

Owing to the authorities declaring the Te Whaiti—Galatea—Rotorua Road a fourth-class road with a maximum load of 4 tons including weight of vehicle, we have not been able to obtain delivery of this timber. Owing to the long road haul the contractor finds it impossible to cart profitably, as the load restrictions preclude him from carrying a load of 1,200 sup. ft. white-pine.

Our annual requirements of white-pine, used exclusively in our own organization, are 6,000,000 sup. ft. This timber is becoming increasingly scarce. The writer has spent considerable time and made numerous inquiries during the last two years with a view to securing adequate bush for future requirements, but outside the present holding at Te Whaiti he has been unsuccessful.

Unless the Government is prepared to assist us by making the roading conditions easier it will mean that in the very near future we shall be compelled to seriously consider the question of the use of imported shocks—viz., American spruce and Baltic pine. This will have very far-reaching effects on industry, and will aggravate the question of unemployment. It will mean that a great number of wage-earners will have to be dispensed with. The imported shocks would come to hand ready for nailing.

A very considerable sum which is now circulated in this country in the way of timber royalties, sawmill wages, cartage charges, railway freights, stacking charges (at our Frankton yard), and box-factory wages would be lost to the Dominion, and a huge sum would go to foreign countries annually for the purchase of the boxes in shock form. The latter, of course, will be an irreparable loss.

Our present contract for timber from Te Whaiti is for 1,000,000 super. ft. per annum. This timber will be railed from Rotorua Station to Frankton Junction. The railway freight is 4s. 2d. per 100 ft., which on 1,000,000 ft. amounts to £2,083 6s. 7d. In all probability we shall be drawing 4,000,000 to 5,000,000 ft. per annum from this source within the next two years, providing obstacles are not put in our way.

We trust that if these figures do not enable you to succeed in your efforts, that they may at least be the means of persuading the Hon. the Prime Minister and the Minister of Industries and Commerce to use their endeavours in persuading the Main Highways Board and the Public Works Department to ease the prohibitive restrictions they have placed on the use of the roads for the carting of timber.

That letter is from the New Zealand Co-operative Dairy Co. at Hamilton.

10. *Hon. Mr. Ransom.*] What road is that to which they refer?—The Rotorua—Galatea—Te Whaiti Road. Now, sir, the yield of planted timber has been variously estimated. The Department has made different estimates exceeding 100,000 ft. to the acre; on occasions it substantially exceeded 100,000 ft. to the acre. But between the private plantations and the Government plantations there will be, within easy reach of this railway, 300,000 acres of planted timber. Now, with a thirty-year rotation, and an average yield as low as 50,000 ft. to the acre, that would give an annual cut of 500,000,000 ft., besides the thinnings. At 75,000 ft. to the acre it would give 750,000,000 ft. per annum. Or, if we take it at a forty-year rotation (which would be my own idea of it), at 100,000 ft. to the acre that would give 750,000,000 ft. per annum, or double the cutting of all the mills in New Zealand to-day. If that does not justify the railway, I do not know what will.

11. *The Chairman.*] 750,000,000 ft. per annum—is that from now on?—Oh, no.

12. Eventually?—Eventually, yes.

13. *Hon. Mr. Ransom.*] When do you estimate this will come in?—In my opinion, in about thirty years from the planting. Of course, the planting has been done at all sorts of odd times. They began from about 1900, and at first they planted small areas, gradually increasing their planting, until last year, I understand, that something like 40,000 acres were planted in one hit. The Government plantations contain not a great deal of *Pinus insignis*. The more recent plantations consist of Oregon pine, which is supposed to be the most valuable timber in the world. Tens of thousands of acres of Oregon pine are growing on the Kaingaroa Plains. The growth is very rapid. It has been estimated that the growth of timber on the pumice area is greater and better than in any other part of the world. It has been well established that the growth of the tree depends not so much upon the richness of the soil as upon the range of the roots; and the pumice is so free that they can travel where they like. Now, it is estimated that the native forest of New Zealand, for all practical purposes, will be exhausted in twenty-five years, and of course the exhaustion is beginning now. In this letter from the New Zealand Dairy Co. you can see what difficulty they had in locating white-pine at all. We are already beginning to feel that our timber is done. The kauri is done and the kahikatea is nearly done, and in twenty-five years the native timber will have disappeared. This pumice country, as any one may observe, naturally clothes itself with timber. Our great enemy is fire. Some person may light a fire under a billy, or for the sake of seeing a blaze will set fire to the scrub, and the fire is carried over thousands of acres in the summer-time, and kills all the native bush coming up. But if you come up to Waiotapu I will show you a portion of the country which has escaped the fire, and is now coming into native bush. All over the Kaingaroa Plains, and around Wairakei, the land is being naturally covered with pine-trees without the expenditure of one penny. There are many savings with regard to planted timber. Bush is being worked in New Zealand yielding only two or three trees to the acre; but in planted bush the trees are all properly spaced, and in that way you get the maximum yield, which will go up to 150,000 ft. to the acre, and your trees are a uniform size. Your machinery need not be adapted to cut a log of 7 ft. and then another 1 ft. Your logs come in uniformly. There is an immense amount of timber within reach of your hauler. Then again, the permanence of the traffic is assured. Even if there is no further planting, the natural regeneration of pine-trees in that country will give a continual supply for all time. It is not to be supposed that this country which is going under forestry is a loss to the railway—far from it. That forest, properly looked after, will support nearly as much population as farming. As a farmer I regret to see so much available land go under trees, but it is by no means a waste, and the population supported by a properly worked forest is not very far short of that supported by farming the same area. When once they get to the milling stage the population will be greater, and if it is desired to resume the land for farming after it has been under forest it will be found that the land has been vastly improved by the presence of the trees. When I was up there lately there was a depth of soil accumulated on top from the detritus of the leaves as great as 9 in. or 10 in. And one great beauty of this country when planted in forest is its great availability: there is no difficulty in getting the timber out. The Afforestation Proprietary, Ltd., estimate the cost of the formation of their roads 22 ft. wide at £12 per mile. That is the cost of formation apart