

The State briquette-works established at Westport are doing good work. The output at present averages about 300 tons of briquettes per week. The number of hands employed is fifteen.

It is satisfactory to note that the Westport Harbour Board realises the importance of undertaking works of port-equipment of considerable magnitude in view of the immense possibilities of the coal industry in the Buller district. The proposal of the Board is to make Westport an efficient harbour for coaling His Majesty's ships—a worthy object of Imperial as well as local concern.

In the Inangahua district the coal industry has remained stationary during the year. The mines in that district are worked on a small scale, the output being consumed locally. The coal in this portion of Nelson District is equal to any in the Dominion for household purposes. The number of hands employed in connection with coal-mining is thirty-nine; the output for the year is roughly estimated at 12,300 tons.

Of the northern portion of the Nelson District the most that can be said is that if the industry has not developed it has not declined. Although large areas of coal-bearing country are held, the output is very small. It is acknowledged that there are both quality and quantity of coal to warrant more active operations. The Puhonga Mine, which gave promise of permanency, has closed down temporarily owing to another change in management. The Pakawau property is not yet established as a coal-producing mine, but prospecting on the area is being carried on vigorously.

#### THE TIMBER INDUSTRY.

Little or no improvement has taken place in the timber industry through the northern portion of the Nelson District during the past year. The mills are of small capacity, ill-adapted for a large output, and the scarcity of timber does not warrant the expenditure involved in establishing up-to-date plants. I predict that during the next few years cutting will continue off and on to meet local requirements as heretofore. In about ten years all the available milling-timber will have been cut out between Nelson City and the Tadmor Saddle, and between Motueka and Cape Foulwind. The recent bush-fires have accelerated the extinction of the industry, about 600 acres of good forest on private property and 2,000 acres of State forest having been destroyed.

In the Buller County a slight improvement is noticeable in the timber industry. The majority of the mills there are at work continuously, and large quantities of timber are exported to other districts. Between Westport and Karamea nearly all the mills cut timber off Crown lands, royalty being paid at schedule rates. The principal timber cut is rimu. It is estimated that in about fifteen years the milling-timber on the flats and slopes will have become exhausted.

An important consideration in relation to the Crown forests in the district is the preservation of areas for mining purposes. The expansion of coal-mining in Buller County has induced the Land Board to reserve areas of forest for the supply of timber for the mines.

In Inangahua County the mills cut for local consumption, the timber being utilised principally for purposes in connection with the mining operations which are carried on in the vicinity of Reefton.

The revenue derived from timber during the year—viz., £2,850—taking last year for comparison—places this district third in value of importance in the Dominion, Auckland and Westland Districts taking precedence.

The administration of this portion of the public estate is now run on business lines. Close office supervision and effective field inspection, and the assistance of the Warden, make evasions of the regulations a matter of extreme difficulty. These safeguards are, however, accompanied by a liberal interpretation of the regulations. There is no friction existing as between the sawmillers and the Department—a result in no small degree due to the manner in which the Rangers carry out their duties.

The reports of the Rangers in respect to the timber industry are summarised as follows:—

There are eighty sawmills in the Nelson Land District, eight of which are cutting timber off Westport Harbour Board Endowment lands, forty-eight off freehold lands, and twenty-four off Crown lands. The cutting-capacity of these mills per annum is 69,700,000 superficial feet. Fourteen mills are worked with water generating 145-horse power, and sixty-six with steam generating 765-horse power—total horse-power, 910.

Fifty-nine sawmills supply timber for local purposes, twelve for local purposes and export to other districts, and nine for export only.

The output during the year of different classes of timber cut was 12,047,358 superficial feet rimu, 2,220,565 superficial feet kahikatea, 540,000 superficial feet matai, 925,747 superficial feet birch, 155,000 superficial feet totara, 742,617 superficial feet yellow-pine, 400 superficial feet cedar—total, 16,631,687 superficial feet, an increase of 37,288 ft. over the previous year. The value of the output is approximately £76,008. The number of persons employed in the timber industry is 493, the number of horses 302, and of bullocks 123. There are eighty-one miles of tramway used in connection with the mills.

During the past year eight new mills have been erected. Of the eighty sawmills in the district, twenty-three are situated in the Buller County, fifteen in Inangahua County, and the remainder—orty-two—in the northern portion of the Nelson District.

#### THE DAIRYING INDUSTRY.

The development of the dairy industry is a matter worthy of notice. In the localities where the industry has been taken up seriously the results show that there are great possibilities ahead of it. There are nine factories established in this district, seven of them in northern Nelson, one at Karamea, and one at Cronadon in the Inangahua Valley. There is a creamery at Ikamatua connected with a factory at Grey Valley, Westland District. There are about 4,100 cows supplying the factories mentioned. The yield of butter for the year is roughly estimated at 270 tons, valued at about £31,000.

Dairying in the settled districts around Nelson City suffered a check owing to the unfavourable conditions attending an unprecedentedly lengthy season of drought. In several localities the farmers ran short of water and pasturage.