

*Mr. White* : I am not altogether in favour of putting an export duty on anything. However, I am present as a delegate from the Auckland Sawmillers' Association, and we are here to carry out a policy in accordance with the motion read. Since I have been in Wellington I have had conversations with one or two sawmillers here, and I am sorry to find there is somebody advocating an export duty on the flitches. If such a thing were to happen it would mean throwing a thousand men out of employment. In cutting kauri there is more labour used in cutting the log into flitches than in cutting it into ordinary stock. To talk about putting an export duty on the flitches, I think, would be simply ruinous, and I am sorry to hear any man advocating anything of the kind. With regard to flitches, it is quite understood that a flitch means something to be resawn, and generally it is taken out in the solid. We want the Government and the people here to understand the position it will place us in. With regard to the square-hewn timber, what we speak of as balk timber here, we mean either a round log or the square-hewn timber—that is, a log with all the defects inside of it—while a flitch means something absolutely sawn. Now, if a man wanted to square his timber, I do not see any objection to his taking his log—if he had an outrigger on his break-down—and squaring his log with a break-down saw; it would be a log all the same. But, when it comes to a flitch, I was rather surprised in the previous conversation that some of the gentlemen connected with the timber trade spoke of the flitch as if it meant going in as a log. I say myself that is a mistake. I do not think that this Federal tariff is going to have the ruinous effect upon us that it is thought it will, and I had private advice, though it was not verified, that white-pine was going to be allowed to go in free—that there was an exemption going to be placed on white-pine.

*Mr. Jagger* : A wire came to hand in Auckland from Australia that they had every reason to believe that white-pine would be admitted free.

*The Chairman* : But that is not verified yet.

*Mr. Jagger* : No.

*Mr. White* : I have here some instructions that I received from the chairman of our company. He said, with regard to the export duty on logs, it must be understood that balk timber is hewn stuff which has not been touched with the saw, and that it is of vital importance to the company that no export duty should be imposed upon the flitches or sawn timber. I say that this is an important thing. Mr. Goldie alluded to our mill in Australia. We sell our timber from the ship's slings in Melbourne. The mill in Sydney really handles more American timber than it does kauri. So far as the Auckland representatives are concerned, we would strongly oppose anything in the way of a duty on sawn timber or flitches.

*Mr. Goldie* : That is so.

The Chairman then put the motion, which was carried.

*The Chairman* : Would the Conference recommend anything to the Government by way of an export duty?

*Mr. Jenssen* : We had a meeting at Dannevirke and discussed the question, and thought it would have to be 4s. or 5s. on the log, having in view at the time white-pine. To do any good and to protect ourselves we thought we would have to put on 4s. or 5s. It would then cost them 12s. 6d. cut in Sydney or Melbourne, as against 11s. 6d. for the sawn timber that we can send over in flitches, or in all round sizes. I will move, "That the duty on round or squared logs be 3s. per 100 ft."

*Mr. White* : I will second that motion.

*The Chairman* : They have an unlimited quantity of hardwood timber over there which hardly comes into competition with any timber we have here. I would suggest that we agree upon the rate of 3s., because there are other items we shall want to deal with; there are other items that this Conference will want to deal with by the way of suggestion or negotiation. There is a good deal of our timber affected by this new tariff, and if the duty on logs is made 3s. it will be easy to yield something off this rate for concession from the other side. I think on that account we might agree upon this rate of 3s., with an intimation to Ministers, who will be dealing with the question, that we will not make a serious objection about it being reduced to 2s. if we get some adequate concession from Australia.

*Mr. Goldie* : I think if the Government say they want to make it 3s. they will do so. I suppose the House will have ceased its sitting in a few days, so if the thing is not done before the session is over it cannot be imposed until next year. The Government can suggest any terms with Australia they like after the House ceases to sit, but this would require to be ratified by the House. I presume what we are doing now is simply making recommendations to the Government.

*The Chairman* : This Conference might make a suggestion to the Government that they should arrange before the House rises that the Premier or the Minister for Railways, or both, with the Minister of Customs and a representative of the timber trade, such as Mr. Mitchelson, and some one or two others fairly acquainted with the other important interests affected, should enter upon a negotiation with the Commonwealth Government with a view to the establishment of a commercial tariff. Besides ourselves who are interested in the timber trade, there are many farmers and others who will be very seriously affected also.

The Chairman then put Mr. Jenssen's motion, which was carried.

*Mr. Brown* : I have seen it suggested that the Government should be recommended to place an export duty on all the white-pine timber, sawn or in the log, and it appears as if the Government are inclined to entertain that idea. I think it would be well for us to express an opinion that no export duty should be levied on white-pine timber and kauri; and I will move, "That this Conference earnestly deprecates any export duty being placed on sawn or dressed New Zealand timber."

*Mr. Chalmers* : I might say that on my first visit to Melbourne, in 1880, in the infancy of the