

progresses it is simply impossible to keep any small sections of it—sawmilling and settlement must go hand in hand. The bush must therefore disappear if settlement is to go on.

*The Chairman*: Yes. I think the opinion of the Conference further is this: that if any extensive New Zealand bushes are to be conserved now, they are really in the hands of the Government. There are extensive bushes on the West Coast of the South Island that could be conserved if the Government liked to do it, but if settlers are allowed to break into them they will render further conservation impossible. There are very large and very valuable bushes away in the North, that would be tapped by the main trunk line, that the Government can conserve, and personally I have a strong opinion that the Government should take very great care of the timber reserves they have there, and take very careful precautions so as to prevent the waste that has been allowed to go on with many other bushes in different parts of the colony. The bushes there are very extensive and valuable. The soil is much of it covered with pumice dust, and it would be a pity to let fires run hither and thither all through this bush and destroy hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth without the possibility of getting good land in exchange.

*Hon. Mr. Mills*: Has the Conference passed any resolution embodying those opinions? I think at a meeting like this, where we get the collective wisdom of gentlemen so well able to form an opinion on this subject, it would be judicious to pass a resolution embodying the opinion that you have expressed, and also to name the parts of the colony where you would suggest the Government might conserve timber. If those here to-day could give an opinion on these lines I think at any rate it would be a certain guide and assistance to the Government.

*The Chairman*: If you think it would be an advantage to have that opinion expressed I will ask the Conference to deal with it.

*Hon. Mr. Mills*: I think there are those present who could probably name certain places in the colony where it would not interfere with present industries to conserve the bush, and where, in the opinion of the meeting, it would be advantageous to do so for future requirements.

*Mr. Goldie*: With the kauri you cannot possibly conserve it. In the North you have thousands of men going about gathering gum who may throw a lighted match down and set fire to valuable forests. With regard to your white-pine and matai you might do it, but so far as kauri is concerned it is doomed.

*Hon. Mr. Mills*: It was that mixed bush I was referring to. I know from the different reports we have had how difficult it is to conserve this kauri timber, especially where gum-diggers are moving round.

*The Chairman*: An opinion is expressed here this afternoon that kauri timber will be annihilated within ten or fifteen years. Well, the next resolution, Mr. Mills, is, "That, in view of the present tariff, a recommendation be made to the Government that the railway freight on white-pine for export to Australia shall in no case exceed 1s. per 100 ft. to the nearest port."

*Hon. Mr. Mills*: As to railage, if a sawmill were within a short distance of a port would they pay the shilling or not?

*The Chairman*: Well, that is a matter that did not come up for discussion, but it is a matter that you would no doubt consider. However, the Conference expressed no opinion on that. Then, there is the last resolution. It says, "That, not anticipating any adverse legislation from the Australian Commonwealth, the northern companies have committed themselves to large contracts for log supplies for the purpose of keeping their mills running full time; and, as the Federal tariff is likely to lead to a restricted demand, the Government be urged to give favourable consideration to any application for an extension of time for clearing bushes held under short Government leases." That arises out of the tariff indirectly, as one of the consequences anticipated. I think you will see that, if that consequence takes effect, they will not be able to keep their terms (or, at any rate, not easily) with the Government, and the resolution merely asks that, as a consequence of this tariff legislation, the Government should look favourably upon applications that may come before them for an extended time, so that they might not have the timber forfeited. Well, sir, those are the resolutions passed by the Conference. No doubt the Conference will put upon paper their views upon the conservation of the bushes. Apart from this, I think the Conference has now finished its labours.

*Hon. Mr. Mills*: Would it not be advisable to pass some resolution in regard to your opinion as to trying to establish a reciprocal tariff between the colonies?

*The Chairman*: I spoke at some short length on this subject in the earlier part of the Conference, and I am glad to have the opportunity of saying that I think very strongly that these difficulties which are now arising, and which will crop up, should be looked upon as matters not for retaliation, but for negotiation. I suggested to the Conference that it might be prudent to express an opinion that before the House rose Cabinet might arrange for a Commission, comprising possibly the Premier, the Minister for Railways, and yourself as Minister of Customs, with one or two representative men who could be easily selected, and who were well acquainted with the timber and other trades. A Commission of that kind might be formed with a view to asking the Commonwealth authorities on the other side to appoint a similar Commission to meet and discuss the matter. They have some things that we want, and we have some things that they want, and it might be possible to get an interchange of products, and get more generous consideration than perhaps by any other means. If you think it would be an advantage I will ask the Conference to consider this matter.

*Mr. Goldie*: Those representatives who have come down from Auckland only want the 3s. put upon it if the present tariff is maintained. If not we do not want the Government to impose the tax. Our instructions from Auckland were to the effect that if the Government retained the tariff on the other side then we want this 3s. rate; but if, on the other hand, they modified it very much in our favour, then the Government may, if they deem it wise, reduce the amount.

*Hon. Mr. Mills*: I am not clear as to whether you have given the minimum size you propose