

IS PROHIBITION OF EXPORT PRACTICABLE ?

During the course of the present inquiry it was demonstrated to the Board—

(a.) That in working mixed bush it is impossible to leave any particular milling-trees unfelled for future bush operations, as the felling of trees other than white-pine would damage and destroy the white-pine trees to such an extent that they would die. Even assuming that this difficulty could be overcome, the protection afforded to the white-pine by the other milling-trees would be lost, and heavy winds, to which the white-pine has not hitherto been subjected, would undoubtedly uproot them. A sudden alteration in the environment would result in their destruction even if fire did not get into the old tops—an occurrence most likely to take place. Again, assuming that it were possible to remove the other timber and leave the white-pine behind, the subsequent cost of utilizing the white-pine, necessitating the reinstatement of tramways or other means of access, together with the clearing-away of the debris, would make the cost so high as to be prohibitive for butter-box-making material.

(b.) Even in a mixed bush where the white-pine predominates the removal of other than white-pine timber may so alter conditions that the white-pine left standing would seriously deteriorate. Instances were pointed out to the Board where, for no other apparent reason than a drain being cut, or the protective fringe of scrub surrounding the white-pine being cleared and burnt for farming purposes, the white-pine left showed a distinct tendency to decay not only at the fringes, but right in the centre of the forest as well.

(c.) Owners of the white-pine already alienated from the Crown for legitimate milling purposes cannot be expected without compensation to retain their holdings until such times as the white-pine can be profitably used on the local market, and in cases where land containing white-pine has been alienated primarily for settlement purposes the owners, if exportation were prohibited, could not be expected to conserve the timber for the dairying industry, and the destruction of such timber by fire would take place to a greater extent than in the past. Even to-day settlers who have areas of white-pine on their holdings and have disposed of their timber rights to sawmillers usually stipulate that the timber be removed within a few years. If the sawmiller cannot profitably mill this timber the loss in most cases falls entirely on him, as the settlers will seldom grant an extension of time, so great is their anxiety to make use of the land for dairying and pastoral purposes.

(d.) Some white-pine is so situated that it cannot be milled profitably for local consumption owing to heavy transportation charges, but it escapes these heavy charges when exported: *i.e.*, it would be impossible for box-factories situated in the North Island profitably to use for the local market the white-pine brought from the west coast of the South Island.

(e.) The Crown in parting with its rights in timber areas to sawmillers has imposed no restriction as to export, and, moreover, it was fully aware of the fact when parting with the timber that the white-pine when cut would be exported. Relying on the good faith of the Crown, the millers have invested large sums in necessary plants, tramways, &c., for the purpose of milling white-pine, which timber, if thrown on the present local market, will have no value at all, but which finds a ready value in the export trade.

(f.) The dairying-industry requirements absorb about 45 per cent. of the output of the log; the remaining portion of the output of the log is in sizes and qualities for which no ready sale exists in New Zealand, but which in the Australian market bring almost as high a price as butter-box sizes. Assuming that the export of white-pine were prohibited, and that the local market could absorb the whole of the sizes suitable for butter-boxes and cheese-crates, a large proportion of the balance of the log would find its way to the slab heap and be burnt, thus not only creating a waste but destroying a value which would have to be passed on to the remaining portion of the log. Furthermore, as the bush can be worked profitably only if all the timbers are extracted on a face, the prohibition of the export trade in white-pine would throw the whole cost of milling on to the remaining timbers, and necessarily materially increase their cost.

(g.) The policy pursued by the Government up to the present has in effect been to foster the use of white-pine at the expense of other timbers, as it receives preferential treatment on the State railways, and can also on account of this preferential treatment be sold at a cheaper rate in Australia than timbers that might be almost as suitable for many purposes for which white-pine is used in that country.

During the last few years Southland beech (*Fagus Menziesii*) has begun to compete with white-pine in Australian markets, in spite of the fact that it is handicapped in Australia by a duty of 3s. 6d. per 100 as against 1s. for white-pine, and by preferential concessions given to white-pine in freight rates in New Zealand: *e.g.*, the railway freight on white-pine from Riverton to Edendale is 1s. 4d., in comparison with 2s. 2d. per 100 on other timbers. If white-pine were subject to the same railway tariff as other timbers, substitutes for white-pine would compete on an equal basis.

SUBSTITUTES.

Although we can never expect to get any timber equal to white-pine for the packing of dairy-produce, yet other timber must be utilized, as in the near future our white-pine will be exhausted. It is imperative that experiments that have already been made with some timbers should be continued.

The Board heard a good deal of evidence on the matter, and found that the following timbers had turned out quite satisfactorily under test for both butter and for cheese crates—*viz.*, taraire, tawa, *Pinus insignis*, poplar, beech (*Fagus Menziesii*), Oregon pine, and Canadian spruce. Inquiries made in Australia from the New Zealand Government Agent showed that just prior to the outbreak of war thousands of butter-boxes were manufactured from scandia-board, a wood-fibre produced in Gothenburg, Sweden. This substitute is reputed to be capable of carrying about double the weight of ordinary