

SAWMILLING SECTION.

[This Section is published by arrangement with the Dominion Federated Sawmillers' Association (Incorp.) in the interests of the Sawmilling Industry of N.Z.]

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Since our last issue the financial statement has been delivered and it is satisfactory to know that the revenue for the year exceeds the expenditure by over half a million sterling. No further new taxation is contemplated in the meantime, and *per contra* no reduction in existing taxation can be made until the full obligations of the country for pensions, etc. to returned soldiers are ascertained. A period of Commercial activity after the conclusion of peace is confidently looked for, but this will only be brought about by the repatriation of our manhood, and moderate immigration to enable us to obtain all the necessary labour for more intensive cultivation, land settlement, and increased production all round. Railways under construction should be pushed on to payable points, and public works for the development of the country and the opening of new industries urged on with all possible haste. The hydro-electric schemes intended to be carried out will make for coal saving, and cheaper driving power, which can be distributed for long distances at a comparatively low rate, all of which should tend to encourage more local industries, and incidentally create a greater demand for timber.

Reference is made in the Statement to the "continued complaints as to high prices and short supplies of timber, especially white pine, which have led to the necessity for control of this important industry," and further reference is made to the policy of afforestation for which it is intended to ask authority for a loan of £200,000 for this purpose. In this connection the Hon. Minister for Finance remarked:—

"The Government proposes that the State forests shall henceforth be managed and controlled by a separate Minister, with the special duty of utilising them for the supply to the Dominion of timber ripe for cutting, coupled with careful protection from destruction of all growing trees. By this means in other countries lands have been continuously preserved under forest, and are annually yielding revenue from the trees which gradually in each series of years become fit for timber purposes. It will be advisable in certain areas to establish State sawmills to give full effect to this policy, notably in the case of the Waipoua State Kauri Forest, and also in areas reserved for railway supplies. All loan authorities and grants from the Consolidated Fund for forest purposes are now exhausted, and the forestry branch of the Lands Department is not only without funds, but has been compelled to encroach upon the vote for other lands purposes to prevent the closing-down of the various plantations. I propose that authority be granted this session for a new loan of £200,000

to provide funds for forestry and afforestation purposes for a considerable period. Revenue can only be derived from milling licenses and sales of timber, and it is obviously undesirable at present to seek increased revenue from those sources. The grant proposed from the Consolidated Fund for this year will be the same as voted in the year 1917-18 viz., £5000. During the five years ended March 31st, 1918, the sum of £24,250 was transferred from the Consolidated Fund (lands and survey vote) to supplement State forest funds, and during this year £6000 has been so transferred owing to the loan authority having become exhausted."

Since our last issue the Timber Industry Committee, consisting of Messrs. J. W. Butler, Bush, and Jos. Butler (representing the sawmilling industry), Messrs. Bassett & Hopkirk (timber merchants) and Mr. Murdoch (Egmont Box Coy.) has met the Board of Trade in conference with respect to the Timber Regulations. Mr. Leggat, the Southland representative of the sawmilling industry was unfortunately unable to be present. Much useful preliminary work was done and the data collected by the Board carefully examined and analysed. The Board has now requested a certain number of sawmillers both in the North and South Islands to furnish it with a statement of their cost of production, and the Federation has guaranteed that no advantage will be taken by associated sawmillers to increase prices beyond existing rates pending the collection of this information. A long and interesting report of the proceedings has been furnished by the President of the Federation, and this will doubtless be available for the information of Members after it has been presented to the Special General Meeting intended to be held on 11th December.

Sawmillers on the Main Trunk have had an exceedingly bad run during the last month. First of all, Southern traffic was blocked on account of the Mangaweka slip, then the disastrous slip, unfortunately accompanied with loss of life, occurred at Motaroa, followed by a further slip at Mangaweka again. Then came the epidemic from which the whole country is suffering, many mills have been compelled to close down, and those men not stricken themselves, have been mostly occupied in helping the sick and suffering. When the Armistice was signed we thought we were in for a period of rejoicing, but this scourge has been so disastrous, that the war itself has been overshadowed—at least locally—and quite a number of well-known men have succumbed. "One touch of Nature makes the whole world kin,"