

Should the Commissioners be unable to agree upon any question of forest policy the Minister shall appoint some prominent State official to act as arbitrator, and, subject to the Minister's approval, his decision shall be final.

If it be decided to apply a carefully-considered and approved system of working the forests according to accepted scientific principles and working-plans, after mature consideration and a rigid inspection of special local surroundings is adopted, it is absolutely imperative that no outside interference should be permitted, or consideration of political or private interests be allowed to retard the work by altering the scheme inaugurated.

The life and growth of trees vary to such an extent that years must of necessity elapse before a system modelled on the French, German, Swiss, or Indian forest codes can be fully worked out. Any interference with the Conservator in carrying out the details of his scheme must therefore in many instances render futile the work of years, and in some cases risk the overthrow of the entire system. It must be remembered that the culture of forest-trees entails a "rotation" plan extending from forty to eighty years. However well conceived and carried out such a plan may be, any "break" must overthrow it. It is quite simple for a Minister, influenced by people who are ignorant of forestry principles and requirements, to cause such a "break," but it is a work of greater difficulty, which involves many years of time lost, to repair the damage so done.

For all these reasons the foundation and most essential condition to the establishment of a successful Forest Department is an Act of Parliament giving the Conservator of Forests secure tenure of office and ample powers to insure the uninterrupted and continuous progress of the work entrusted to him. This Act should contain clauses to provide that all timber areas now in the hands of the Government (or that may be hereafter acquired from the Maoris) should be proclaimed permanent State forests, and should be safeguarded by the most stringent conditions. It should further provide for the adoption in working the forests of the broad principles of systematic and fixed conservancy, details being left entirely in the hands of the skilled officers; and insure the officers from all danger of intimidation in the exercise of their duties.

An experience of four colonies, extending over sixteen years, of the manner in which political considerations are permitted in Australasia to override the essentials of forest conservation and culture, justifies the emphatic assertion that without such an Act the establishment of a successful system is impossible.

As part of the duty placed upon me by the Hon. the Premier, I feel bound, therefore, as a forest expert, to fearlessly express my views on this and all other matters which, by subjecting forest officers to rebuffs and trials of a vexatious nature, not only dishearten any man who understands and loves his work, but make the ultimate success of his operations utterly impossible. It is with a view of enabling your Government to make provision at the outset against such difficulties and dangers as I have described that I have written so frankly upon forestry as carried out in the Australasian Colonies at the present time.

The necessity for immediate action in New Zealand is apparent, and unless forest reforms are inaugurated speedily the timber famine, which already threatens in your colony, must come.

Enormous quantities of timber are required to meet the great and increasing demand for wood-paving in all the great cities of the world—a trade as yet only in its infancy. When the authorities really grasp the fact that Australian hardwoods are absolutely the best timbers in the world for such purposes, the possibilities of forestry will assume startling significance, and neglect to provide for profit from this demand must be regarded as almost criminal.

Blue-gum is largely grown in New Zealand, and as soon as jarrah and red-gum become scarce (the latter already is so in most of the colonies) this timber must be one of the foremost in public favour, being particularly adapted for wood-paving, and especially so for such use in wet places. Large plantations of these and other *Eucalypti* (which mature so rapidly that in twenty-four years they are ready for the sawmiller) could be planted with great profit, both by the Government and by private persons.

Already the Americans have become dissatisfied with their own deals for street-paving, and the City of Philadelphia has commissioned its museum authorities to inquire into the suitability in price, quality, and quantity available, of Australian hardwoods for this purpose. This fact alone indicates the probability of an extensive trade in such timbers in the near future.

During the past forty years millions of money have been sent to America in payment for the soft woods of that country, and now there is every probability, if our opportunities are seized upon, of some of these millions coming back to Australia.

The cultivation of such *Eucalypti*, as may be found by experiments now being conducted in Melbourne and elsewhere, most suitable for the purpose, opens up a vast field for the operations of up-to-date forestry, and there is no reason why New Zealand should not compete with the other colonies in supplying the demand for these timbers, while her own indigenous timbers will become too valuable for use in this way.

Before closing this portion of my report I feel bound once more to warn the Government of New Zealand that if forestry operations—of such vital and momentous importance to them—are not placed at the outset upon a solid and permanent basis no practical good can result. No half-hearted measures, no subsequent "tinkering" with the subject, can insure the maintenance of the forests and profitable use of their timber. It is absurd to appoint experts, waste money upon a "bastard" system, and yet allow what little good work might be done even under that to be neutralised by alterations of policy on a change of Ministry or in the exigencies of some political interest.

Systematic and scientific treatment has been proved and recognised as indispensable in the experience of every one of the older countries. Such treatment cannot be applied if the system is disarranged merely to oblige Jack, Tom, or Dick, who supposes that an elector's or miner's right gives him authority to burn, cut, or otherwise destroy timber at his own sweet will, and without any reference to the rights of the people as a whole, who really own the forests.