

## REPORT ON AFFORESTATION OPERATIONS IN THE NORTH ISLAND.

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### AREA PLANTED AND TREES RAISED.

During the year an area of 1,633 acres was planted, thus bringing the total area of plantations in the North Island to 21,792 acres.

The trees raised from seeds during the year numbered 3,128,000, and the total raised to date is 60,786,000. Trees to the number of 4,321,500 were in the nursery at the 31st March, half of this number being sufficiently large for transferring to the plantations during the coming winter.

### LABOUR.

The scarcity of labour has made it impossible to carry out much of the work that was planned. Many returned soldiers have been employed, but except in a few cases they remained for only a short time. Any camp made for these men must necessarily be of a temporary character because of the shifting nature of the work, and consequently there are discomforts which many men are not prepared to face. Arrangements are now being made to improve the living-conditions, because many returned men are not physically fit to rough it. A kitchen building of sufficient dimensions to accommodate forty men when dining is being erected, and, although the men will be required to live in tents, these are being provided with wooden floors, and are reasonably comfortable. It is hoped that by making the conditions more attractive many returned soldiers will be induced to accept work on the plantations. The open-air life and good climatic conditions obtaining in the Rotorua district have a recuperative value which will probably be availed of by many returned soldiers.

### TREE-SEEDS.

The results obtained with imported tree-seeds last season were very disappointing as regards the percentage of germination. Owing to war conditions, supplies of tree-seeds from abroad are more costly and difficult to procure, and until some better system for obtaining supplies is arranged it would be wise to restrict the imports to bare necessities. In order to keep the prisoners employed and to provide for the employment of returned soldiers the tree-planting could in the meantime be confined chiefly to *Pinus radiata*, seeds of which can be got in abundance in the Dominion. Although many kinds of tree-seeds can be collected, few are as plentiful as *Pinus radiata*, and several of the kinds most needed by the Department cannot be got. Many species of *Eucalyptus* can be secured, and during last spring about 1 cwt. of seed of several species, comprising chiefly *E. Macarthuri*, *E. eugenioides*, and *E. viminalis*, were collected under the supervision of an officer of the Department.

Smaller quantities of *Cupressus Lawsoniana* and *Cupressus macrocarpa* were also collected. Whilst the cost of collecting seeds from standing trees is greater than the price usually paid for imported seeds, the locally saved seed is cheaper in the long-run because of the higher rate of germination.

### SALE OF TREES TO FARMERS.

The number of trees sold to farmers during the year was 261,000, or nearly double the number sold during the previous year. From the continued increase in the demand for trees it is justifiable to conclude that the scheme is both popular and successful. The wisdom of the Government in encouraging and assisting farmers to plant trees may not be generally felt at the present time, but it will not be many years before it is realized that the planting now being done is of very great importance to the Dominion. Each farmer who plants a shelter-belt derives a direct benefit to himself therefrom, and if tree-planting is undertaken by many farmers in a district the aggregate of this is of distinct benefit to the district from a climatic, scenic, and economic point of view. The value of the State's share in this work lies in the supplying of suitable trees, true to name and of the best strain, and thus ensuring the planting of only such kinds as are valuable in their respective classes. It has been found that the demand for tree-seeds had to be met, and consequently stocks of a variety of seeds, principally *Eucalyptus*, have been collected.

During the year the tree-seeds sold aggregated about 56 lb. in weight, and were supplied principally in 1 oz. packets. In the course of time, as the plantations mature, the Department will have more facilities for collecting tree-seeds, and it is probable that this will become a very important branch of the work. For the coming season a variety of useful eucalypts and conifers is being offered for sale.

Eucalypt plants will be sold in trays, and it is hoped that this method will not only enable the more difficult kinds to be successfully transplanted, but that it will ensure the plants arriving at their destination in a satisfactory condition.

### PRISON LABOUR.

During the year prisoners performed work to the value of £2,522 15s. 2d., the average earning per man being £89 17s. 6d. The summary given hereunder shows the value of work performed at Kaingaroa Plains, the only plantation where prison labour is now employed, and for comparison the particulars of work done at Waitapu and Whakarewarewa Plantations. The total value of tree-planting work done by prisoners to date is £47,008 12s. 11d. Following is the summary referred to:—