

since improved, another 180 are urgently required in order to maintain the current rates of production estimated at 350,000,000 board feet, and still another 800 to increase production to a planned objective of 380,000,000 board feet for the year ended 31st March, 1946.

71. *Species Cut*.—Although the total current production of timber has not been exceeded for eighteen years, there has been a steady decrease in the cut of most indigenous timbers and a corresponding increase in the output of insignis pine.

Rimu and miro production has declined from 208,000,000 board feet to 191,000,000 board feet since the year ended 31st March, 1940, whilst kahikatea cut has fallen from 33,000,000 board feet to 21,000,000 board feet during the same period. Although the output of kauri has for some years been falling steadily until it reached in 1942-43 the low level of 2,500,000 board feet, there was a very urgent demand in 1943-44 for timber for the construction of minesweepers, tow-boats, barges, &c., for the Allied Navies, and the production of kauri had to be expanded to 4,500,000 board feet in order to meet these requirements. The only indigenous timbers which have recorded increases have been beech, tawa, and other hardwoods, whose aggregate production has increased by 6,000,000 board feet. In pre-war years the use of native hardwoods was strictly limited, but the fact that oak and other imported hardwoods are no longer available has led to an improved demand for the local species.

Exotic species, principally insignis pine, continue to be cut in increasing quantities, and the recorded total of 83,000,000 board feet creates a new peak in production, representing an increase of 36,000,000 board feet over the reported cut for the year ended 31st March, 1940. The Auckland Province contributed 23,000,000 board feet of this increase, reflecting the expansion in milling of small-sized plantation timber in the Rotorua-Putaruru-Bay of Plenty districts.

72. *Man-power*.—Realizing that increased timber production was primarily dependent on man-power, and particularly additional skilled bushmen, efforts to locate suitable men and to secure their transfer to the industry were carried on incessantly throughout the year by both the National Service Department and the State Forest Service. Such efforts were well rewarded, but, unfortunately, the gains in man-power were offset by the unavoidable loss of a not inconsiderable number of men who had to leave the industry for various reasons, many of them being skilled workers who have continued to work as long as practicable after their normal retiring-age to assist over the war period. In contrast, few of the men gained to the industry were skilled personnel, with the result that the ability of the average employee has tended to fall, though, it is hoped, only temporarily. All millers who have employed the unskilled workers and undertaken their training must be highly complimented on their willingness to assist the national interest in this way.

Practically all mills are seriously understaffed in their logging activities, and the shortage of skilled bushmen has become very acute. Retirement of older bushmen and the lack of young men training to replace them has brought about a difficult position that can only be overcome by giving the maximum possible encouragement to any one who can be persuaded to enter this field of employment. It is certain that all efforts to increase production by assisting in development work, provision of equipment, and erection of new mills will be largely nullified unless bushmen can be found or trained to provide ample log-supplies.

Tuition in sawdoctoring at the Waipa Mill has been continued and the trained men absorbed into the industry, but some difficulty is being experienced in maintaining the interest of the industry in this training scheme.

Additional reference to the man-power position will be found in paragraph 102.

73. *Equipment for Timber and Allied Industries*.—Throughout the year deliveries of new equipment have been very limited, and sawmillers and boxmakers have had to tax their resources to the utmost to maintain plant in reasonable working-order. Naturally repairs to old plant seriously retard production, and this is particularly noticeable in the case of old logging equipment, frequent repairs to which result in many mills being short of logs.

A few heavy tractors have arrived in the country and been allocated to suitable operators by the Mechanical Plant Advisory Committee, but there are still a number of sawmillers whose requirements have yet to be met. Assistance in developmental work has been given to a number of sawmillers by the hire of tractors from the Public Works Department whereby production has often been maintained where it would have ceased altogether if such plant had not been made available. A number of heavy motor-vehicles have been released by War Assets Realization Board and allocated in most cases to replace worn-out trucks.

The service given by the Timber Controller's Office in locating machinery, tractor, and truck spares and other materials has been continued, and with the close co-operation of other Departments, mainly the Public Works Department and the Army Department, it has been possible to keep most tractors and vehicles in commission.

74. *Domestic Markets*.—A strong seller's market characterized every section of the timber trade throughout the Dominion. A careful watch was maintained over grading practices, but, generally speaking, sales were fairly up to specification. As in previous years, the timber shortage in the North Island was much more acute than in the South Island, which again benefited from increased supplies as a result of the lack of shipping facilities for moving West Coast timber either to the North Island or to Australia. Due to a shortage of both rail and road transport in the North Island, the year closed with larger mill stocks than at any time for several years.

In the building section of the North Island trade, shortage in supply has shifted gradually during the year from the finishing and dressing grades to scantling timber. This disparity in supply was not so marked in the South Island. As the result of a break in overseas contracts for foodstuffs, supplies of insignis pine, originally allocated for boxmaking, were released over a short period for building purposes in both Islands.

Despite the increased production of insignis pine, supplies of this timber and of white-pine proved quite inadequate for the greatly expanded requirements of the box industry for the packing of foodstuffs and munitions. Although considerable quantities of sap rimu for butter-boxes, &c., and of sap matai for cheese-crates and tallow-casks were absorbed along with minor quantities of other indigenous timbers, the stock position in box-factory yards deteriorated so badly that many North Island box requirements had to be met with shooks manufactured in the South Island.