

Timber

A KORERO Report

THERE WAS a moment's silence as the two bushmen stepped back from the base of the tall rimu. Just before, the natural silence of the bush had been broken by the rhythmic bite of their axes, the rasping of the saw, the thud of maul on wedge. Down the track we could hear, too, the rattle of the winch working the high lead, the signalling toots of its whistle, and the smash and thud of a drag of logs being hauled down to the tramway. Now there was a moment's silence as we stood watching the slim, straight tree stand defiant and proud for a dying instant, then topple slowly with a noise of splintering wood that grew to a crackle, then a crash, as it fell to its bed of saplings below. A swish of displaced branches, a fluttering of leaves, and we again became aware of the thud of axes and the toot of the distant whistle.

To the watching layman the felling of a tree seems sad. For the bushman it's all part of the day's work. But it is a strong antidote to sentimentality to know that from that tree will come some of the timber so urgently needed to house New-Zealanders. From the sap at the top of the trunk will mainly come O.B. to be used perhaps for linings. Further down the clean sap will provide Dressing A for ceilings and furniture. Nearer the base of the trunk the clean heart will provide various building timbers.

In South Westland stand New Zealand's greatest reserves of timber. Huge forests run up from the beaches to the foothills of the Alps and here the red and white pines, with a little totara and matai, are being felled to meet some of the Dominion's timber requirements.



But even though the forests are extensive they are not inexhaustible; we cannot afford to fell bush haphazardly. It is the work of the State Forest Service to grant timber-cutting rights to private companies, who pay royalties of so much per hundred feet of timber taken. Since the forests are all on Crown lands the sawmillers obtain only the right to cut and remove the timber, and this they do under the supervision of the State Forest Service.

The Service selects an area for cutting and calls for tenders. The successful miller must cut out all the timber within a certain time, but must take care not to do irreparable harm to the young trees and undergrowth. Thus erosion can be avoided and the young forests conserved. For New Zealand's forests must be conserved if we are to meet the steady timber demands of industry. A glance at the map in the bulletin on soil erosion will show the serious depletion that has taken place over the last one hundred years, and, though afforestation schemes will provide for the future needs of the community to some extent, New Zealand will need to conserve her present stores carefully to supply the requirements of an intensive house-building scheme. Remember that 140,000 new houses are needed by 1958.

In South Westland the exotics, such as *Pinus radiata*, which are usually planted for re-afforestation, do not flourish. Here the need for conserving our most valuable reserves is even greater.