

5. WOOD PRESERVATION.

Detailed inspections of the service lines of creosoted fence-posts and poles, &c., were made during the year and have added to our store of knowledge regarding the relative effectiveness of various treatments. Except, possibly, in one or two areas of low rainfall and low humidity, all non-durable posts and poles appeared to require a full-length treatment with creosote, as most butt treated timbers have failed by decay of the tops and their breaking-off just above the ground-level. The larch and eucalypt fence-posts full length creosoted at Rotorua in 1920 still show negligible signs of decay, and the same comment applies to the beech and kamahi posts treated at Dunedin in 1925 and the rimu poles treated at Westland in 1930. Similar results have been secured with a number of creosoted pine posts, the results, however, indicating that great care must be exercised in the handling of these timbers before treatment and in securing sufficient penetration and absorption of the preservative.

Further timbers were treated and new service lines installed during the year, a total of two thousand fence-posts of larches and pines having been creosoted during the last two years and about four hundred already placed in use. Further investigations also have been made into the incidence of sap-stain of exotic timbers. Such stains are the principal source of prejudice against the use of exotic timbers, but with negligible exceptions are traceable to bad logging and seasoning practices. The underlying difficulty is that saw-millers either will not realize that the exotic timbers cannot be abused in the same way as the indigenous timbers or are content to disregard the complaints of their customers.

6. MISCELLANEOUS.

Amongst the general utilization projects undertaken during the year were investigations into the identification and expanded use of the silver-pines and the beeches, the control and prevention of borer attack, the standardization of butter-boxes, the use of locally grown timbers for handle and clothes-peg manufacture, and the development of markets for rustic work.

CHAPTER IV.—THE TIMBER TRADE.

1. GENERAL.

The annual cut of sawn timber for the year ended 31st March, 1936, is estimated at approximately 300,000,000 ft. board measure, or over 50,000,000 ft. board measure more than the previous year, and almost twice the record low cut of 154,000,000 ft. board measure for the year ended 31st March, 1932. The predicted cut of 250,000,000 ft. board measure for the year ended 31st March, 1935, agreed closely with the Government Statistician's reported cut of 243,782,000 ft. board measure.

Any prediction of the annual cut for the forthcoming year is naturally of a speculative character, but the four-weekly railway returns of timber loadings are indicative of the present trend and the March, 1936, figure of 42,113 tons is the largest since May, 1930. Judged by building permits, railway loadings, depleted yard stocks, and the inauguration of a Government housing scheme, an increase in annual production to at least 325,000,000 ft. board measure might be expected, but it is difficult to assess the demand for timber for private building activities.

While the greater part of the increased production for the year ended 31st March, 1936, will be accounted for by rimu, it is anticipated that other building-timbers will show a proportionately large increase in production. Insignis pine, which alone of all timbers registered a consistent increase of production throughout the depression period, attained a new reported record of over 27,000,000 ft. board measure during the year ended 31st March, 1935, and is expected to reach 35,000,000 ft. board measure during the period under review.

2. DOMESTIC MARKETS.

The firming prices and increasing demand characteristic of the 1934-35 period continued to gather momentum during the year ended 31st March, 1936. Continuation of the building-subsidy scheme of the Unemployment Board is reflected in a further increase in building activities, the dwelling permits for the larger towns and cities as reported by the Government Statistician numbering 3,181 for the year ended 31st March, 1936, as compared with only 2,173 and 1,981 for the two previous periods.