

South Africa has just three times the New Zealand forestry expenditure, for which it gets a completely equipped Forest Department, a sound system of forestry, and some 18,000 acres of forest planting yearly, or over six times the yearly planting of New Zealand. The total area of the Government forest plantations in South Africa is about two-thirds larger than that of the New Zealand plantations. In 1883 there was only a nominal Forest Department in South Africa and a nominal forest revenue.

For the sixteen years previous to the outbreak of war there was in New Zealand a total forest revenue of £609,378 (Lands Department pamphlet, 1914). During recent years the forest revenue has varied between £30,000 and £60,000 a year. For the year before the war broke out it was £29,771. Of the total forest revenue since 1898-99, about half has been expended on the forest plantations. A considerable portion of the forest revenue, over £100,000 (Lands Department pamphlet, 1914, p. 20), has been paid to local bodies for the upkeep of their roads. In a large sense we must look on this merely as defective book-keeping. The whole forest revenue and a considerable forest loan should have been expended in putting the forests in order. The delay in spending the second half of the forest expenditure when it was so urgently required to put the forest estates into order will cause an eventual loss that it is impossible to calculate or even roughly estimate.

New Zealand at present, cutting about twenty-five times the quantity of timber that South Africa does, has a forest revenue amounting to only about half that of South Africa, which is £57,000 (1912-13). It is a repetition of the Australian experience of a nominal Forest Department and a nominal forest revenue, or a real Forest Department and a real forest revenue. In Australia, whenever an effective Forest Department has been established it has paid for itself many times over within a few years. In Victoria the forest revenue rose from £17,000 to close on £70,000 in ten years. The forest revenue of New South Wales rose from £10,000 in 1901 to £95,000 in eleven years. And these Forest Departments are not yet fully equipped and organized as in Europe and South Africa.

It is fairly certain that an effective Forest Department in New Zealand would double or treble the forest revenue in a few years, or, even as in New South Wales, increase the revenue tenfold. One hears on every side stories of waste in the forest. It has been stated on good authority that as much kauri has been burnt or spoilt by fire as has passed through the sawmills. I have already mentioned that the kauri timber burnt and partially wasted in one forest, the Puhupuhi, has been valued at three millions sterling.