

we have not heard of it. From this you will see that if the sale of white-pine were restricted to New Zealand, as it would be if an export duty were imposed, the price of butter-box timber would have to be raised to such a price as would permit of the offcuts—the 60 per cent. referred to—being destroyed.

By reciprocal arrangement with Australia, New Zealand gets red and white pine into the Commonwealth on a preferential tariff, and we are able so to dispose of the whole white-pine output as to permit the dairy industry to get its boxes at a fair rate. The State gets its royalty, and labour is employed to an extent that would be impossible were this duty imposed. An export duty on pine-logs was imposed with the avowed intention of securing to our own workers all the employment possible, and an export duty on sawn timber would more than nullify any advantage so given.

There is the further fact to be considered that most of the white-pine on the West Coast grows in company with other timbers—matai, rimu, &c. If these other timbers are taken out, and the white-pine left until New Zealand wants it, we respectfully submit that it will be totally lost to the State. Fire is certain to destroy the trees sooner or later, and a few months after they are dead they are useless for any commercial purpose. The result would be, on the one hand, loss of royalty, railage, and taxable value to the State, and loss of employment to the mill hands; on the other hand, a very large rise in the selling-price of red-pine would have to take place to compensate for the increased cost of production, caused by having to go over a very much larger area to get the same quantity of timber.

In the few places where white-pine grows alone it will usually be found to be rich river-flat. These are the most desirable areas for farming, and in view of the fact that such a small proportion of the available white-pine can be used in New Zealand our remarks apply even more forcibly here.

As men who have struggled for years and are still struggling to establish the timber industry on such a basis as will enable us to handle the forests to the very best advantage of the State, our workmen, and ourselves, we desire to make the strongest protest against any such ruinous proposal as this suggested export duty would certainly be.

There is a further matter which we would respectfully bring before you—viz., the desirability of urging on our Railway authorities the value of birch as a railway-sleeper. When the Midland Railway was laid fifteen years ago it was laid entirely with this class of timber, and some of the sleepers still remain. At present the Department pays 3s. 6d. each for silver-pine sleepers, and we understand 4s. 3d. to 4s. 6d. for hardwood. Now, sleepers of birch (*Fagus fusca*) can be obtained in large quantities at 2s. 6d. each alongside the railway-line. This would be a saving in first cost of, say, 2s. per sleeper as compared with the hardwood, and as money at 5 per cent. doubles itself in fifteen years, this 2s. saving would provide a second sleeper inside the Australian cost and also pay for placing it in the line.

Even if the Department decided to creosote birch sleepers, which can be done under 1s. each, there would be a big saving by using the birch. Another most important point is that the use of birch sleepers, even if it were maintained that there was no direct saving, would keep the whole cost of the sleeper in the Dominion, and employ a considerable amount of labour. At the same time, a timber that is among the strongest commercial timbers we have, but which has hitherto been virtually neglected and is now being largely destroyed, would be brought into its proper use, and its value as a national asset conserved.

The method of dealing with birch to-day is to take out the red and white pine and to leave the birch to its fate, which is generally fire, and we are positive it can be turned to much better account. Even if it were used on wharf-deckings and such works, instead of the Australian hardwoods, which have lately furnished many instances of their short lives, a great saving would be effected both from national and strictly commercial standpoints.

As regards afforestation, we venture to suggest that the Government be recommended to establish on the West Coast trial plantations in order to ascertain what foreign quick-growing timbers are suitable for the climate. Nothing has been done in this direction by private persons or local bodies, as is the case in other parts, and the climatic conditions render the experience of other districts unreliable. There are areas of open country where plantations could be tried to begin with, and small blocks should also be tried in country from which milling-timbers have recently been taken.

We respectfully commend the above suggestions to your favourable consideration.

For the West Coast Timber Trading Company (Limited),

J. W. CALDWELL, Secretary.

E. W. BOYD, Director.

No. 26.

GENTLEMEN,—

Lyceum Hall, Greymouth, 25th March, 1913.

Seeing you are taking evidence in Greymouth on the question of reafforestation, whilst being in favour of having the forest of the Dominion replanted as the timber is cut down so as to ensure a supply of timber in the future, I would like to bring under your notice the question of the export duty on white-pine, as suggested by the farmers of the Dominion.

I would respectfully point out to the Commissioners the injustice such a tax would impose on the wharf labourers in this and other parts of the Dominion. The export of the white-pine from this part to Australia gives a considerable amount of employment to a large number of men, and the loss to the men would be fully 25 per cent. of their earnings if a duty was put on the exportation of white-pine, making prohibitive the sale of the timber in Australia.

Trusting you will give this your earnest consideration when dealing with your report, which I presume you will lay before the Government.

I remain, &c.,

JAMES GOODALL,

Secretary.

The Chairman and members of the Forestry Commission.