

MEMORANDUM.

I HAVE here to express briefly how far, and for what reasons, I am obliged to withhold my assent to the first two of the recommendations above made.

1. Whilst allowing much weight to many of the arguments in favour of an export duty, and whilst keenly sensible of the pressing need of funds from some source for road-construction in the North, I am yet disposed to assign more weight than my colleagues to the objections urged; and in the present state of the kauri-gum trade I do not see my way to advocate an export-tax on the commodity.

2. I must very emphatically express my dissent from the proposal to debar immigrants to the colony,—especially our British and colonial fellow-subjects,—from access to the gumfields until they have been twelve months in the country or have acquired land.

It is difficult to say to what length such a principle, if once admitted, may be carried,—how far it may be extended to other industries, or what reprisals it may provoke in other countries. But, not to dwell upon these general objections, it appears to me a very questionable policy to introduce a regulation which may have the effect of compelling newly-arrived immigrants to spend their capital at the outset—or perhaps to have recourse to our charitable aid funds—instead of keeping open to them every channel through which an honest living may be earned.

I also dissent from the proposal to make a license necessary for digging upon private lands, believing that this is a matter which ought to be left entirely to the landowner and the intending digger to settle by agreement between themselves.

My own recommendation is that, notwithstanding the greater difficulty of enforcing regulations on gumfields than on goldfields, which has been already pointed out, and the unsatisfactory results hitherto attained in collecting fees for digging on Crown land, the attempt should not be abandoned.

Nothing can be more reasonable than the requirement that persons who desire to remove a valuable product from Crown lands should pay a moderate fee for the privilege; and we see that the diggers do pay as much as £4 a year for digging on some private lands. I believe that 40s. a year would be a tolerable impost if it were allowed to be paid quarterly, which would also meet the case of those who only dig occasionally.

The fees might be paid to and the licenses issued by postmasters, Clerks to Resident Magistrates' Courts, County clerks, and storekeepers; and the Chairman of a County Council should be authorised to remit payment wholly or in part where hardship would otherwise be caused. The money should be devoted to road-making, with a certain deduction for charitable insurance, as before explained.

J. GILES.
