

planting of 500 acres, whilst 1,500 acres of artificial forests were created by boroughs and county bodies. Other State Departments were responsible for the planting of 200 acres.

The grand total acreage of plantations established during the year, including the State plantations, was 15,000 acres.

AREA OF STATE FORESTS.

A substantial and essential addition of 97,170 acres of Crown forest lands was made to the National Forest Domain during the year. The total domain is now 7,433,181 acres, or 11·2 per cent. of the total area of the Dominion.

GENERAL.

The increasing importance of the opossum as a by-product of the forest is emphasized this year when it is noted that 109,905 skins, valued at £46,563, were trapped. At least ninety thousand of these skins were secured in State forests. Bounties were paid on 4,781 wild pigs destroyed in the Whangamomona district. A start was made in reducing the vermin deer in certain unprotected areas in Canterbury, Westland, Nelson, and other centres, but the real value of this system of control will not be seen for some time.

Progress has also been effected by the Service in establishing its own seed collection and extraction machinery; in effecting substantial economies in tree propagation and plantation formation costs; and in widening general interest in forestry throughout the Dominion.

A valuable perspective on the relative value of the present New Zealand forest policy as compared with Australia, Canada, and other parts of the Empire was secured by the Director of Forestry as a result of his attendance at the British Empire Forestry Conference held in Canada last year. (A brief abstract of the resolutions passed at this Conference and notes thereon are contained in Annexure VI.) He is of the opinion that in achievement and progress New Zealand has much to be proud of, yet it is true that she has a long way to go to assure her national forest objectives. Three problems are clearly revealed. They are timber-supply, land use, and stream-flow conservation.

The time will soon be ripe for a complete recasting of our national forest policy in the light of the knowledge and experience gained as a result of the investigations and developments of the last four years. Our Dominion-wide Forest Inventory shows the timber resources of the country, their distribution and volume—we know fairly accurately what lands may be permanently dedicated to timber-crop production; our national growth can be gauged, and we know what may be secured from planted forests.

The Service must now consider the problem of formulating a permanent and lasting forest programme, and in a few months it must express a definite, exact, and practical plan upon which can be built our national forest policy for all time. A programme of reasoned use which will ensure to New Zealand her national safety in plentiful wood-supplies, in continuity of water-flow, and in the widest and greatest use of our forest lands and resources.

CHAPTER II.—THE STATE FOREST SERVICE.

The members of the Service during the year 1923–24 have given efficient, loyal, honest, and intelligent service to their many increased responsibilities and duties of forestry. The total number of permanent officers was 96, as compared with 97 in 1921, yet the volume of business for the year just closed was ten times that of the former period. Only four changes in the staff by resignation took place during the year. The spirit of genuine co-operation and team play that prevails enabled the Service to cope with the many new problems that have arisen, for in addition to carrying on forest surveys, timber cruises, forest-fire patrols, trespass, opossum-control, collection of silvical material and timber-testing material, the forest officers of the Service act as Scenic Reserve Inspectors, rangers under the Animals and Birds Protection Acts, and many other associated activities.

The work of the Service is now seriously handicapped through lack of trained men: the setting-up of a departmental periodic school of instruction and the recognition of a properly equipped School of Forestry at one of the University colleges are urgently required and should be proceeded with. Forest officer trainees to the number of thirteen were recruited to the Service, and it is hoped to increase this number as suitable candidates appear. The following schedule illustrates the distribution of the permanent staff:—

NEW ZEALAND STATE FOREST SERVICE ORGANIZATION.—DISTRIBUTION OF PERMANENT STAFF AS AT 31ST MARCH, 1924.

Forest-conservation Region.	Director.	Secretary.	Chief Inspector.	Conservator of Forests.	Special Officers.	Forest Assistant.	Surveyor.	Clerical Staff.	Draftsmen.	Forest Rangers, A Grade.	Forest Rangers, B Grade.	Forest Guards.	Nurserymen.	Others.	Total Number as at 31st March, 1924.
Auckland	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	1	..	1	3	..	..	..	6
Rotorua	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	3	..	2	6	6	1	1	20
Wellington	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	3	2	1	..	..	7
Nelson	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	1	4	1	..	..	7
Westland	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	1	..	1	3	..	..	..	6
Canterbury-Otago ..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	3	..	3	6	3	3	..	19
Southland	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	1	..	1	3	..	..	..	6
Central Office	1	1	1	..	2	1	1	12	5	..	1	..	..	..	25
Total	1	1	1	5	2	1	1	23	5	12	28	11	4	1	96