

FORESTRY IN AUSTRALIA.

Position of the Industry.

Report by Mr. Lane Poole.

The Minister for Home and Territories (Sr. Pearce) on Thursday released for publication a report by Mr. C. E. Lane Poole, Commonwealth Forestry Adviser, outlining the present position of the forestry industry in Australia. Mr. Lane Poole also makes allusions to the responsibilities of the Commonwealth Government in this matter, and the direction in which the States can be assisted by the Federal authorities in dealing with forestry problems. The following is a summary of the report:

An Importer of Timber.
Australia's economic situation as regards her supplies of timber is unsatisfactory. For some years a citizen of Melbourne—Mr. John Laver—has been analysing the timber statistics, and, thanks to his work, it is possible to summarise the position.

| | | |
|------------------------|-----|---------------------|
| Production | 587 | million feet super. |
| Exports | 87 | million feet super. |
| Imports | 364 | million feet super. |
| Population | 5 | million. |
| Per capita consumption | 153 | super feet. |

The above are the figures of 1922-23. The peak year was 1913, when 683,000,000 ft. were produced and 457,000,000 ft. were imported. The production figures include both sawn and hewn timber, and the proportion of the latter is 21.24 per cent. We are importing 42.18 per cent. of our requirements in timber, a figure which in view of the youth of Australia and its relatively speaking small population is very disquieting. The production consists mainly of hardwoods derived from the eucalyptus family, though hoop and bunya pine form an important part of the Queensland output, as do the tropical furniture woods of that State. Data is not available for the production of minor forest produce for the whole Commonwealth, but the State of Western Australia keeps a record of the wood fuel produced for mining purposes alone, and this in 1923-24 amounted to 568,132 tons, while 148,000 cubic feet of mine props were utilized. The total commercial and domestic wood fuel consumption of Australia must be heavy and would increase the per capita figure.

The imports are all soft woods of the pine family, for we may neglect the small imports of such special timbers as teak for railway coaches, hickory for wheels and shafts of carriages and such like minor timbers. Since the war American woods have made up the bulk of our imports, and of these 90 per cent. was Oregon, or, as it is called in Canada, Douglas fir. Australia's situation is rendered doubly critical for in the first place her own supplies are inadequate and in the second place these supplies are mainly hardwood, while soft wood is her most urgent need. It is not generally realized that over 90 per cent. of the world's consumption of timber consists of softwoods and that hardwoods, therefore, fill but a tiny want in comparison.

Experts of Timber.
Turning to the exports, there is to-day but one State with an apparent surplus of timber, that is Western Australia. In 1923-24 she exported 133,500,000 super feet, of which 46,000,000 went to other States of Australia, and the remainder overseas. The overseas shipments consisted almost entirely of sleepers. Queensland and Tasmania also are in the position of suppliers to other States, but they have no overseas export to speak of so I will not enlarge on their situation in this section, nor will I touch in such minor forest exports as sandalwood and tanbark.

An important industry.
The importance of forestry as an industry is quite overlooked in Australia, and in this regard a glance at the figures for a European country are instructive. One man per 180 acres of forest in Prussia. One man per 130 acres of forest in Bavaria. Australia with her wild, untended, cut-over forests will not employ anything approaching such a proportion of her population on forestry work, but gradually as the forests are rendered normal, a man will be required to tend every 1,000 acres or 24,500, while some 75,000 would be required for felling and hauling logs, making roads, &c., and to convert the timber into the marketable products for the user would employ over 330,000 men.

I have set the quota which the foresters of the various States have decided in the area of forest country in each State.

| | Area Required. | Forests actually dedicated. |
|----------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| | Acres. | Acres. |
| Queensland | 6,000,000 | 1,410,364 |
| New South Wales | 8,000,000 | 5,315,689 |
| Victoria | 5,500,000 | 3,401,728 |
| South Australia | 500,000 | 208,258 |
| Western Australia | 3,000,000 | 52,389 |
| Tasmania | 1,300,000 | 29,199 |
| | 24,300,000 | 10,502,634 |

A Forestry Policy.
As to the work done in each State by the forest authority, it is quite clear from the reports that the efforts made are puny in comparison with the task that confronts the authorities. In each State the forests department is striving to make good the wastage caused by timber getters and fires, and is putting as large an area as it can get funds for under plantations of soft wood, but it will take them many long years at the present rate of progress to effect the object in view. They lack two essentials—one is money, and the other is trained staffs. Continuity of policy is an essential in forestry, more so than in any other business, for it takes many years for a tree to attain maturity, and if the policy is constantly chopping and changing, there is little hope for the forests. A continuity of timber supplies obviously depends on a continuity of planting, and this on a continuity of annual appropriations or some other financial arrangement under which the forester can lay down his plans for a period of years.

Training in Forestry.
There is only one school purporting to give a full course in forestry, and that is the one at the Adelaide University. It is unfortunate that this lectureship is in the one State of the Commonwealth which is so lacking in forests. It augurs well for forestry that out of so badly situated an institution some enthusiastic and fine young foresters have been turned out. Given the proper forestry environment, and atmosphere and the best tuition, I see no reason why excellent foresters should not be trained in Australia. The main difficulty has been, and must continue to be, the lack of demonstration forests.

The need for one first-class school has been repeatedly emphasised, and resolutions have been passed urging the establishment of such an institution. Its curriculum has been laid down. Its site has been chosen, and complete unanimity was arrived at between the foresters of all States as to the whole question of higher training. The most difficult matter was that of deciding between a course of forestry at a university and a separate school. I have always been in favour of a separate institution situated in or near a forest in that State, where the widest range of Australian climatic conditions prevailed; while to ensure the necessary knowledge of those sciences on which forestry is built, the students admitted should be graduates of an Australian University.

That a first-class Australian forest school has not been established in spite of the agreement attained is not due to the foresters, whose unanimity was beyond question, but to the action of various State Governments, who, in spite of the advice tendered to them by their forestry advisers, have failed to give effect to the scheme of a national school.

The Federal Position.
The forestry aspect in the territories coming under the Federal Government shows, I think, that there is much work to be done, and that the failure to initiate forest work in the past must redound to the discredit of the central authority. The proper administration of its own forest resources and the formulating and carrying out of a forest policy in its own domains does not mark the boundary of the Federal authority's forestry activities. While it holds no rights over their forest lands, there are several directions in which it can assist the States to carry out their forestry programmes. The Interstate Forestry Conferences bristle with resolutions aimed at better co-operation in such things as more uniform methods; a standard nomenclature for trees; a glossary of technical forest terms; the establishment of a central seed store; the founding of an Australian Forestry Journal. All these are important matters that lack the presence of the central authority to give them effect. But they fall into the background compared with the continually affirmed desire on the part of State foresters to see established:—(1) An Australian forest school; (2) a Commonwealth forest products laboratory.

It is not possible to go into the question of the cost to the Federal Government of a forestry policy. A trained staff will be required to carry out the preliminary work, and there will be some difficulty in obtaining qualified men, so of necessity the central Government must move slowly. The study of the forestry position in each State, while it will take some time, should not prove expensive, for, I think, all the Departments of Forestry would render assistance when the object—a comprehensive treatise on Australian forestry—was realized by the various

Forest Area.
The area of the forests of the Commonwealth is given as 99,054,000 acres, but this figure bears no relation to the area of commercial forests, and it is hard to know how it has been arrived at. It certainly is not the wooded area of Australia, for, except for the Nullarbor Plain, some sand dunes and rocky mountain tops, the whole of Australia is wooded. How far out is this official figure is shown by the Western Australian statistics which give 3,000,000 acres as the total extent of forests, while the Commonwealth Year Book puts down 16,404,000. Fortunately foresters have made estimates of the area of true forest land of Australia, and the figures arrived at was around 24,500,000 acres.

What is the condition of our forest heritage of 24,500,000 acres? This relatively speaking small area of land is carrying today remnants of virgin forest, but is mainly covered with a bad growth of uneven aged timber, which has grown up more or less haphazard after the saw-millers have picked the best out. The areas are swept by fire for the most part, and instead of putting on a satisfactory increment annually, are standing still, viz., their increment is cancelled by the loss through fire and other causes. These forests are dying as fast as they are growing, and a minimum of timber is standing on a maximum area of land. But this is not all; for the land on which the forests are growing is not dedicated to forestry. Here are the areas of the permanent forest reserves, and against them

forest authorities of the States. The wide general educative campaign for the same reason should prove economical. While it is not possible to lay down definite figures of cost at present, it will be helpful to look into the general question of how forestry should be financed. Timber being a crop on a very long rotation, it is seldom that the generation that plants can reap the benefit of its work. From this fact it is often argued that the financing of forestry should be by the means of loans. It is clearly reproductive work of the first order, and the present generation should not bear the capital cost. I am in agreement with this when it applies to the formation of new forests, such as the planting of waste lands with conifers. I do not agree with it, however, when the question of the country's natural forests is considered.

NEWS. 1.5.25

ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION

Branch in Adelaide

Under the guidance of Dr. H. Heaton (Lecturer in Economics at the University) the Adelaide branch of the Economic Association of Australia and New Zealand is in process of formation. It was decided at the meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, held in Adelaide last year to organise an association somewhat on the lines of those already established in North America and Great Britain, with branches in the 10 University cities of Australasia. Speaking on the subject Dr. Heaton said that research work and discussion would be the principal objects of the association, and the results would be published in a series of bulletins, so that the public would have the benefit of a complete and progressive record of the work accomplished in both the theoretical and practical sides of economics.

"Our aim is to include teachers of economics, students, and business men among our members," he explained. "The branch is not officially connected with the University, and there will be no qualifications attached to entry, which will, of course, be open to men and women. I shall be calling a meeting during the coming month to organise the Adelaide branch."

"One of the first matters to be considered," continued Dr. Heaton, "will be the working out of a business barometer, which will enable us to forecast the trend of industry, movements in prices, and bank rates just as a weather barometer indicates climatic changes. In other parts of the world this business barometer is in use, and has proved of great value."

"Other subjects of discussion will be the Australian foreign exchange and the return to the gold standard. These matters will be considered in their relation to Australasia as a whole, but when practical problems are being investigated they will be studied from the South Australian point of view."

"One of the greatest advantages to be derived from the association will be its treatment of internal problems from an economic standpoint. Many of the industrial problems at present agitating the Commonwealth are purely economic in origin, but unfortunately they are always bound up with politics. For instance, the vexed question of hours of labor is always discussed on a political basis."

"We shall probably study that problem from the point of view of production on the one hand and industrial fatigue on the other, and when the matter is looked at in those lights it assumes an aspect totally different from that at which it is usually regarded."

Concluding, Dr. Heaton said, "Although these societies have been operating in America, Canada, and Great Britain for the past 30 or 40 years, the reason why they are only now being established in Australasia is that interest in economics is of comparatively recent growth, and the subject has only been studied in our universities during the last 10 or 12 years."

NEWS. 1.5.25

Principal Kiek left Adelaide on November 28, 1924, for a short trip to Great Britain. He is on board the Cathay, which is expected to reach Outer Harbor tomorrow.



PRINCIPAL E. S. KIEK who will return from Great Britain tomorrow.

row morning. He will resume his lectures on modern world's history to the University Tutorial Class in connection with the Workers' Educational Association on Tuesday, May 5.

NEWS. 1.5.25

AGRICULTURE FOR BOYS

High School Recommended

"That the Minister of Education be asked to consider the desirability of establishing, on the block of land presented for the purpose by the late Mr. Peter Waite, an agricultural high school for boys less than the age of 16 years, the school to have accommodation for boarders and provide courses for those who intend to work on the land, or who desire to enter the Roseworthy Agricultural College." This was a resolution adopted at a meeting of the Advisory Council of Education, held at the Education Office.

There were present Mr. W. T. McCoy, B.A. (Director of Education), Professor Kerr Grant, Drs. Ida Halley and Charles Fenner, Mrs. Edith A. Hubbe, Messrs. W. J. Adey, W. R. Bayly, Charles Charlton, and Albert Sutton.

The progress report was received from the Cinema Committee and arrangements made for demonstrations by a number of different machines suitable for use in schools.

NEWS. 1.5.25

Dr. Constance Finlayson, M.B., B.S., of Adelaide, has been appointed clinical biochemist at the University of Adelaide. Dr. Finlayson has been working at the Adelaide Hospital as a joint officer of the University and the Hospital Board.

REC. 7.5.25

In Executive Council on Wednesday the appointment of Dr. Constance Alice Finlayson, M.B., B.S., as honorary clinical assistant in biochemistry at the Adelaide Hospital was approved.