintained.

In January the Minister in Charge of Forestry presented to the public a statement of forest policy by the execution of which it is hoped to attain the conservation and reasoned use of our visible timber-supplies and the perpetuation of the use of the national forest estate for future generations. This policy is based on the conviction that the forests of New Zealand are for the use of the people of New Zealand, and that while the present is entitled to the fullest economic use of this resource it behoves the present to so handle this heritage that the rights of posterity are safeguarded. The policy briefly calls for—

- (1.) Permanent dedication to Forest management of all Crown forested lands chiefly valuable for forestry and timber-production, and the deletion from State forests of all lands chiefly valuable for agricultural purposes as soon as possible :
- (2.) The subjection to scientific Forest management of all State forests, and the placing of same on a sustained-cut basis :
- (3.) Establishment of protection forests at the head-waters of streams, on water-supply basins, &c. :
- (4.) Application of an efficient scheme of forest-protection to State forests :
- (5.) The gradual building-up of an efficient administrative instrument—the State Forest Service :
- (6.) Establishment of a School of Forestry for the training of forest technicians :
- (7.) Promotion of forest research :
- (8.) Forest-extension by the State planting in those regions where demonstrated results are best and the local needs most urgent :
- (9.) A progressive timber-sale policy :
- (10.) Decentralization, and the settlement of all local questions by local officers.

This expression of policy, which has been very well received by producers, consumers, and the general public, forms a splendid base upon which to build the new Forest Act so urgently required.

THE NATIONAL FOREST ESTATE.

The forest reconnaissances which were made during the year, of the mountainous backbone of the North Island from the East Cape to Parks Peak, and of the eastern slope of the Southern Alps, emphasize the grave danger of opening up to reckless settlement the high forested uplands and wooded ranges of the Auckland, Taranaki, Wellington, Hawke's Bay, Nelson, Marlborough, Westland, Canterbury, Otago and Southland Provinces. The vital social interests of New Zealand, her national welfare and economy, demand the reservation from further devastation and destruction of all the hundreds of thousands of acres of these protection forests. Surely this beautiful Dominion does not mean to repeat the history of Mesopotamia, Greece, Italy, Spain, France, Portugal, China, and other countries in pastoral and agricultural disaster ?

The time to begin rational forest-management is when you have forests to start with. "Do not lock the stable-door after the horse is stolen." There are at least 4,000,000 acres of undedicated Crown and Native forest land that should be subjected to rational conservation, reasoned use, and silvicultural control in the interests of the national well-being.