

UTILISATION OF KARRI FOREST RESOURCES

By A. L. Clifton

The Karri forests belt\* has a vast potential for sustained wood production and there is an enormous reserve waiting to be used.

But there is disastrous cellulose wastage in the present utilisation of the resource.

The economy of the area is relatively depressed. What it needs is overall planning to transcend the nibbling approach of the present milling system and pre-occupation with agriculture.

This regional planning should incorporate integrated sawmilling, hardboard, paper pulp and the generation of electric power.

The need for at least one such integrated unit is urgent, now.

But there are two arguments against the establishment of a pulp industry in this region. Firstly the population of Western Australia is not great enough to sell all the end products. Secondly there is not enough pine on the spot to provide the necessary proportion of softwood fibre for blending with indigenous pulps.

Both these objections can be surmounted.

The first should not be difficult if we look beyond our own coast-line to see the potential markets in South-East Asia where rising living standards will demand increasing quantities of paper, hardboard and other wood products. This market is right on our doorstep.

The second is partly answered by the rapidly developing Blackwood Valley plantations. However, they are not enough - not enough in area and not as economic as on-the-spot plantations could be, because Pemberton or at least the Warren Valley is the natural place for such an industry, with its indigenous timbers and ample water supply.

Pilot soil surveys indicate that there is more Pinus radiata soil in the Warren Valley under Forests Department control than all areas north of the Karri belt combined. And nearby, on the coastal belt there are many thousands of acres of sands showing promise for Pinus pinaster growing.

Here then is a blue print for the first stage of much needed development of the Karri forest belt -

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\* I refer particularly to the area bounded by lines drawn east from the Darling Fault to Manjimup then to Walpole, back to Northcliffe and west again to the Darling Scarp.

1. Immediately establish several thousand acres of Pinus radiata down to an estimated SQ V, close to a suitable industrial site in the Warren Valley. These plantings could occupy fire damaged Karri sites, repurchased farmland etc. These plantations would be managed for pulp production to tide over the period until coastal plantations can come into full production.
2. Conduct extensive trials on and intensive studies into Pinus pinaster establishment on coastal sands. To be followed up by large-scale planting of these areas.
3. Keep figures on pulpwood resources from Karri thinnings, mill offal, Marri logs etc. constantly before the potential users of our raw material.
4. Expand our capacity to carry out the field work required, which is beyond present resources. Such trial programmes as proposed should be administered separately from divisional work with its many distractions.

Research facilities and personnel are required. Site preparation equipment must be ear-marked for the planting trials. Economic studies must be carried out on a large scale and, if necessary, a pilot plant established to prove the feasibility of using local materials on a working scale.

Many of these things have been said before and some carried out, but let us keep up the pressure for fuller utilisation of our resources.

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