

for Baltic pine, the same witness said the rate had risen from 10s. in 1914 to 28s. 9d. in 1920, and shipments due in March or April next would probably be about 32s., and this state of affairs must continue for some time. It is claimed that these prices are controlled not by the measure of profit made by the Australian merchant, but by the price fixed overseas and the cost of freight, while in business with the United States there has been the added expense of ruinous exchange. But, whatever the cause may be, the fact remains that the Australian consumer is the sufferer—wherever timber is used in building and construction or in manufacture the purchaser has many times more to pay than he had in normal times before the war, and as the Fair Profits Commissioner in Victoria remarked, the prospects offer cold comfort for the building trade so far as imported timber is concerned.

Another question is that of the supplies coming from other countries. Admittedly Australian forests cannot give the softwood required for domestic purposes—that is a well-known condition—and the softwood now growing must be conserved with never-failing consideration to increasing our resources in years to come, apart from any relief that may be obtained from vigorous afforestation policies. Therefore the importation of timber must continue, and Australia must be at the mercy of other countries which are more favourably situated for the time being. Yet, here again, we find that according to all records the war demand has seriously depleted the forest of Europe and of the North American continent, thereby creating a condition of competition in which there is not any great anxiety to send the valuable and much-sought-after cargoes on the long journey to Australia when there is a ready market much nearer at hand in Great Britain, France and Belgium. In this connection it is interesting to follow the statistics of imports for a period of ten years, such as given in the last Annual Report of the New South Wales Forestry Commission. From that authoritative source the following figures are quoted:

IMPORTS.

Year.	Superficial feet.
1910-11	156,893,170
1911-12	175,512,627
1912-13	219,064,874
1913-14	165,642,479
1914-15	175,412,864
1915-16	124,266,616
1916-17	125,975,727
1917-18	126,275,588
1918-19	86,686,910
1919-20	86,636,780

As the quantities have decreased the values have rapidly increased—so much so that, without going into a long series of figures, it is found that in 1919-20, when the quantity imported was 50,200 superficial feet less than in the previous year, the

value of the cargoes was £372,000 more. That puts the story very tersely.

The only solution of the difficulty is, of course, a vigorous policy of afforestation—a policy of progress which should be bounded only by the extent of suitable land available for planting and the financial resources of the Forestry Commissioners. It has not, however, been easy to obtain suitable areas for planting in accessible localities, as some of the most attractive lands are included in mining reserves, the development of which by the growth of forests is strongly objected to by other Government Departments. The position is, nevertheless, becoming desperate, and the need for making unproductive land productive will, it is hoped, be better realised and objections will be withdrawn. The New South Wales Commissioners have made strong representations to the Government, and in anticipation of more favourable conditions have, as a preliminary measure, sent a trained officer to America and Europe to acquire knowledge upon some of the problems of afforestation concerning species to be introduced.

Paper from Wood Pulp.

As a result of representations by the Auckland Forestry League, a Commission is to be appointed by the Government to inquire and report as to the manufacture of paper from wood pulp in New Zealand (states the Auckland "Herald"). In a letter to the Mayor of Auckland, the Minister of Industries and Commerce (the Hon. E. P. Lee) states that now the Parliamentary session is over, he proposes to go fully into the matter with the Board of Trade, with a view to inquiry being made into paper manufacturing and other industries for which, from the efficient treatment of existing forest areas and their energetic extension, adequate supplies of raw material would be available. He adds that in view of the condition enlisting as to prices and scarcity of paper supplies, it is recognised that the inquiry should be urgent. During the war the National Efficiency Board made fairly comprehensive inquiries into the matter. As a result, inquiry had been made from abroad by interested parties in the South Island as to the possibility of securing the necessary machinery for the manufacture of paper from wood pulp. The Department was advised that the cost of machinery at present was prohibitive. Though inquiries were still being made, it was not considered wise to start the industry at present, in view of the very heavy prime cost of establishing it. The Department, however, would continue its investigations, and the Minister hoped to be in a position to publish the result next session of Parliament.

"The transformation of productive forests into idle wastes impoverishes the nation, damages the individual, is wholly needless, and must be stopped."