

indiscriminate manner in which willow-trees have been planted on the banks of rivers and streams; and, owing to the luxuriance of their growth, and their disposition to spread into the beds of the streams and block up the water-way, many local bodies have experienced considerable difficulty in keeping them in check. The ill-advised action of persons who plant in this manner without due forethought has led to much unnecessary expense, and occasioned considerable trouble in the subsequent eradication of the willows, and we are of opinion that the practice of planting willows near watercourses should be discouraged except under strict supervision, and with due regard to the requirements of each case.

Afforestation.

In the evidence of the Under-Secretary of Lands (Mr. W. C. Kensington) it was estimated that about 34,000,000,000 sup. ft. of milling-timber remains available from all sources for the future timber-supply of the Dominion (*vide* Appendix F); and, as a large proportion of this is not likely to be available for sawmilling purposes for a long time to come on account of its inaccessibility, whilst in other cases milling-timber is so scattered as to render sawmilling unprofitable, it was considered by him that the supply of timber from our own forests is not likely to last for a longer period than about fifty years. Attention is therefore called to the urgent necessity of dealing with the matter of afforestation on a more vigorous and extensive plan, so that the planting of trees in this country may counterbalance the annual timber-destruction sufficiently to prevent a future timber-famine. All over the world the forestry question has become a most serious problem, engaging the minds of statesmen and experts to an increasing degree, and the need for educating the people of New Zealand to the necessity of adequately preserving our timber-supplies appears very pressing.

In order that we might become acquainted with the scheme of afforestation hitherto pursued by the State, we visited and carefully inspected the nurseries and plantations at Hanmer, Rotorua, Whakarewarewa, and Waiotapu, and viewed with satisfaction the operations now in progress. Judging from the encouraging results which have been obtained, we are strongly of opinion that the work of planting for the future needs of the Dominion should be extended, and recommend that plantations be established in the several land districts to meet the requirements of each locality.

As it is most necessary to provide timber for the constant needs of the State, we recommend that, in addition to the larch and pines that now form the bulk of the plantations, supplies of Australian hardwoods and other trees suitable for conversion into railway-sleepers should also be planted. In the past the Railway Department established plantations of trees alongside railway-lines, mostly in Canterbury, for the dual purpose of providing shelter for trains in open, wind-swept localities, and of growing timber that might be suitable for the future needs of the Department; but, as such plantations have not been continued for many years past, we consider that the whole of the work of afforestation for State purposes should be under the control of one Department.

After inspecting the methods and operations of the Forestry Branch of the Department of Lands, we are of opinion that the administration of that Department appears to have been economical and efficient, tending to excellent practical results. Details thereof are given in Appendices H and I, the latter of which contains extracts from the Report on State Nurseries and Plantations for the year 1907-8 (C.-1B).

We understand, however, that the annual cost of maintaining the nurseries and plantations on the present basis, and of raising and planting trees on a scale commensurate with the future requirements of the State, is from £20,000 to £25,000, and as we understand that the statutory source from which this expenditure can be met is rapidly shrinking, so that it will be impossible to continue operations on a sufficient scale unless further provision is made for requisite funds, we strongly recommend that a special vote be placed on the estimates to insure that a sum of at least £25,000 be annually available for afforestation purposes. We consider that this amount is the minimum that should be provided.