

1901.
NEW ZEALAND.

SAWMILLERS' CONFERENCE

(PROCEEDINGS OF THE), TOGETHER WITH CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO THE PROBABLE EFFECT OF THE FEDERAL TARIFF UPON THE TIMBER INDUSTRY.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

TELEGRAM FROM THE PREMIER TO SAWMILL-OWNERS.

THE Federal tariff of the Australian Commonwealth proposes to make very important alterations in the duty on New Zealand timber imported into Australia. As the matter is very important to the timber industry of this colony, I shall be exceedingly glad if you can make it convenient to meet in Wellington in conference for the purpose of considering the matter. I am asking the various sawmill proprietors in the colony to meet together, as the Government contemplate taking such action as may seem most advisable to protect the sawmilling interests. Kindly confer with the other sawmill proprietors in your district, and appoint delegates, and state the time it would be convenient for you to attend the Conference. On receipt of your reply I shall telegraph further suggesting the date upon which the Conference should take place. It will require to be at an early date.

R. J. SEDDON.

Wellington, 15th October, 1901.

THE CONFERENCE.

In response to the above invitation a Conference met in J Committee Room, Parliament Buildings, at 2.30 p.m. on the 24th October, 1901. The following gentlemen were present :—

Mr. Walter Bailey (Manawatu Timber Company); Mr. P. Bartholomew (Wairarapa Sawmillers' Association); Mr. William Booth (Wairarapa Sawmillers' Association); Mr. William Brownlee (representing Havelock sawmillers); Mr. Henry Brown (Taranaki Sawmillers' Association); Mr. W. Chalmers (Wellington Steam Cooperage); Messrs. Ellis and Burnand (timber merchants, Otorohanga); Mr. J. J. Ewing (Messrs. Halley and Ewing, Wellington); Mr. D. Goldie (Auckland Sawmillers' Association); Mr. James Hutchen (Stewart Timber Company, Wellington); Mr. F. Jagger (Auckland Sawmillers' Association); Mr. J. A. Jamieson (Hawke's Bay Sawmillers' Association); Mr. F. Jenssen (Hawke's Bay Timber Company, Limited); Mr. H. D. Knight (Dannevirke); Mr. A. C. Knight (Totara Sawmill Company); Mr. James Leggat (Invercargill, representing Southland sawmillers); Mr. William Lodge (Wakamarina); Mr. N. F. Marley (Wellington Timber Merchants' Association); Mr. W. J. Parker (Auckland Sawmillers' Association); Mr. T. Price (timber merchant, Petone and Hawke's Bay); Mr. John Prouse (Messrs. Prouse Brothers, Levin); Mr. W. J. Reilly (Nelson); Mr. J. D. Smith (representing Forty-mile Bush and Wairarapa Sawmillers' Association); Mr. C. Stewart (Stewart Timber Company, Wellington); Mr. Hart Udy (Petone and Hukunui); Mr. W. A. Waddell (Messrs. Waddell, McLeod, and Weir, Wellington); Mr. T. H. White (Auckland Sawmillers' Association); Mr. W. M. Woodhead (Taranaki Sawmillers' Co-operative Association).

Mr. W. Booth, who was elected Chairman, said that the Hon. C. H. Mills, Commissioner of Trade and Customs, would say a few words before the Conference commenced its business.

Hon. Mr. Mills : The Government are very pleased at the ready response the sawmillers have made to their invitation to assemble in Wellington to consider the probable effect of the Federal tariff upon the timber trade. A Bill has been drafted with the view of imposing an export duty on balm timber, but before going on with it they desire to have an expression of opinion from the sawmillers who have an expert knowledge of the subject. My own opinion is that, while the Australian States want New Zealand's white-pine, they desire that the labour of preparing it for the market shall all be found in Australia. That would not be fair to the timber industry of this colony. The Government look upon the white-pine forests as a national asset, and, even if a tariff had not been imposed by the Federal Government, something would have been done in the direction of conserving that timber for local use. That could only be done by the imposition of an export duty. What the duty should be has not yet been decided upon, and the Government will be glad to have the views of the Conference on the matter. I can only add that I will be glad to