

terly journal. A publication of this kind, dealing with the needs, problems, and progress of forestry in all parts of the Empire, should, it is felt, be of great interest and practical value to foresters, students of forestry, and owners of woodlands, as well as the architects, engineers, and traders interested in the distribution and use of timber. It would also afford an opportunity for an exchange of views between those working in widely distant fields.

State Forests.

REORGANISATION OF CONTROL.

Important events have happened lately in the New Zealand forests, or rather in the circumstances affecting them. In the past two years over 5,000,000 acres of land under the administration of the Lands and Survey Department have been gazetted as provisional State Forests and placed under the administration of the Commissioner of State Forests (now Sir Francis Bell). The total area thus designated is now close upon 7,000,000 acres. Some of the land carries no forest; on some of it the timber is at present of low value; but within the total is comprised a very large proportion of New Zealand's useful timber resources.

Among the commodities of which New Zealand has a short supply, and for which the demand is clamorous, timber takes a first place; and one of the most important functions in the system which the Forestry Department has laid down is the organising of a proper and efficient method of increasing this supply. The recently-appointed Director of Forests, Mr. L. Macintosh Ellis, has prepared and had approved by the Commissioner a scheme for the organisation of a skeleton staff more in proportion to the magnitude of the task than the existing one. At present the Department has only about a dozen officials directly concerned in active forestry work. The scheme comprises the division of the Dominion into seven forest regions. The head office will remain in Wellington, but control will be considerably decentralised in the hands of a conservator of forestry in each region. The regions will be divided into districts, each of which will be in charge of a ranger.

The first aim of the Department is, in brief, to make the best use of the timber resources. It is estimated that at present only about 25 per cent. of the timber cut or destroyed is used; and that by proper means this proportion could be increased to 65 per cent. The great loss is occasioned largely by public ignorance of the properties of the native timbers—ignorance for which they cannot be blamed, because very little serious research has yet been made in the matter. A case in point is that there is a large supply of Southland beech (the so-called "birch"), which is an admirable timber for many industrial purposes, but is, as yet, not widely used. Another aspect of the same subject is that certain manufacturers are importing English

timber for special constructional purposes, because their designers have ample information about these timbers, but no authoritative data about equally suitable New Zealand woods. An effect of this ignorance is that many timbers which are now wasted or deliberately destroyed, would, if their properties were known, go into employment, and release a large quantity of building timbers for their best use. Proper measures to test the economic qualities, as well as the rate of growth, of all native timbers are to be made by the Department, and if the results come up to expectations the effect will be to meet much more freely the cry for timber for houses. The work is already in progress in the kauri country by Mr. McGregor, of the Auckland University, and in Westland by Mr. Foweraker, of Canterbury College. In view of the prompter results likely to be secured, this research work is regarded as of high importance. It is as vital as a replanting policy, because the unnecessary wastage now going on is greater than the gain due to planting. Describing the Department's intentions, the Director stated to a "Post" representative that the general idea is "first, to house-clean, and bring order out of chaos; and to dispose of the now available timber in the most businesslike way." Cultural measures, so far as native trees are concerned, cannot proceed for some years, because it is not yet known what methods can best be followed. These will be studied by those in charge of the research work.

The Impending Shortage of Softwood.

Frequent reference to the need for greater supplies of softwoods has been made in *The Australian Forestry Journal*, but the subject is of such vast importance to all concerned in the production or use of timber, that no excuse is needed for again writing on the same lines. It is a matter of world-wide concern. Unfortunately writing will not improve the conditions; but it is only by constant urging that the full moment of the question can be ventilated to such a degree as to ensure that steps are taken to effect a remedy in as near a future as may be. There is no doubt about the existing shortage of many classes of timber, but in the matter of softwoods it is already very serious and the experience of to-day is but a preparation for what is yet to come.

The best evidence of the condition of the supply is, perhaps, that afforded by the soaring scale of prices in the Australian market, and of these striking testimony was given recently before the Fair Profits Commission in Melbourne. Mr. E. H. Clark, of Rosenfeld, Hillas & Co., Pty., Ltd., stated that prices of redwood had ranged in 1914 from 22s. to 24s. 6d. per 100 superficial feet; in 1917 they had increased to 32s. up to 35s. 6d.; last year from 35s. to 54s., and recent shipments had risen as high as 93s. per 100 superficial feet. Quoting the market