

wooden boards. Samples submitted prove that it is attractive in appearance and takes an imprint very well. The ends of the boxes are made of wood, as the nails will not hold along the section of scandia-board, but only through same. With white-pine ends, the cost in Sydney prior to the war and during the first year of the war was 1s. 4d.; but latterly none has been obtained on account of the increased cost of the boards and high freights.

Some excellent samples of cardboard boxes used in the packing of fruit and other foods were also submitted to the Board from a firm of leading boxmakers in Sydney, New South Wales. The cases are made to standard sizes, and are strong enough to carry 60 lb. or 120 lb. of any class of fruit, and to stand a strain of 200 lb. to the inch. The small cases are quoted in Sydney in wholesale quantities at 7½d. (half-bushel) each, and the large ones at 1s. 4½d. each (full bushel). The use of this form of case, if the price could be kept reasonable in New Zealand, would undoubtedly tend to ease the demand for white-pine for any purpose other than for the packing of dairy-products.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. That the Government should determine without delay what its policy in regard to forestry generally is to be, as it is impracticable to pursue in regard to white-pine a policy different from that applied to the other timbers of New Zealand. If the Government determines upon a policy of scientific conservation and afforestation, a course which the Board strongly recommends, no time should be lost in giving effect to such decision. Until the Government's decision be arrived at it is recommended that the various Commissioners of Crown Lands should meet periodically and decide on a policy to be pursued in regard to leasing or withholding from sale or lease the remaining blocks of timber on Crown lands.

2. That the Dairy Division of the Agricultural Department be requested to make exhaustive tests with various native and imported woods with a view to determining their suitability as substitutes for white-pine butter-boxes.

3. That a bonus be offered for a suitable manufactured substitute at reasonable price.

4. That all differential treatment of white-pine in the matter of freights on railway should be removed. This would mean an increase in the freight rates now paid on white-pine.

5. That the Australian Government be approached with a view to a rearrangement of its import duties on New Zealand timbers in order that the differential treatment accorded white-pine should be removed, and other New Zealand timbers be placed on an equality with it.

Since this report was furnished, further urgent representations were made by interested parties for the absolute prohibition of the export of white-pine timber, so as to conserve existing supplies for New Zealand's sole use. Sharp advances in prices took place in all classes of timber, the high prices and the insatiable demand in Australia having their effect on the local trade, and subsequently led to action being taken by the Government imposing restrictions on the export of timber. It was decided to frame regulations having for their object the control of the export trade, the fixation of price for timber for local use, and the gradual tapering-off of export to prevent the depletion and utter exhaustion of our native forests. These regulations were gazetted on the 6th August, 1918.

#### PETROL.

Many complaints were made to the Board regarding shortage of supplies of petrol and high prices ruling from time to time. The Board kept in close touch with the trade, and, in view of the supplies available, had deemed it prudent not to interfere with importers or distributors. Constant fluctuations in prices were experienced, and consumers frequently complained of high prices being charged. So acute did the position become that the Board requested the principal importing companies to exercise control over the distribution of their stocks, as the hoarding of supplies by traders and consumers was disorganizing industries and leading to hardship and dissatisfaction. The position for a time improved, but as there was undoubted evidence that the distribution was still unsatisfactory, and that farmers, fishermen, and other essential users could not secure adequate supplies, it was resolved that a scheme for the control of the distribution and price of petrol should be devised in order to meet the position.

A scheme was accordingly devised which provided for the equitable distribution, rationing if necessary, and fixation of price, according to locality. The full scheme is contained in an Order in Council issued on the 12th July, 1918 (see appendix marked "C").

Considerable assistance was rendered to importers by the Government at a critical time in providing freight for petrol from the United States. Generally speaking, however, importers have done exceedingly well under existing conditions in getting sufficient supplies for the Dominion's requirements.

#### GALVANIZED CORRUGATED IRON, BARBED AND PLAIN GALVANIZED WIRE.

These commodities formed the subject of a special investigation in August last, following instructions received from you. The Board in its report showed that in July, 1916, the export of corrugated iron and fencing-wire was prohibited from Great Britain by the Imperial Government, and since America entered into the war it has become increasingly difficult to obtain supplies from that country; consequently, to-day stocks in hand are low and will soon be exhausted, and very little hope is entertained by traders of their being able to obtain further supplies.

As the difficulties of obtaining supplies increased and the demand did not appreciably slacken, importers adopted the policy of supplying their regular clients in preference to casual customers, even although the casual customer was prepared to offer tempting prices to have his wants satisfied.