

"FORESTRY": ADDRESS BY DIRECTOR OF FORESTS.

(At a recent meeting of the E.S.T.I.S. Committee at Tewantin, Queensland, Australia, the Director of Forests, Mr. J. B. McADAM, Dip.For., delivered the following address).

It may be asked why, if so much forest is available in the Territories, it is not made available more rapidly. One of the major reasons is that the bulk of the lands of the Territory are native owned and before they can be alienated and dealt with they must be acquired by the Administration. The legislation provides that if the native owners are willing to sell, the Administrator may acquire lands or timber rights. Ownership investigations are very carefully carried out, and if, as is usually the case in forest land acquisitions, the area is large, many natives may be involved and negotiations may be protracted. It is important to keep the confidence of the native peoples and to proceed at their tempo. They realise that development is to their own betterment in the long run and that the Administration is guarding their interests and an amicable agreement is the rule when the position is carefully explained to them. It is a condition of all such purchases that the District Officer responsible for the purchase must ascertain that it is not detrimental to the natives' interest before he may proceed with the purchase.

I am convinced that, provided access is developed sufficiently rapidly, the forests of the Territory are sufficient to allow a cut of several hundred million feet per year.

Ultimately, with the development of the standard of living of the local peoples, they themselves will have a demand of the magnitude of several hundred million feet per year.

For example, the population is now as great as that of Queensland, which annually requires between 300 and 400 million super feet of log for production of sawn timber. It will be many years before the local people develop such a demand, but even now their demand is gaining momentum. In the meantime, export market would provide a means of employment for many of them and as long as adequate measures of representation are applied there need be no fear for their future requirements.

A recent survey showed that Australia is at present importing the equivalent of 50 million super feet of logs worth about £200,000 of a kind similar to those available in New Guinea. With Australian enterprise those requirements might well be supplied from Australia's own Territories—Papua and New Guinea.

The Administration does not expect startling increases but it does look forward to a steady displacement of other suppliers by enterprise in the Territories.

This is looking only at the present position with a population of 8,000,000 people. Australia requires about 1,200 million super feet of sawn timber and falls short of her requirement by some 2 to 300 million super feet which she has to import. If the population reaches double present figures in the next 20 years as is the plan, this deficit may reach nearer a 1,000 super feet of timber per year.

That void will cause increasing prices and should prove a "Price to get supply" for many of the Forests of New Guinea which to-day, because of poor access, heavy shipping freights, poor equipment and inefficient labour, must be regarded as of negative royalty value.

Twenty years ago, the "secondary timbers" of North Queensland were not saleable. Twenty years from now the "Secondary Woods" of New Guinea