



mobile transceivers and aircraft patrols for reporting to the established headquarters. So additional forces can be mobilised when and where required.

When a fire call comes from a lookout, the information is telephoned to the headquarters for the area. At Kaingaroa, for instance, there is a net-work of look-outs which record every fire and give a compass bearing on it. At Kaingaroa, too, there is a large transceiver which is in contact with Rotorua, the administrative headquarters for the region.

The mobile unit goes to the scene and, if the fire is a big one, the forest staff, which has been on call during hazardous times, follows as a fighting gang. Aerial patrols constantly in touch by radio, direct the work of the army and the transceivers, in effect, co-ordinate the battle on all fronts.

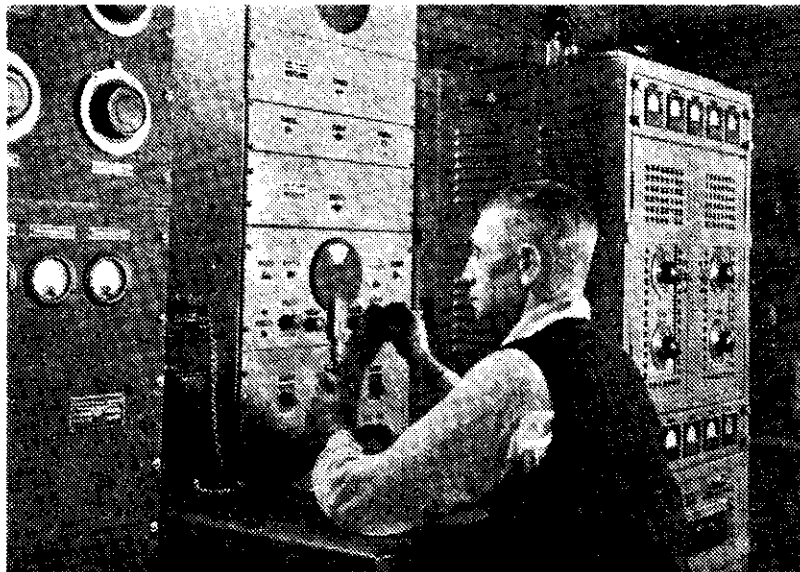
The largest exotic forest in New Zealand is at Kaingaroa, where there are 344,000 acres with 260,000 acres of trees. When we went to press there had been no reports of damage there, although fire had been up to the boundary. But when all the damage in various areas is added up, the total is appalling from the point of view of the forests' future.

#### Preventive Measures

The State Forest Service has over 20 stations recording fire hazard conditions throughout New Zealand. All information from them is set out on graphs, like meteorological office data. Wind direction, force, humidity and temperature are all taken into account.

For testing humidity three squares of timber, dowelled together, and known as "sticks," are used. They are exposed to outside weather and weighed regularly to give an indication of inflammability. Complete rainfall records are kept and the Weather Office plays its role in giving an over-all picture of the conditions in areas not covered by State Forest stations. It also endeavours to predict conditions.

In the central North Island district, north of National Park, a large region



State Forest Service photograph

**RADIO CONTROL ROOM** at the Kaingaroa Forest headquarters, from which messages are broadcast to the administrative centre at Rotorua and to other stations

of millable timber had no meteorological cover, so the Weather Office, at very short notice in the recent emergency, supplied two mobile stations which recorded weather conditions. Their records were transmitted by radio to Ohakea headquarters and Ohakea passed them on by teleprinter to the Weather Office, which was in touch with the State Forest Service.

The headquarters of the fire hazard prediction service is in Fitzherbert Terrace, Wellington, where continuous records are taken of progress on all fire fronts. These are used partly to advise the public, through the radio and the press, and also to arrange for additional men and equipment to be sent where they are most required. The men and equipment come largely from the Army and Air Force.

In the recent blaze at Taupo the Public Works Department played an important part both with equipment and manpower. But during an emergency the State Forest Service can ask anyone for assistance. In fact, in places where there is only a small staff, manpower comes almost wholly from the settlers of the neighbourhood, who realise that what they do in fire-fighting is to their own advantage. Recently a naval party from Waiouru was taken post-haste to Taupo and assisted in maintaining lines of communication.

Radar, said to be capable of recording sounds from the moon and the sun, is one of the few modern devices not yet used in forest fire-fighting in New Zealand. Officers of the Department say that at the moment they do not see how it can be applied; but one never knows.

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