

through the Otira Gorge is completed, Westland. Other nurseries would be well placed at Have-lock, Palmerston, Auckland, and Lake Taupo. These five nurseries, if worked energetically, and under skilled control, would supply all the trees required in the colony for both State planting and for distribution to the public. As proved in Victoria, such nurseries can be maintained on economical lines. As for the growth of forest-trees, there is no necessity for the expensive glass-houses and other buildings used by the ordinary nurseryman in conducting his business.

All trees supplied from a State nursery should be grown as hardy as possible, and to this end should not be grown in rich soils. It is a great error of judgment to select rich soil as the site for a nursery to grow forest trees. Trees originally grown in such soils are heavily handicapped when sent away probably to a great distance and replanted in poor soil. Nurseries, and especially those for State purposes, should therefore be established in poor soils, as under such circumstances the young trees are hardy, and when transplanted there is little, if any, check in their growth in similar soil; and if transplanted to richer ground they "get away" at once and vigorous growth results. When grown on rich soil for transplanting a forced growth is generally the result. This, no doubt, suits the nurseryman because it enables him to more quickly realise his stock, and he is satisfied, though his customers find in the long-run that the plants do not make headway after being transplanted, and very often perish. The forcing of the trees by chemical manures, too, one of the little tricks of trade, may be productive of business, but proves annoying to the man who purchases young trees and hopes to see them flourish. The State, however, can have no object in forcing, and all trees grown under State supervision should be as hardy as the skill and experience of the nurseryman can make them.

In distributing trees to the public, care should be taken that the trees are hardy, well rooted, taken out with plenty of the small fibrous roots attached, and the tap-root uninjured. Before being sent from the nursery the roots should be well puddled with a thick mixture of mud. Neglect of this precaution has caused the death of multitudes of trees. The puddling should be done immediately after the tree has been raised from the nursery-lines, and if properly carried out will enable the plants to stand without injury a week's journey by train, coach, or water. It should therefore never be neglected. Great care is necessary to see, in packing with grass, straw, or rushes, that the trees are not packed too closely, as they are liable, if kept so for a couple of days, to "sweat" and become scorched or heated. If, therefore, trees are packed for transmission to a distant part of the colony, occupying some days on the journey, the straw packing should be as light as possible, and care taken to keep it from contact with either rain or moisture.

The selection of nursery-sites (should the Government decide to resuscitate the Forestry Department in New Zealand) must have an important bearing on the success or failure of the enterprise, and I trust the suggestions and remarks here made may be of service. As stated, however, in earlier sections of this report, it will be of no use to undertake forest reform in a half-hearted or niggardly fashion. It will cost money to restore the New Zealand forests; but surely the development of such a timber trade as may be created into a huge industry is worth the expenditure of £15,000 or £20,000 a year. Such an industry, besides providing employment for thousands, would very soon yield an annually increasing revenue as a set-off to the cost. New Zealand has to face—and there can be no use blinking the fact—the extinction of her native forests within a very short time, unless preventive measures are adopted. It will in such case be necessary to import foreign timber at the cost of hundreds of thousands of pounds, as is the case now with the Australian Colonies, and has been for the past half-century. This money goes to support the sawmillers, bush-hands, shipowners, seamen, &c., in Europe and America, for lack of local timber, which, under other circumstances, would give a means of livelihood to our own people, and enable them to improve their position and acquire a stake in the country.

COMMENTS UPON MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE TIMBER CONFERENCE HELD AT WELLINGTON ON THE 17TH JULY, 1896.

As my unavoidably late arrival prevented me from taking part in the proceedings of the Conference, I may perhaps be permitted here to comment upon the proceedings as detailed in the published report.

Though forced to disagree with many of the conclusions arrived at, I heartily congratulate the delegates on the earnest and business-like manner in which they approached the various questions at issue, and the practical value of their support to the Government in seeking to place matters connected with the timber trade upon a legitimate and mutually satisfactory footing. The Conference, indeed, has done yeoman service to the colony, in that it has done much which should convince the Legislature that it is of vital importance to the community to place forestry at the earliest possible moment on a systematic and scientific basis. Naturally, however, from its composition, and the direct object of its meeting, the Conference as a whole dealt with the business in hand more as it affected the collective or individual interests of members in the timber trade than as a matter of State policy. But to me, as a forest expert, who, sympathising with each phase of the question, looks first of all to general principles, the proceedings of the Forestry Committee appeal most strongly, and I have much pleasure in congratulating its members upon the general result of their work.

The opening address, in which the Hon. the Premier placed the main questions before the Conference, indicated that the speaker had recognised and carefully considered the important issues at stake before summoning the Conference, and this fact leads to the expectation that his colleagues are, with Mr. Seddon, resolved to act in this matter vigorously and promptly. It is, indeed, as fortunate for New Zealand as it is rare to find a leading politician like the Premier so well versed in the matter at issue and of such practical money-value to the colony. His address was the key-