

CHAPTER V.—GENERAL.

1. VISIT OF EMPIRE FORESTRY CONFERENCE.

An event of both interest in and importance to the forestry world was the visit to the Dominion of the delegates to the Empire Forestry Conference, which opened its sessions in Perth, Western Australia, on 21st August, 1928, and after including in its itinerary all the six States of the Commonwealth, arrived in New Zealand on 8th October and visited both Islands, concluding its sittings in Auckland on the 23rd of that month.

This is the third occasion upon which the Conference has been called together, the initial meeting being in London in 1920, and the second in Canada three years later. It is proposed to hold the next Conference in South Africa in 1933.

Foresters attended from all parts of the Empire, including Canada, several provinces in India, South Africa (and the other British African territories), Cyprus, North Borneo, Ceylon, Burma, Federated Malay States, &c.

The proceedings were presided over by the Right Hon. Lord Clinton, Chairman, British Forestry Commission. The New Zealand delegates were the Hon. O. J. Hawken, Commissioner of State Forests; the Right Hon. Sir Francis Bell; the Hon. Sir R. Heaton Rhodes; Dr. L. Cockayne, F.R.S.; Professor H. H. Corbin, B.Sc. (Agriculture), Forestry School, Auckland University College; C. E. Foweraker, M.A., Lecturer-in-charge, School of Forestry, Canterbury University College; A. Hansson, M.F. (Yale), Chief Inspector, State Forest Service; W. T. Morrison, Conservator of Forests, Rotorua; and the Director of Forestry, of whom the three last mentioned attended both the Australian and New Zealand sessions.

For the Dominion tour all the other executive officers of the Service were appointed associate delegates, as well as certain gentlemen who have been associated with and have rendered outstanding service in the cause of forestry in a scientific and semi-official capacity.

Briefly, the objects of these Conferences may be described as twofold—firstly to stabilize forestry practice throughout the Empire for the safeguarding of future timber-supplies, and co-ordinating and improving generally matters of policy, administration, trade, marketing, &c., and the technical and research branches of forestry; secondly, to assist the countries in which they are held by an exchange of the knowledge and experience of forestry matters acquired by the delegates throughout long years of administration in other parts of the Empire.

In addition to the subjects just referred to, other kindred ones, such as timber supply and consumption, labour in relation to forestry, forestry in relation to climate and erosion, forest surveying, forestry education, forestry technique, &c., were discussed, and forestry principles applicable to conditions prevailing throughout the Empire were enunciated in general terms.

In pursuance of the policy of co-ordination, the Director of the Imperial Institute and representative of the Empire Marketing Board, London, the Director of the Imperial Forestry Institute, Oxford, and a representative of the Timber Trades Federation of the United Kingdom also travelled with the Conference, the two former being delegates, and the latter an associate delegate.

Conference Recommendations.

Indigenous Forests.—The Conference appointed a committee to furnish a report on New Zealand forestry, and the following extracts from this report are quoted for general information.

Dealing with those indigenous forests which are maintained primarily for protective reasons in mountainous country, with the object of preventing erosion and the silting-up of rivers, the committee states:—

“We recommend that steps be taken to complete the process of reservation as rapidly as circumstances will permit, in order that the further destruction of these forests may be prevented. We recommend also that all forests of these categories be placed under the administration of the State Forest Service, as this should tend towards economy and efficiency in maintenance.”

With respect to those which are maintained primarily for the supply of timber, the committee uses these words:—

“We recommend that all areas remaining to be dedicated as permanent forest should be reserved for this purpose as soon as possible.”

Exotic Plantations.—Under this head, amongst other remarks, the committee makes this observation:—

“No scheme of planting other lands unsuitable for agricultural purposes has been formulated for the years subsequent to 1935, but it will be necessary to prepare a scheme providing for systematic afforestation up to the time when the oldest plantations reach commercial maturity. This will provide a regular series of age-classes, and ensure the working of the plantations on a sustained-yield basis, a matter of vital importance in connection with the establishment and maintenance of local industries.”

Thinnings in Plantations.—As this is a world-wide forestry problem, the committee report is quoted in full:—

“Although the plantations visited are apparently in a healthy condition, it is obvious that thinnings are urgently required. It is important that this work should be pushed on to the utmost extent possible, particularly in the case of larch. For this purpose it is advisable that a scheme of thinning should be prepared which will ensure that each plantation is thinned at least once every ten years. Until some use—such as wood-pulp—can be found for the material cut in thinnings, this work is likely to prove costly; but against this it should be noted that the ultimate benefit to the crop, through enhanced increment and a better quality of individual stems, may more than compensate for the expense involved in thinning. The low cost of establishing the plantations is a further justification for expenditure on thinning operations. In the meantime, every effort should be made to find a use for the large quantities of material available from thinnings.”