

CHAPTER I.—PROGRESS OF NEW ZEALAND FORESTRY.

What progress has been made in the successful development of our national forest policy, the assurance of regularly sustained and ample timber-supplies, the efficient management of our forest resources, and the protection of forested areas essential to water-supply, stability of climate, and the public health? Definite progress is herein reported on all counts in this the first full year of the operation of the forest policy and the Forest Service.

The year will be known as the enactment year of a modern Forests Act, whereby the excellent forest policy inaugurated by the late Minister of Forestry was crystallized into law. This Act, known as the 1921-22 Forests Act, "makes provision for the management and protection of forests, and for other purposes in relation thereto"; and expresses the best of modern experience in the administration of national forests. Whilst the forest laws and codes of other British and English-speaking communities have been drawn upon, nevertheless this Act is essentially a forest law designed by New-Zealanders for New Zealand conditions. A clear line of authority and responsibility has been defined from the Legislative head downwards. Power has been taken to appoint a consultative Advisory Board in order that ideals may be allied with practical needs. The machinery of action—a State Forest Service—has been created. Ample power has been given for the dedication of permanent and provisional State forests, the creation of forest plantations, the formation and regulation of forest working-plans, and for the definition of fire districts. A special feature of the Act is the provision for the management of Maori forests by the Forest Service. By the operation of the power contained in this chapter the Native owners may secure a permanent and perpetual periodic revenue from any native bush which may be dedicated as "Maori forest."

The Act, which became law on the 1st April, 1922, assures a unity of control and administration of the national forest estate; it eliminates overlapping of services, ensures continuity of policy and a certain permanency of action which, unfortunately, has not heretofore characterized the national forestry effort.

The year has been noteworthy for the substantial area accession to the provisional State forest roll. During the year 272,351 acres of highly valuable commercial Crown forest have been dedicated as provisional State forest. This contribution stands as an earnest of the sincere spirit of co-operation and of helpfulness of the Department of Lands and Survey in its desire to further the national policy of forestry.

It is gratifying to note the substantial and increasing interest in the establishment and growing of tree plantations, shelter-belts, wood-lots, county and municipal forests, by the farmers, settlers, cities, towns, counties, other local bodies, and by corporations. From the two main sources of supply—i.e., the Forest Service and the Dominion Federated Nurserymen—over four million trees (and more than 400 lb. of tree-seeds from the Forest Service) were disposed of to private planters during the year, as compared with a sale of probably a quarter of that amount for the previous year.

The Service, through its two tree-planting Inspectors, supported by the splendid tree-nursery facilities at Rotorua, Hanmer, and Tapanui, and the expert knowledge of its afforestation staff, was able to take a leading part in the stimulation of private tree-planting. Sixty-one tree-planting demonstration lectures were delivered by the two forest-extension officers to nearly two thousand interested planters, and nearly five thousand memoranda, letters, and reports giving advice and instruction were prepared for private planters. Surely that is a distinct community service! It is pleasant to record the planting by the Service of nearly five million trees in the various plantations: this is equivalent to the stocking on new ground of over 3,400 acres, the largest area ever planted by the State. It constitutes a record within the Empire. By the exercise of economies, by loyal co-operation, and by the use of more direct methods the capital cost of State-plantation establishment was lessened by £10,000. In reviewing the national and private forest-extension activities for the year it may truly be said that a high-water mark in afforestation has been set by the planting during the year in New Zealand of at least ten million trees, or 10,000 acres of new forest. The State plantations, now totalling 42,000 acres, may be conservatively valued at £2,000,000.

The forest revenue for the year was £31,000—the largest amount since the year 1912, and in the face of a steadily shrinking domestic and export timber market. This sale revenue, which is 263 per cent. greater than that of the year 1920, is largely due to the introduction of a progressive timber-sales policy, increased exploitation, supervision, and a closer control over royalties, returns, timber trespasses, and thefts.

In the prevention of forest-fires on and contiguous to the public forests definite results were obtained through the operation of fire patrolmen, educational propaganda, and by the development of settler and farmer co-operation. The forest-fire season—from October to April—was fortunately a wet one, and aided materially in the setting of a record for minimum damage and destruction. Our records show the actual destruction of 5,200 acres of woodland, valued at £4,010. It is hoped that the creation of certain fire districts this year, and the improvement in the technique of detection and suppression of fires, will ensure the continuance of the splendid 1921-22 record.

The forest inventory and stock-taking of the Dominion's forest resources were begun during the year, and 50 per cent. completed. This economic survey embraces an investigation of all commercial and protective forests, their ownership, the quantity and quality of timber, distribution, accessibility, and value. This national inventory will serve as a starting-point from which to build specific working-plans so necessary to the adequate production of perpetual and sustained wood crops. The findings of the inventory make possible a very close prediction as to the life of our virgin supplies, and this data, combined with rate of growth and yield statistics, will determine the effectiveness of the indigenous-forest asset in a scheme of permanent national forestry.

The silvical research programme of our kauri, rimu, totara, and miro forests and trees was continued during the year with satisfactory progress results. Further investigations bearing on forest problems have been undertaken by Canterbury, Victoria, and Auckland Colleges. During the year it was possible, in co-operation with Auckland University College, to begin a technological testing programme of considerable magnitude of all our important indigenous timber-trees. A series