

Kauri-gum exports fell considerably below the 1925 figures, only 4,877 tons, of an average value of £61 6s. per ton, being exported during 1926. The 1925 exports totalled 5,370 tons, valued at £77 6s. per ton.

#### Imports.

During 1926 only 66,505,092 ft. b.m., valued at £827,422, were imported, compared with 81,923,784 ft. b.m., valued at £1,178,982, imported during 1925.

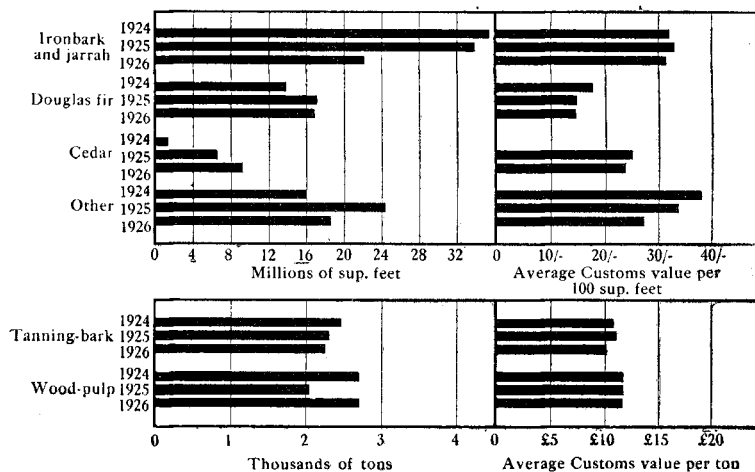
Of the various groups, hardwoods, with an importation of approximately 26,000,000 ft. b.m., or over 21,000,000 ft. b.m. less than the previous year, accounted for more than the total decrease of all groups combined—an indication of the decreased activities of the Government Departments, Electric-power Boards, and local bodies during the year.

Softwoods, following the general trend of the past five years, again showed an appreciable increase, the importations for the year being approximately 40,400,000 ft. b.m., or over 6,000,000 ft. b.m. more than the preceding year, thereby setting a new peak in softwood-importation.

As in former years, Douglas fir again figured as the most important softwood imported. Unit values, also following a general trend, fell slightly. Thus, for 1926, 16,821,000 ft. b.m., valued at 14s. 3d. per 100 ft. b.m., were imported, compared with 17,116,000 ft. b.m., valued at 14s. 8d. per 100 ft. b.m. in 1925. Indications gauged on figures so far available this year point to a further increase being experienced in the 1927 importations.

Western red-cedar continued to find favour with local builders, and the importation of 9,021,300 ft. b.m., valued at 32s. 10d. per 100 ft. b.m., reached a new trade peak for this timber. It is not likely, however, to be exceeded in 1927—in fact, it is probable that during this year the trade will suffer in competition with redwood.

Formerly redwood has been restricted by price consideration to exterior joinery, and similar high-grade uses, but, following the visit to New Zealand of representatives of redwood-producers, the prices have been materially reduced to allow of competition with western red-cedar for weather-boards. The result has been a jump in importations from about 1,500,000 ft. b.m. in 1925 to 4,000,000 ft. b.m. in 1926.



GRAPH SHOWING TIMBER AND TANNING-BARK IMPORTS FOR YEARS ENDED 31ST DECEMBER, 1924, TO 1926.

Hemlock still finds favour in many districts as an interior lining and finish timber, 4,410,000 ft. b.m. have been imported during the year, at the low average price of 18s. 10d. per 100 ft. b.m. This total includes approximately 750,000 hemlock fruit-cases, containing approximately 2,000,000 ft. b.m. of timber, imported during the year. Over 80 per cent. of this timber is imported dressed. Wrongly or rightly, it has in certain districts a bad reputation for borer-attack, and the fact that in this connection some timber-merchants have already cleared their yards of stocks indicates that a considerable decrease in the quantities imported during the current year may be expected. 511,000 spruce butter-boxes and 137,000 spruce and hemlock cheese-crates entered New Zealand during 1926. Petrol-cases containing 3,000,000 ft. b.m. of hemlock and spruce were also imported. These figures represent a considerable decrease in butter-boxes imported as compared with the previous year, but an increase in both cheese-crates and fruit-cases.

#### Markets.

Following the usual business cycle, the boom years of 1919-25 are being succeeded by a depression in the timber trade. Surface indications point to increased importations as the responsible factor. They have, it is true, aggravated the position, but to arrive at a satisfactory explanation it is necessary to make an analysis of the underlying trend.

Since building operations absorb from 50 to 45 per cent. of all softwoods consumed, the building ratio (*i.e.*, the number of persons per dwelling) is one of the best barometers of business for the timber trades. An examination of Government statistics bearing upon this question indicates that, except for a few exceptional localities such as Wellington, the housing ratio is lower than it has ever been previously in the history of the country. In other words, the house-shortage has, generally speaking, been overcome—a fact which is confirmed by the increasing number of houses to let, &c.