

log-hauling engines are of the heaviest type, their portability not being such a necessity, as, owing to the enormous quantity of timber per acre, their removal is not of frequent occurrence. All this gear is worked strenuously for ten hours a day, which represents a 25-per-cent. advantage over the time worked in New Zealand. This means that the capital invested in bush machinery in New Zealand has to carry by way of interest an additional 25 per cent. over and above what the Oregon producers have to pay. Contrast those conditions with those of the smaller sawmillers in New Zealand, who have to employ teams of horses, with a man attending each team, and each team doing well to average a load of 2,000 ft., at three miles an hour, over wooden tramways. With the limited areas meted out to the New Zealand sawmiller he has little chance of improving his methods. It would be far better to give him bigger areas and increase the royalties, rather than drive him to a system of production that is about one remove from using cant-hooks and pit-saws.

*Comparison of Labour-conditions in the Bush.*—Having made brief comparisons of the bush plants, I will now submit evidence regarding labour and its conditions in some of the logging camps in America. The recognised hours are ten hours a day. In some cases even longer than this is worked. One man told me he was working at a camp where they worked from “can to can’t,” meaning from the time they could see to the time they could not see. And, what is more, in some camps there was no observance of the Sabbath, it being held that it was better to have all their Sundays together. In other camps I was told it was common for the men to work on Sunday when there was a likelihood of a log-shortage at the mill, and that time so worked was paid for only at the usual rate.

I was informed by a manager of a big lumber company that they had a system of insuring the hands against accident, but that the premium was paid by the men themselves, and that the insurance people allowed the lumber company a commission for doing the business; so that, instead of a payment having to be made by the miller a profit accrued to the miller for having his men insured.

At one camp I visited there was a most complete system of “trucking” in vogue. Seeing that the New Zealand workman is so fortified against impositions of this character that may be forced upon him by unscrupulous employers, I should like to explain the trucking method alluded to. In a camp was a building which was a combination of store, grog-shop, and gambling-den. It was run by a storekeeper in the employment of the logging company. The storekeeper also acted in the capacity of timekeeper and paymaster. When a man had put in a week’s work he was provided with a card which had a number of squares marked on a portion of it. Each square had a mark denoting its value either in cents or dollars. When any purchases were made, the value of these was punched out of the squares until the value of the squares punched out equalled the value of the amount earned. If he “shouted” for a friend he tendered the card, which was promptly punched to the value of the drinks. If he wanted nickels for the purpose of investing on the gambling-machine, which was stationed in the store, he applied for them to the storekeeper, and had a corresponding value punched from the card. Money was only available for speculating on the machine. I tried the machine, and lost a dollar in a little over a quarter of an hour. If he left the job and had a number of these cards to his credit—a very unlikely contingency—he would not be able to get them redeemed by the storekeeper, but would have a number of tokens given him representing the unpunched value of his cards. These tokens could be traded to any of the storekeepers in the neighbouring towns. But if he was desirous of obtaining the country’s currency for them, he would be charged 10 per cent. for exchange. The storekeeper of the town did not get the whole of this percentage, for when he presented the tokens for payment to the issuing firm, he was charged 5 per cent. for cashing them.

It may be thought I have made an exaggerated statement; but, in order to show that I have not submitted an impossible instance or one laden with bias, I should like to be permitted to hand in a short extract from a book entitled “The Evolution of Modern Capitalism,” by John A. Hudson, M.A. This is a text-book for students of political economy when preparing for degree examinations in the New Zealand University. [Extract handed in.]

In fairness to the Oregon millers, although a great amount of trucking goes on in the Puget Sound camps, I do not think it is in so acute a form as what I have instanced. The camp where this was taking place was in the Southern States; but, as it was under the American flag, it is safe to assume that similar conditions could obtain anywhere within the United States.

I would respectfully point out to the Commission that the whole of our later legislation relating to employer and worker has been directed against the undesirable conditions that now exist in our competitor’s country; and, while it is expected of us to maintain the dignity of our laws by honouring them, we should receive an ample protection against the invasion of our markets by commodities produced under laws which we consider immoral.

*Comparison of Log-transit.*—In Puget Sound there are thousands of miles of sheltered foreshore, the whole of which is or has been, magnificent forest. There are many camps near the shore, the occupiers of which are getting logs for the supply of the mills situated on parts of the shore favoured with shelter and deep water. The extreme lightness of the Oregon as compared with our timbers makes rafting an easy and cheap way of conveying logs—so cheap that in some cases the bush supplying the logs is hundreds of miles away from the mills cutting them up. The bushes in many cases are run by contractors, who have secured large holdings for this purpose.

All the timber supplied to the Puget Sound mills is not, however, rafted, but in some instances it is railed. The bigger the lumber company the better are the terms it can obtain from railway companies. On making inquiries from a director of a large lumber company with operations in Puget Sound, what was the rate of freight for his logs from the bush to the mill, he stated it was a dollar a thousand feet, and that the distance was fifty miles. Included in this was the use of the railway company’s trucks over nine miles of the timber company’s line. This privilege put the trucks right into the heart of the bush, so that the logs could be hoisted into them direct from the log-hauler. When the present Premier held the portfolio of Minister of Railways, it was a just boast of his that the smallest railway customer was on the same footing as regard freight-rates as was the largest customer. This does not obtain in America, where, by guaranteeing a large trade, concessional freights can be secured. One reason for this is that their railways are not