

REPORT.

SUMMARY.

A few salient points of general interest concerning the year's operations are quoted hereunder for ready reference :—

State Forests.—The area under the control of the State Forest Service is now 8,762,000 acres, of which 6,676,700 acres are permanently reserved ; the net increase for the year was 311,548 acres. The percentage of land area under forest reservation has risen to 13.20.

Exotic State Forests.—Tree-planting was continued on a very minor scale, 4,223 acres being planted, which brings the total area under trees to 439,804 acres.

Forest Fires.—Excepting one serious fire in Eyrewell Exotic State forest, North Canterbury, when over 1,000 acres of young trees were destroyed, the fire hazard generally was low, and although numerous small fires were reported, the actual damage was negligible.

Timber Sales.—The quantity of timber sold was nearly 17,000,000 board feet greater than last year's total, the actual figure being 94,134,000 board feet.

Timber-production.—The increase in the timber produced from State forests was, however, not nearly so marked, being approximately 500,000 board feet in excess of the previous total of 112,000,000 board feet. The total quantity of timber produced from all sources is not yet definitely known, but it is expected to aggregate 340,000,000 board feet—the previous year's cut was 336,000,000 board feet.

Sawmills.—A reduction in the number of sawmills from 598 to 585 was recorded as at the end of the financial year ; of this number, 319 worked full time, 123 worked part time, while 143 were closed down ; 435 mills cut indigenous timber only, and 92 worked exclusively in exotic forests.

Imports of Timber.—As was to be expected, a sharp decline took place in timber imports, and the total quantity as recorded by the Comptroller of Customs at the 31st December, 1940, was 15,000,000 board feet, or slightly more than one-third of the total for the previous year. The value of these imports was £298,600.

Exports of Timber.—On the other hand, exports of timber increased by over 4,000,000 board feet in quantity and £43,000 in value ; the actual total was 17,408,000 board feet, valued at £195,400.

Rehabilitation.—Preparatory plans for the rehabilitation of ex-servicemen have received close attention, and much preliminary work has been done in collaboration with other State Departments.

CHAPTER I.—FOREST POLICY.

SECTION A.—PERSONNEL AND PLANNING.

1. The New Zealand State Forest Service is rapidly attaining a full wartime footing. As never before, war has reduced all forest issues to one simple problem, that of meeting an increasing and ever-changing demand for timber. Month by month this has claimed more and more of officers' time until in some instances their peacetime activities have been reduced to a vanishing point. To conserve manpower, continuation of this trend is inevitable, and the Department's programme of work is being reoriented accordingly.

Fire protection, timber appraisal, and utilization activities with their direct contribution to essential wartime production have been intensified, but with two exceptions all other activities either have been or are in course of being reduced to a mere skeleton basis. The two exceptions are staff training and planning, upon which the whole resources of the Department surplus to the war effort must be concentrated. Prior to the appointment last year of additional technically-trained personnel and their assignment to silvicultural and forest-management duties, it was realized that more particularly in the State exotic forests some losses must be anticipated due to haphazard planning and lack of trained staff over a long period of years. Even prior to the great depression, organization and personnel were entirely inadequate to the Department's rapidly-increasing responsibilities, and both the depression and post-depression periods have served to accentuate the disparity between volume of essential work and available trained staff. The seriousness of the position can no longer be ignored, and any attempt to correct it merely by intensification of current training methods must fall far short of minimum requirements.

2. Military service obviously precludes the training of an adequate junior technical staff until the conclusion of hostilities, when it is hoped that a number of scholarships in overseas Universities will enable forest officers now on military service to qualify for professional duties. In the meantime it is hoped to arrange a number of staff exchanges with overseas forest authorities so that certain technical officers may obtain a practical working knowledge of our principal exotic species in their natural habitats and that at the same time New Zealand may receive the benefit of similar knowledge possessed by the exchange officers.

With improved staff-recruiting arrangements now in operation, it becomes practicable to supplement the ordinary attachment method of field training for ranger officers by providing full-time instructional facilities at a Forest Ranger School. An ideal location exists at the Whakarewarewa State Forest, to which large areas