

more particularly timbers required for furniture and building purposes, that you are doing an injustice to the timber, and you are doing an injustice to yourselves. That is my opinion. How can this best be stopped without unduly and harshly pressing upon those engaged in the industry? A man with capital, he could go and fall it, but it would be unjust to those who have little capital. The only way under these circumstances is for you to suggest some reasonable and some fair way in which something could be done to prevent this felling of the trees when they are in full sap. It is done in other countries, why should it not be done here? You are all crying out and wanting markets. I take it for granted that you want to do justice to yourselves, and if that is the case it is inexpedient for the time being to go on as you have been doing. You will never be any better off, and if you have markets and you send indifferent and sappy timber you will soon lose your trade. For instance, take the timber now that goes to a hot climate: They cut it up in full sap and send it before it is seasoned. What is the result? It works, twists, and shrinks, and as soon as the experts come along they look at it, and they condemn it. Now, timber cut when the sap is down and seasoned will stand anything. We have timber in New Zealand that would stand any heat, and would prove much better than the timbers they have been getting now from the Baltic. Therefore, from this fact alone I would ask you, gentlemen, to consider whether or not you would help us in this direction. A Bill has been framed, and many of you have been communicated with. The Government does not desire to act hastily in the matter, but we do desire to do something, and we take it that your combined wisdom should be able to suggest to us what we should do in respect to this very important question. I am satisfied that, gathered together as you are here from proper and unselfish motives, some good in this respect will come out of the Conference that is now being held. I may say here that this Conference is representative. We have the builders and the joiners represented. Now, I believe myself that the bringing together of the builders, of the sawmillers, and the joiners will tell you of the waste that often takes place in the timber being cut, and cut in such a way that they find themselves at a disadvantage. You may help them, and they will be able to help you. The bringing together of the joiners and the builders with the sawmillers at a Conference of this kind must be, in my opinion, conducive to the welfare of all—that is, the sawmiller, the builder, and the joiner. I suggest that you subdivide and take into consideration under different heads what I have just now suggested so you. To show you the position of the colony, as far as we can arrive at it by calculations, is as follows: The amount of timber exported, hewn, and so on, in 1895 was 38,297,905ft., of a value of £144,892. We have been unable to ascertain the actual quantity of timber that has been cut in the colony, and, therefore, to that extent we are not in a position to put before you and to put before the world the vast amount of timber that is cut, and the importance of the industry from a purely New Zealand standpoint. I hope myself in future to have this rectified. There is scarcely any other industry in the colony but what the State can give returns showing the volume and the value of the industry. We cannot do it in respect to the most important of our industries—that is, the timber industry. However, you will be able amongst yourselves probably to assist the Government in rectifying this error. I would like myself to have a record kept of the whole the timber that is sawn in the colony from year to year, so that we may place that as a return before Parliament, and let it go to the world. I will tell you this, that unless you make the world believe that you are somebody, and that you are doing something, why, they do not think much of you. Our State forests include those for climatic purposes, and comprised on the 31st of March, last, 1,141,778 acres. That is the area of the forest lands in the colony. Well, I hope we shall move in the direction of extending our markets, as it is our bounden duty, I think, to make the most of what is left; and, though many of you have been working for years with very little good for yourselves, and not much good for those who are working for you, and the State, if anything, getting the best of it, with the small area, comparatively speaking, that is left we should make the best of it, and for that purpose, gentlemen, you are called together, and I hope you will assist us. I think there is nothing further for me to add in opening the proceedings, than to say, that in matters of this kind it is for the Government, I take it, to lead. Every convenience will be placed at your command, the necessary officers will be here to assist you, and I wish to have your proceedings fully reported so that we may give to the world in full what transpires. I also beg to inform you that whatever transpires here will be fully reported, and we shall print it at the Government expense. We had a Conference here in respect to fruit-culture, and I may say that very valuable papers were read, discussions of an important character took place, and all these were reported and published. The whole of the fruit-growers of the colony and those engaged in agricultural pursuits who were unable to attend had the advantage of the wisdom and of the experience of those who attended the Conference. Though the colony is well represented by the sixty-seven or sixty-eight gentlemen who are here to-day, there are many others who are equally interested, but who are not present, and the only way that we can help them and help the colony is by giving the fullest publicity to your proceedings. That, gentlemen, shall be done. You then, if I might suggest, would do well if you would subdivide the work, and appoint Committees to deal with the several subjects; take, for instance, first, in regard to your outward markets, the extension of markets under the head of exportation; select a sub-committee to deal with that question; let one delegate be selected from that sub-committee to bring forward a paper on the export of timber from the colony, and the markets and probability of markets for that timber. That comes forward in the way of a paper read by the chairman of the sub-committee, and on that discussion will be evoked. You must have some one to commence. I make this suggestion to you because I believe it will facilitate business, and be a practical way of bringing before the Conference itself the information in respect to exportation, and to the increasing of the markets outside. Then you take the Forestry Department, and the prevention of the destruction of forests, and the preservation of forests, make that another subdivision, and appoint a sub-committee whose