

WESTLAND.

The accompanying schedules fairly indicate the present position in this district of the timber industry, which, although distinctly progressive, does not differ much from that obtaining in 1905.

There are now forty-nine mills as against fifty-one two years ago, but, owing to renewal of machinery and more up-to-date appliances, the cutting-capacity of the mills is 94,426,000 ft. as against 88,990,000 ft. The output for the year (44,933,813 ft.) has also increased by 7,600,000 ft. This is mainly due to the additional output of the following mills: Craig and Sheedy (Marsden), Lincoln Bros. (Stafford Siding), Malfroy and Co., Baxter Bros., Olderog and Co. (now Tennant and Co.), (Ho Ho). The above mills have cut 5,000,000 ft. over their output for the year previous.

The number of sleepers obtained during the past year was approximately 95,000. These were supplied to the Railway and Public Works Departments, and consisted wholly of silver-pine. There were also about two thousand telegraph-poles supplied to the Postal Department, a large number being used in connection with the extension of telephone lines in South Westland.

Two mills closed during the year—namely, McIlroy's at the Loop Line, and Webb's at Hokitika, both small mills. The former worked out an area of rimu timber, chiefly for blocks and props for gold-mining companies at Kumara and Waimea, and having completed their contracts the mill closed down, as it was too far from the railway for export trade. Webb's mill, owned by a Christchurch syndicate, found the expense of bringing logs to the mill too heavy, and after two attempts was also compelled to close down.

Two mills were shifted—Nyberg and Co. removing their mill from Kokiri to Moana, and Roberts and Co. from Kokiri to Lake Mahinapua.

As stated previously, the main supply of timber in Westland is drawn from the district north of Hokitika, and until better communication and means of transit is obtained to and from South Westland it will continue so.

Around Kotuku and Lake Brunner there still remains a large belt of forest country, on which are mills owned by Messrs. Wallace and Laurie, Craig and Sheedy, Nyberg and Co., and R. Stratford and Co. These are fully equipped, and mill a large quantity of timber.

Further down the same line, at Kotuku, Aratika, Kokiri, and Kaimata, are the mills owned by Messrs. Jack Bros., Waller and England, Stratford, Blair and Co., and Baxter Bros. These mills keep working very steadily, and are responsible for rather more than half the output. They are chiefly cutting red-pine for export to other districts in New Zealand; the chief use being for building purposes, a small percentage being used for furniture-making by the cabinetmakers.

A few of the mills export a little white-pine to Australia, this being used chiefly for the manufacture of butter-boxes. White-pine is a timber that can only be cut when required for immediate use, as if stacked outside and exposed to the weather it becomes discoloured and unsaleable.

The mills on the Grey-Reefton line are somewhat smaller, and not so numerous.

The principal mills at Ngahere are owned by Messrs. Hamer and Donaldson, Uddstrom and Co., and G. Hahn; while at Orwell Creek, Ericksen has an up-to-date mill. These are also cutting red-pine for export to other districts in New Zealand. Other smaller mills—viz., Messrs. Marshall and Co., Saddler and Molloy, and Fisher and Co.—cut silver-pine for sleepers.

On the Hokitika-Grey Railway line we have Messrs. Stratford and Blair (Paroa), Butler Bros. (Gladstone Siding), Morris and Co. and G. D. Wilson and Co. (Kumara Junction), Westland Sawmilling Company and G. D. Wilson and Co. (Kapitea Creek), Lincoln Bros. (Stafford), Malfroy and Co., Baxter Bros., Olderog and Co. (now Tennant and Co.), (Ho Ho). One of the above mills—viz., Malfroy and Co.—executed an order for the Exhibition buildings, this firm supplying most of the timber used in their construction, the balance being supplied by Messrs. Baxter Bros., also of Arahura. Malfroy and Co. have a very up-to-date equipment, having three miles iron tramway, on which is running a new locomotive doing splendid work. These comprise all the larger mills on this line, and they also are cutting red-pine for export and to other districts of New Zealand.

A few small mills at Kumara export a small quantity of red-pine, but their chief employment is cutting for mining claims, such as props for underground workings, blocks for paving sluice-boxes and tail-races, and generally the timber required for the mines.

On the south side of the Hokitika River are the sawmills of Messrs. Stewart and Chapman, Hansen and Co., and Potts and Co. (rimu), and of Messrs. Perry and Hegan, Morris and Co., and D. H. Roberts, on the Hokitika-Ross Railway. These mills are all cutting red-pine for export to other districts for building purposes, while the first three mentioned supply timber for general mining purposes, as well as a small quantity for house-building throughout the district.

Messrs. Stewart and Chapman (Waitaha) are too far away from the railway to compete in the export trade, but supply a large quantity of silver-pine sleepers, as well as silver-pine for bridge-building, and a small quantity of red-pine for building purposes locally.

Grimmond's mill (Ross) cuts only for local use, house-building, mining, &c., while Zala (Okarito Forks), who has lately re-equipped his water-power machinery, deals principally in silver-pine sleepers, &c.

Two mills are being erected at Hatter's Terrace for the purpose of cutting silver-pine sleepers, Brown and party having an area of 200 acres with two reservations of 200 acres each, and Southorn and party 200 acres with three reservations. This comprises 1,400 acres of fairly good timber country, although some of the smaller timber has been cut out by axemen under splitters' warrants issued by the Warden.

During the coming year Messrs. Stratford and Co. and several other firms propose to erect mills adjoining the Ross-Hokitika Railway. This line is expected to be completed during the coming year, and will enable millers to operate on large areas which are now unprofitable; and should the contiguous reserves, now offered for sale by the Hokitika Harbour Board, be disposed of, fully 12,000 acres of good milling forest will at once be occupied by large mills.

Taken as a whole, the industry is in a flourishing condition, and indications point to a further advance during next twelve months. The demand for timber continues to be fairly brisk, orders are plentiful, and most of the mills are working full time.