

But if the sawmillers will not accept those conditions, then the alternative must be faced of confining sawmilling to State-owned mills. We have already some State milling operations conducted by the Railway Department upon timber lands reserved for railway purposes, and I have made proposals to that Department, which I trust may be accepted, for the transfer to the State Forest Department of all the Railway milling operations. In any case I believe it will be necessary to establish State sawmills in the Waipoua Kauri Forest.

I have been awaiting the publication by Mr. D. E. Hutchins of his "Report on the New Zealand Forests." His great experience enables him to give advice upon such matters as fire protection, which we shall doubtless accept for our guide. I conclude this brief reference to conservation of forest areas by reminding you that in this regard the question of the age at which New Zealand trees attain maturity does not arise for consideration. As I have said, on each area we have the trees actually growing to maturity—New Zealand timber-trees self-sown and growing in their natural conditions—and we save those trees until their maturity whatever the period may be. Many of the trees are already of the age of maturity, and others are growing naturally to that age. For example, if the age of maturity be 250 years, the milling operations will leave trees growing already of the age of 200 years, and a less time will elapse for those trees to attain maturity than the time required by quicker-growing foreign plantations.

With regard to the second of our principal operations—namely, plantation—we must remember in the present and the future that the land to be used must not be land which will be sought for settlement purposes, and therefore poor land; and, further, we must have regard to climatic conditions. A considerable rainfall is essential to produce the growth of most of the quick-growing trees, and therefore large areas of land which are considered by many persons to be fit for forest operations, because fit for nothing else, must be discarded from our consideration. Then, again, we have to remember that it is useless to plant trees for forest purposes unless they can be subsequently milled and used without a heavy cost of transit. Plantations of inaccessible hillsides are of no practical utility. I invite the Commissioners to advise me, through the Minister of Lands, of areas which fulfil the necessary conditions, and I hope to be able to establish on land so acquired in various parts of the Dominion nurseries and plantations of quick-growing trees to provide in the very near future timber for commercial purposes. I will not enter here upon the question of the kind of trees to be planted with that object. In New Zealand we have come to believe in the *Pinus insignis* as the tree most quickly producing profit, but I observe by the latest English report that English experts give the first place to the Douglas fir. The subject is one upon which expert advice has been sought and is being acquired. There is at the present moment difficulty in securing the services of men trained in nursery-work and capable of directing planting operations. It is certain that we must contemplate an increase in the rate of remuneration of that class of Government employee if our planting operations are to be extended. I hope and believe that many returned soldiers will be willing to take up plantation-work, but there are more vacancies than applicants at present.

Upon one subject closely allied with both forest conservation and plantation I must add a few words. The kauri grows largely on poor land. There are considerable areas, I believe, in the North of Auckland from which the kauri milling-timber has been removed, but where there is a large number of self-sown kauri-plants, and also a large number of younger kauri-trees unfit for milling. I hope that it may be found possible to bring under the control of the Forest Department a number of such areas where an attempt may be made to reproduce the kauri forests, partly by encouraging the growth of the trees already there and protecting them from fire, and partly by consistent planting of kauri-seedlings. Let us at least make the attempt not only to conserve as kauri forests the lands now remaining covered with such forests, but also to restore to the original condition of kauri forest the areas of poor land which were originally covered with kauri. Whether that effort be made for the benefit of the next generation, as some hope, or for generations one hundred and fifty years hence, as more believe, it should surely be made.

One last word as to the gradual disappearance of the white-pine and the continued permission to export a percentage of that timber. You are all aware that the white-pine grows principally upon good land, and therefore upon land required for settlement if it is Crown land, or upon land which the owner desires