

workmen is so much higher than that paid to the skilled workmen that there is no incentive for the skilled worker to perfect himself in his particular trade.

*To Mr. Veitch:* I have no scheme to propose for the training of workers. If you work out a scheme to-day the wages are so unsettled that your plans are upset to-morrow. We cannot get apprentices. A youth will go to a flax-mill, where he can get good wages, rather than be bound as an apprentice at 15s. per week.

*To Mr. Luke:* There is any amount of scope for workmen in this district. I refer particularly to skilled carpenters. There would be no difficulty in absorbing journeymen after their apprenticeship period. We are not getting enough apprentices trained at present to fill up the places of joiners and carpenters who take up other trades or who die. We are left now with very few men to carry on, and if work becomes very busy, as I believe it will, we shall be in a difficulty. The Technical School will help us a great deal in the matter of apprentices. I am not in favour of giving my boys time off in working-hours. We work forty-four hours per week, which leaves a boy plenty of time to attend classes after working-hours.

*To Mr. Hudson:* If doors were taxed as I suggest their importation would stop. It would not raise the cost to the consumer.

JAMES LEGGETT, Southland and Otago Co-operative Timber Company, examined.

I wish to bring one or two points before the Committee. The charge for railway-sidings is excessive. This has long been a sore point with some of us. A man who starts a sawmill applies to the Department for a siding, and the Department asks what price it likes, and the sawmiller, having no option, pays the price. When the siding is finished, after having cost £300 or £400, the Government at once charges a rent for it—£50 per annum. But the Government does not stop even there. They claim the siding as their own, and if it should be lifted on account of the bush cutting out it is the property of the Government. A mill may bring revenue to the Government to the extent of from £3,000 to £5,000 per annum.

*To Mr. Sidey:* We have met the Railway Department about the matter, and can get no satisfaction from them.

*Witness:* Another point is this: the rating of standing timber for county purposes. If a sawmiller buys timber from a farmer the farmer pays rates on the land, and we are rated on the timber. It is an instance of double rating. We do not use the roads, and therefore hold that we ought not to be called on to pay rates. We are in the Catlin's district.

J. K. CAMPBELL, Sawmiller, examined.

There are one or two matters I wish to mention. First, there is the duty on imported timber and the railage on imported timber. On no account should the duty or the railage be reduced. The Government are taking drastic steps in connection with the export of timber. They have reduced the export quantities of rimu to 25 per cent. of the total output of the Dominion, and of white-pine to 40 per cent. That means that the sawmilling industry in New Zealand has to look more and more to its own local market to get quit of its supplies. If outside countries, such as America, are allowed to bring timber into this country it means that the local industry will collapse. The sawmilling industry is an important industry, as so many other industries depend on it to a greater or less extent. Therefore we suggest that on no account should the import duty or the railage charge on imported timber be decreased. Then the Government is restricting the price that the sawmiller can charge for his timber. If the Government will not assist the industry by allowing the millers to increase prices when necessary, the mills will have to close down, because no man will run a mill at a loss. The Government are protecting the consumer all the time, but there are no signs visible that they are taking steps to protect the industry, and it is worth protecting. At the present time the sawmillers are working under very onerous conditions. They have to make use of unskilled labour—men who know nothing of the getting of timber or the milling of it—and no inducement is held out to men to enter the industry. In America they have schools of forestry and scholarships, where young fellows are trained in all matters pertaining to timber—growing, cutting, and milling—with the result that many young fellows look to the industry for a livelihood. Another matter is this: In this district there is a large number of small mills, which means that there is a great wastage. In America there are mills which turn out a million superficial feet per day. Here we have mills turning out only a few thousand feet per day. This tends to inefficiency and waste. Therefore some of the mills that belong to the company are considering the question of erecting a central mill, in order to ensure more efficiency and to keep down costs. There is a probability, however, of the Lands Department saying to us, "You cannot put up a big mill to cut timber on this area. You must have sawmills with separate areas." That is an unfair position in which to place the mills. We suggest that in the interests of efficiency the Government should place no obstacle in the way of mills centralizing. One other matter is this: There is a large quantity of light rails purchasable in France at present, and it would help the sawmilling industry if the Government were to buy a large quantity of those rails and offer them to the sawmilling industry in New Zealand at a reasonable price.

*To Mr. Sidey:* There is a duty of 2s. per 100 ft. on imported timber. We understand, however, there is an agitation to have it reduced, and we are against it, as it would cripple the local industry. If anything, the duty should be increased.

*To Mr. Hudson:* No difficulty has actually arisen to the centralizing of the mills, but it is looming. I see no reason why the Government should object to such centralizing.