

PHILIP BEST, Chairman of the Waimea County Council, further examined.

I corroborate what the previous witness has said. I suggest that the Committee should recommend the Minister of Justice to send a band of prisoners to the place and to other places to carry out tree-planting. The island will grow trees, and at present it is a waste. The timber could be used for fruit-boxes and other purposes.

HENRY GOODWIN KINGSLAND, Nurseryman, examined.

I speak on behalf of the Afforestation League in Nelson, and I support what has been said by Mr. Wilkes and Mr. Best. Nelson is using a large number of cases, and the *Pinus insignis* is well suited for the making of such cases. After the trees have been growing for only ten or twelve years the thinnings may be used for cases. It is believed that in the next five years the fruit industry will have trebled or quadrupled its output in this district, and therefore it is necessary to provide for a larger supply of timber. At present 500,000 cases is the output of the district. There is difficulty at present in securing timber for fruit-cases. Millers are to-day giving 6s. per 100 ft. of a royalty for *Pinus insignis* trees in the log. The yield per acre in our plantations is from 150,000 to 160,000 superficial feet per acre.

*To Mr. Craigie:* There are other areas besides Rabbit Island which are more or less suited for planting *Pinus insignis*. There are Crown lands that cannot be used for any purpose that ought to be planted.

*To Mr. Hudson:* The price of a case in Motueka is 1s. 1d., and in Nelson 9½d. If there was a good supply of timber the price would be 6d. or 7d. I think it has not been proved that the *Pinus insignis* is suitable for butter-boxes.

*To Mr. Forbes:* Some of the local bodies have planted, though only on a small scale. I have started two tree-planting syndicates in Nelson.

Lieut.-Colonel A. A. GRACE, examined.

I represent the Colossus Gold-mining Development Company (Limited), whose registered office is in Hastings, and of which I am the supervising director. I was asked to show you some of the stone from one of the reefs. It is a silver-lead-zinc ore, carrying copper pyrites and some gold. [Sample produced.] The average value is about £7 10s. per ton of ore. The reef changed on the line of lode and gave us visible gold, of which I have a series of assays, which I will leave with you. We want to get to work, but when we applied to the Minister of Finance he said, "No, I will not allow machinery to be put on the ground." We propose to put on a plant of about £20,000. We have driven tunnels for about 1,500 ft. or 1,600 ft., and would like the Government to give us what assistance it can equitably give us as a reward and as a help to us. We have been very bold and very successful, and now we want to make it pay.

*The Chairman:* I understand your request was refused principally because of the war, but now the restrictions have been waived?

*Witness:* We would like a subsidy from the Government for the work we have done. The mine is at Wangapeka, on the northern slopes of Mount Owen. We have not applied for a subsidy. Regarding the subsidy, it is usual to give 25 per cent. of the money spent on the actual creation of tunnels. The nominal capital of the company is £36,000. We have about £50,000 worth of ore ready to mine. We are the first to mine the ore, and consider we are worthy of a little encouragement.

A. T. ALLPORT, Orchardist, examined.

I represent the Fruit Association, with Mr. R. B. Jackson and Mr. W. S. Snodgrass. I submit a proposal for supplying cheaper apples and pears to the consumer by means of improved methods of distribution, and at the same time putting the fruitgrowing industry on a sounder economic footing. In this matter the question of prices really affects only two classes, the producer and the consumer—the former, say, 5 per cent. and the latter 95 per cent. of the population. Sections of the producers, through various unrelated schemes tried out in various parts of the Dominion, have spent many thousands of pounds in trying to evolve better means of distribution, with the object of providing a cheaper supply of fruit to the consumer, and thus increasing the demand. It must be confessed that their efforts have been at least a comparative failure, principally owing to a lack of control of the entire output. Therefore we, as growers, suggest that the consumers should co-operate with us in evolving a scheme which will directly benefit themselves by reducing the cost of such a desirable article of food as fruit. But 95 per cent. of the population cannot be organized excepting through the Government. During the next two or three years a tremendous area of young orchards will be coming into bearing, and by the end of that period the production, locally anyhow, should be at least double the present output. This means a very serious situation for the fruitgrowers unless a very largely increased demand can be established. To effect this we can only suggest—(1) Improved means of distribution so that by greatly reduced prices the local demand may be stimulated; (2) an adequate supply of tonnage for export trade. To overcome the difficulties of the situation and to help to reduce the cost of living by a cheap fruit-supply we suggest that the Government should establish a special department to commandeer all apples and pears for a period of three or four years and to work out a national scheme of distribution. Prices to the growers at the orchards to be, say, an average of 1d. per pound for marketable fruit, and a proportionate price for fruit suitable only for factory use. This would, of course, automatically provide the Department with cold storage for about 250,000 cases, together with various packing-sheds and factories, all of which could be leased for the term of the commandeer. A comparison of the sug-