

These officers, who reside at Rotorua and Tapanui respectively, supervise the several nurseries and plantations under their control, and are responsible for the raising and planting-out of the trees in each Island. Under them, in charge of each State plantation, is a forester. These various officials direct the work of each of the labourers and others employed in the tree-planting operations.

In regard to tree-planting operations, a certain amount has to be carried on at Rotorua, Waiotapu, and Hanmer by means of prison labour. Although the actual work done by the prisoners averages less than that by free labour, the value of the work to the community must not be judged alone on a monetary basis. There is no doubt, according to the evidence of Mr. G. C. B. Jordan, Under-Secretary for Justice, and others, that the employment of prisoners in tree-planting is distinctly of benefit to them, and quite likely to lead to their reformation. There is always work in the nurseries or plantations for such as really intend to reform, and it is not uncommon for a prisoner to become in this manner once more a useful member of society. We should be sorry to see a system abolished that is of so much value from its reformatory character.

The administration of the branch is controlled by the Under-Secretary for Lands, to whom the Superintending Nurserymen report, and from whom they may receive orders and directions.

The cost of afforestation is defrayed by the sale of timber in the State forests, supplemented by a contribution from the Consolidated Fund annually voted by Parliament.

The various plantations and other areas are as follows: North Island—Whakarewarewa, 9,024 acres; Waiotapu, 7,695 acres; Puhipuhi, 1,200 acres. South Island—Dusky Hill, 845 acres; Conical Hills, 3,672 acres; Naseby, 1,350 acres; Gimmerburn, 425 acres; Hanmer Springs, 2,668 acres; Dumgree, 881 acres.

In order further to understand the present position of State forestry in New Zealand, the policy and management of the operations from their inauguration must be dealt with. This requires a brief consideration of the following questions: (1.) Are the trees planted suitable for the localities in which they are planted? (2.) Are they the best kinds possible for the localities in question? (3.) Are the trees, even if suitable to the localities, always planted in the best position available? (4.) Has due attention been paid to the urgent necessity for growing trees that give a rapid rotation? (5.) Has sufficient attention been paid to growing every class of timber likely to be required in the future? (6.) Has sufficient provision been made against fire? (7.) Have the cheapest methods been adopted for establishing the plantations? (8.) Are the plantations situated in the best localities available? (9.) Are they in blocks of a sufficient size? (10.) Are they so arranged as to allow the future milling operations to be carried on in the most profitable manner? (11.) Have sufficient experiments been conducted? (12.) Have these experiments been carried on where they can be readily observed? (13.) Had the local plantations of settlers and public bodies been sufficiently investigated prior to the commencement of the forestry operations? (14.) Are the nurseries in the most suitable positions? (15.) Is the method of raising nursery stock conducted on sound lines? (16.) Is the method of procuring seeds satisfactory? (17.) Is there any plan in operation for educating the young men in the service? (18.) Is the management of the nurseries and plantations satisfactory at the present time?

The answer to a number of the above questions is directly applicable to the exact question in our order of reference—namely, “Whether the present operations of the State are being conducted on satisfactory and progressive lines”—for the present operations are in large measure similar to those of the past, in that many of the same trees are being planted, that the methods of planting and nursery-work are very similar, that the nurseries themselves are the same, that the fire-breaks are mostly those which have been in vogue for some time past, that the actual supreme control is the same, and so on.

As several of the above questions interlap, we shall not deal with them individually, but use them rather as the chief points of consideration in what follows.