

1881.
NEW ZEALAND.

TRADE WITH FRANCE IN NEW ZEALAND TIMBERS

(CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO THE PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

Mr. A. LECOY to the Hon. the MINISTER of LANDS.

SIR,—

Wellington, 14th May, 1881

I beg to enclose the petition I mentioned to you the other day. Some of the arguments advanced by the petitioners may be found worthy of notice. They wished me to go to Paris for the purposes referred to in the petition. I objected to an immediate execution, from two motives: I wished to see forest affairs here a little farther advanced as regards statistics, preparatory organization, &c.; also I wished the petitioners to form among themselves a regular and substantial association, which, however, I understand is now in course of completion.

I intend to call upon Mr. McKerrow early next week to see the new forest-maps. These are, no doubt, a good illustration of the previous statements of the department in respect of forest areas. The question is now how to turn to profit these immense possessions.

Your suggestion to the effect that a preparatory survey of those forests be made, comprehensive of technical and commercial estimates, points out the very first steps to be taken in the matter. This preliminary survey could not, however, be made in less than six months.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Lands.

A. LECOY.

Enclosure in No. 1.

WE, the undersigned proprietors of timber-lands, saw-millers, and timber-merchants, resident in the Provincial District of Wellington, and connected with the timber interest in other parts of the colony, desire to bring under your notice the following facts:—(1.) That the timber industry in New Zealand is at the present moment suffering from an absolute stagnation in trade, arising, unquestionably, from the fact that the requirements of the colony in the matter of the consumption of timber are comparatively small when compared with the large area of timber-lands now being worked. (2.) That the great importance to the colony of its native timbers as an article of export has never yet been sufficiently recognized, notwithstanding the fact that the experiments of the late Mr. Balfour, C.E., and the more recent data obtained by Mr. Blair, C.E., have proved that very many of the New Zealand timbers are stronger and more durable than European and American oak, which are taken as the standard woods in the European timber markets. (3.) That it has come to our knowledge that the supply of oak and other hard woods in Europe has become very limited, and is certain to become more so every year, the result being that a constant increase in the value of such timber is taking place: in fact, the price of that particular class of wood has doubled during the last twenty-five years. (4.) That our practical experience has led us to believe that many of our New Zealand timbers would, if properly introduced into the European market, be eagerly sought for by manufacturers in place of oak and other hard woods, the experiments we have referred to having shown that our native timber would satisfy all their requirements as to strength and appearance, while they would be purchasable at a price which, while satisfactory to the buyer, would leave a fair margin of profit to the exporter. (5.) That, notwithstanding their excellent quality and cheapness, great difficulty exists in getting our native timbers properly introduced into foreign markets, in consequence of the ignorance of buyers upon the subject; which can, in our opinion, be obviated by the Government taking active steps in bring-

ing the importance of the question before the necessary foreign authorities, especially before the French public, as France could absorb to the extent of some millions of pounds annually timber of the class we have in abundance. (6.) That the best plan to bring the matter prominently before the Continental public of Europe would be to have a series of comparative experiments, as between New Zealand timber and European oak, made at the "Conservatoire des Arts et Metiers," in Paris, under the supervision of eminent foresters; which experiments would have such an importance through their official character as to thoroughly fix at once in the mind of the European manufacturer and buyer the commercial and economic value of the timber, and enable a trade to be established as it were at one bound, which would otherwise take years to achieve. (7.) That, looking at the importance of such experiments to the timber industry, and to the colony at large, they should be arranged with the greatest care, and the Government should be represented by a gentleman possessed of special experience, not only as to the value of New Zealand timbers, but as to their adaptability to the various requirements of the European timber trade.

We are of opinion that, if such steps as we have indicated above were taken by the Government, the timber industry would at once receive an enormous development, and in the course of very few years an export trade to Europe of vast importance would have been firmly established. The necessity of creating colonial wealth by utilizing the natural resources so lavishly placed at our command needs no comment, and appeals to the common sense of every man who desires to see New Zealand self-supporting and self-reliant.

R. GREENFIELD.
JAMES HUTCHENS.
CHARLES STEWART.

ROBERT EWING.
JOHN CHEW
JOHN COMPTON

No. 2.

The Hon. the MINISTER of LANDS to Mr. GREENFIELD.

SIR,—

General Crown Lands Office, Wellington, 9th June, 1881

At the interview which I had on the 1st instant with yourself and other gentlemen, at which you pressed upon my attention the advantage which would accrue from establishing a trade between France and this country in the native timbers of New Zealand, you stated that, from information you had gathered, you had every reason to believe that if proper steps were taken a permanent trade might be established; and the course that I understood you to advocate involved, amongst other requirements—(1.) The establishment of a *dépôt* with a sufficient quantity of New Zealand timber to enable its character to be tested by manufacturers and builders, but principally in the furnishing business; (2.) The forming of an exhibition of the timber, partly in a manufactured state, and in such form of planks, &c., as would give a good idea of its appearance and several qualities; (3.) The obtaining, through the Forests Department in Paris, a report founded on a series of experiments giving an analysis of the qualities of the timber in respect of strength, durability, and fitness for the requirements of that country: such report to be published and circulated.

For these purposes you pointed out that it would be desirable to appoint an agent who would be accredited to the Government department in France, and who would take such steps as would be likely to bring New Zealand timbers into favourable notice. At the same time you stated that if the Government would appoint such an agent, and provide a sum not exceeding, say, £500 to cover the expenses I have mentioned, you would be prepared to make such arrangements, at the cost of the gentlemen interested, for sending a cargo of timber to be dealt with in some such manner as I have indicated, and for keeping up a supply hereafter.

I shall be glad to know whether I have rightly apprehended your intentions; and, if so, I shall be prepared to place a sum not exceeding £500 on the estimates, to be expended in such way as may, on full consideration, seem to Government to be best to promote the object in view.

I have, &c.,

W. ROLLESTON,

Minister of Lands.

Robert Greenfield, Esq., Wellington.

No. 3.

Mr. GREENFIELD to the Hon. the MINISTER of LANDS.

SIR,—

Wellington, 20th June, 1881

I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 9th June, No. 427-1, in which you intimate that if you have rightly apprehended the intentions of myself and those with whom I am acting, as to the opening of a trade with France in New Zealand timbers, you will be prepared to place on the estimates a sum of £500, to be expended in such way as may seem best to the Government for the purpose of assisting to secure a successful introduction of our timbers into the French market.

In reply, I beg to confirm what was stated at the interview in your office, that if the Government will thus assist by accrediting a suitable agent, and paying the expenses of his mission to France, and of the necessary experiments and tests by the official departments for the purpose

of bringing the timbers favourably under the notice of French builders and manufacturers, I and those with whom I am acting will be prepared to furnish a sufficient assortment of samples of timber for the purpose of such experiments and tests, and for a small exhibition of New Zealand timbers, to be held in Paris.

We are further prepared to do our share, together with other timber-dealers, in sending to France a few cargoes for sale, and have no doubt that others will be prepared to join in the venture, and contribute a portion of such cargoes.

As soon as we understand that the Government will grant the proposed assistance, we will make it our business to communicate with other timber-dealers, with the view of inducing combined action in the matter. Further shipments will, of course, depend upon the result of the first few cargoes, but we are sanguine that a large and profitable business will be established.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. W Rolleston, Wellington.

R. GREENFIELD.

