

HERBERT SUBRITZKY, Farmer, at present residing in Auckland.

*To Mr. Greville.*] He had had over thirty-five years' experience both as a gum-digger and buyer, and subsequently as a farmer. He was of opinion that the gumfields generally had been rather neglected in the past—had been dug without any system, and the land more or less ruined. He knew all the gum-bearing country from Whangarei to the North Cape thoroughly. In regard to the large flats at Waiharera and Houhora, in his opinion it would be a practicable proposition to take portions of the devastated flats and for the Government to have them dug "on a face," recovering what gum there was in the land, throw up all the timber on the surface, and generally leave the land in a fit state for future cultivation. He thought this suggestion not only a practicable one, but that it would be a payable proposition. He was quite confident from his own experience that it would be a financial success. As a matter of fact he himself had often employed labour to dig out "on a face" apparently worked-out land, and the results had always proved satisfactory. He agreed that the development of the Crown gum lands along these lines would result not only in the lands being reclaimed, but would be an easy solution of the "unemployed" difficulty. He felt assured that he could take up a gang of men, fair average workers, with no previous experience on the gumfields, and proceed to dig the flat lands "on a face." He was prepared to pay such men 10s. a day, and was quite satisfied that from the gum derived from the land he would make a profit on the transaction. Speaking more in regard to the hilly lands where the digging was generally shallow, he thought that it was quite a practicable proposition that the State should have it ploughed and put on men to recover the gum, and was sure that in many instances enough gum would be recovered to cover the cost of the ploughing and to put the land into grass. In his opinion it would be a proper scheme for the Government to improve the land—in other words, convert it into farms prior to it being cut up for settlement. He thought that the license fee of the diggers should be £2 a year, with a view to providing revenue for improving the lands which had been dug over. In his opinion the proper solution of the management of the kauri-gum industry was for the State to exercise a general control over it, by the establishment of a Kauri-gum Bureau attached to, say, the Mines or the Lands and Survey Department, and that there should be an export duty on gum sufficiently large to make such a Department self-supporting. He recognized, of course, that any such duty that might be imposed under the present existing circumstances would have to be borne by the diggers, but he felt sure that the beneficial results would be such that the digger would cheerfully agree to pay his share of the burden.

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