

REPORT.

SUMMARY.

A few salient points of general interest concerning the year's operations are quoted hereunder :—

Exotic Forest Establishment.—In round figures, the total area of exotic State forests comprises 430,700 acres. With the major areas all fully planted up, the Service has for the past few years been operating on a very restricted programme. Whilst only 2,711 acres of new planting were completed, 6,250 acres of blanking, interplanting, and replanting were also undertaken. Statistics of the year's planting are embodied in Table 6 of the report.

Timber Sales.—A slight falling off in the sale of timber from State forests was noticeable when compared with the previous year's totals—the biggest reduction (13,200,000 ft.) occurred in Westland. The volume of timber sold was 90,292,600 ft. board measure, and the sale price was £104,821.

Timber-production.—The year's estimated timber-production from all sources is estimated to be 335,000,000 ft. board measure, an increase in round figures of 5,000,000 ft. board measure for the corresponding period last year. Although less timber was sold from State forests, the total cut from this source under all heads actually increased by 8,250,000 ft. as a result of working on reserves or areas purchased in previous years. Of the total reported cut of all rough-sawn timber, approximately 37 per cent. came from State forests.

Sawmills.—The recorded number of sawmills of all classes in the Dominion is 610, an increase of 12. Those working full time totalled 343, half-time 153, and closed down 114. It is interesting to note that 81 mills cut exotic timbers during the year and 294 worked full time cutting indigenous timbers. Only 142 mills were working in State forests.

Exports and Imports.—Schedules showing exports and imports of sawn timber and other forest produce, compiled by the Comptroller of Customs for the three years ending 31st December, 1937, 1938, and 1939, are published in Chapter IV of the report. Due to the conservation of white pine supplies for local essential uses, the exports of this timber have been reduced from almost 15,000,000 ft. board measure to only 2,000,000 ft. board measure, thus accounting for the total drop in the export trade from 27,000,000 ft. board measure to 15,000,000 ft. board measure. An expansion in the import trade is due solely to the increased demand for special-use timbers for which local substitutes are either unavailable or in restricted supply—principally Australian hardwoods and long-length Douglas fir.

Recreation.—The public continues to make increasing use of the State forests for recreational purposes, and the advent of the motor-car trailer and caravan induces larger numbers of townsfolk year by year to spend their annual holidays camping in forest glades or on roadsides in the precincts of the virgin bush. It is therefore very gratifying to record that the great majority of visitors were careful to light fires only in safe places and to do no damage to growing trees.

Those automobile patrolmen who act as honorary forest rangers rendered valuable help in supervision of camps and campers generally, and the Service desires gratefully to acknowledge the debt it owes for this co-operation.

Fire-prevention.—Information supplied daily by the Meteorological Office in relation to temperature, relative humidity and wind force recorded at various stations, and the weather changes which might be expected, was extremely useful during a long period of high fire hazard. It was possible again through the courtesy of the same Office and the National Broadcasting Service to broadcast warnings when fire danger existed in various parts of the Dominion, together with requests for particular care to prevent forest, scrub, or grass fires. Thanks are due also to Messrs. Bryant and May, Bell, and Co., Ltd., and Messrs. W. D. and H. O. Wills, Ltd., for their assistance in publicity work to stimulate the fire-consciousness of the general public.

Erosion.—The Service is keenly interested in the question of soil erosion and was represented on two Committees comprised of various members of Departments of the Public Service set up by the Government to consider and report on the whole problem.

General.—The activities of the Service continue to increase in volume and complexity, and the energies of all members of the staff were severely taxed to prevent work falling into arrears.

It should specially be mentioned that throughout the fire season, extending in most conservancies over several months, executive field officers experienced a particularly trying and anxious time, and for many weeks were virtually on continuous duty.

FOREST POLICY.

FORESTRY AND LAND USE PROBLEM.

Forestry in New Zealand has arrived at a stage in its development when both the national problem and its solution have become obscured by a diversity of side issues and by failure to distinguish between objectives and methods of attack.

What is forestry? It is not alone the planting of trees; nor the production of timber; nor the provision of high-country grazing; nor the protection of watersheds; nor the preservation of wild life; nor the perpetuation of historic, æsthetic, scientific, and primeval values; nor the development of recreational uses. Neither is it the sum total of all these. It is something infinitely more, deriving its greatness not solely from the complex inter-relationship of its constituent parts, but from its basic contribution to the solution of the Dominion's general land-use problem.

In its simplest terms, the national land-use problem is that of so managing the entire land resource that its power to produce is at least preserved in perpetuity and augmented where possible. As will develop later in the discussion, this is a fundamental concept to which all social and economic principles must be made subservient. The contribution of forestry is twofold. By keeping in a state of maximum productivity its own non-agricultural lands forestry, through the maintenance of climatic equilibrium, regulation of stream flow, and control of erosion, preserves inviolate many factors on which agricultural lands depend for their productivity.