

One problem which is common to all three developments—that of accommodation—is of outstanding importance. The basic objective of rehabilitation is to restore soldiers to a normal condition of living of which home and married life are the embodiment. It is therefore essential that married accommodation should be provided for as many as can be permanently employed on all projects, and to this end the Forest Service is investigating the possibilities of manufacturing prefabricated structures in its own plants as a means of conserving skilled building labour and expediting the completion of its housing requirements as soon as possible after the cessation of hostilities.

While general preparatory work is not of major significance in the case of the accumulated arrears of silvicultural work, the reverse applies to the development of utilization activities, and even more so to the establishment of new forest units and counter-erosion areas. The Department is taking urgent action accordingly, and already four new forest units and one counter-erosion block have been located, with the search continuing steadily for others in appropriate districts. If these are to be developed to their maximum as avenues of rehabilitation employment, their early purchase becomes all-important. Hasty planning can only spell economic and silvicultural disaster, as in the case of so many areas in the last post-war era; and surveys, arrangements for seed-supplies, general planning work, and the erection of some accommodation must, as far as practicable, be completed during the war, in order that fencing, roading, firebreak-construction, and nursery and planting work may swing into the earliest operation after the war. Similar preparatory work is being undertaken in connection with utilization activities.

SECTION I.—TIMBER EMERGENCY LEGISLATION.

101. While more activities required formal action through public notices than during the preceding year, practically the whole of the work in connection with the Timber Emergency Regulations was carried out by co-operation and negotiation with the sawmilling, boxmaking, building, and other industries.

102. Both Public Works Department and private contractors were given priority of supply for all classes of defence works, and, with negligible exceptions, supplies were available as and when required. The basic policy in respect to economy has been to allocate cheap slow-moving stocks not generally used for ordinary civil building purposes for all defence works of either a temporary or semi-permanent nature. Only in the case of permanent buildings has any departure from this policy been agreed to. This has been implemented by a rigid inspection of all specifications and appropriate directions to Government Departments, contractors, and suppliers. Further economy has been achieved by directing wherever possible that timber for defence works is purchased direct from mills, the Government receiving the same discounts as allowed to timber-merchants for their bulk supplies.

Generally speaking, timber requirements for munitions have been extremely small, although there is every indication that these will increase in the near future. Supplies and inspections have been undertaken as desired.

The recently-concluded arrangements for the shipment of food and beer, &c., to the Middle East theatre of war have necessitated arrangements for the delivery of 15,000,000 board feet of timber, largely rimu and matai, as supplies of the usual boxing timbers have become so acute as to necessitate their allocation to more essential purposes.

Arrangements for the supply of kauri for the construction of mine-sweepers were concluded during the year. Stocks of suitable sizes were unfortunately extremely low, and for a great part of the material this necessitated the selection and delivery of special logs from State forests to supplying mills.

103. It has been the general policy of the office of the Timber Controller to conserve the best and most suitable supplies of building timber for normal civilian building requirements, most of which are of a permanent nature. This policy, it will be observed, has been largely implemented by the practice previously referred to of securing defence requirements direct from mills, leaving intact as far as possible the merchants' stocks of better grades in both seasoned rough and finished timbers.