

*To Mr. Forbes:* We have splendid timbers of our own in the Dominion, and there is no reason why timbers should be imported. An exception might be made in the case of timbers required for piles. There is no reason why redwood should be imported from America when we have such a fine building-timber as rimu. Doors and sashes are being made in Melbourne from our Southland beech. They say it is a splendid timber for the purpose. American timbers are produced much cheaper than ours are; they have not the waste that we have.

*To Mr. Craigie:* The Sunshine Harvester Company use Southland beech for lorries, harvesting-machines, &c. They use it in preference to any other timber. In Australia they are finding out the value of our timbers before we know it ourselves. We have hundreds of millions of feet of beech in this district. In October some of the beech was submitted to the Department of Agriculture in Wellington for testing for butter-boxes, and the Department informed us that the results were quite satisfactory. In a test made by the Engineering School of the Melbourne University, as to the strength of the Southland beech (*Fagus Menziesii*) in comparison with the best-known Australian timbers, the "modulus of rupture" of the timbers was—Southland beech, 18,755 lb. per square inch; Victorian yellow stringy-bark, 16,650 lb. per square inch; Tasmanian blue gum, 14,500 lb. per square inch; Victorian mountain-gum, 13,880 lb. per square inch.

T. J. GARVEY, Farmer, examined.

In accordance with the wish of our committee (consisting of members of Tussock Creek, Forest Hill, and surrounding districts), who have been granted a reserve of 134 acres in Forest Hill to develop a seam of limestone of splendid quality—93·87 per cent. carbonate of lime (analysis by the Mines Department)—I have been delegated, with others, to interview your Committee and endeavour to enlist your sympathy in regard to my proposition that the Government should devise some scheme by which farmers living at a distance from the lime-kilns and railways could be given Government assistance to develop the lime industry. At present the high cost of labour and horse-feed precludes the use of lime on a large scale by farmers who can only go one trip per day, and that in good weather, as the roads in our vicinity are liable to floods. Therefore the liberal use of lime is restricted to those who are fortunate enough to be near the railways; but by the establishment of lime-crushing plants where the stone is available and of good quality the prosperity of the agricultural industry would be assured, as our industrial future depends on the proper fertilization of the soil, and this cannot be done without a cheap supply of lime, for lime is absolutely essential to the soils of Southland. This matter is so serious from the point of view of national production that I would ask you to go fully into the matter of a cheap and plentiful supply of lime for the farmers in the backblocks. In view of the fact that agriculture is the principal source of all our exports, and always must be the chief factor in the Dominion's prosperity, I am firmly of opinion that assistance should be given, as the probable initial cost would be more than recouped to the Dominion by the increased returns in the production of raw materials to supply the essentials of the various industries fostered or encouraged by your Committee which are bound to spring up as a result of Mr. Rodger's scheme for the electrification of Southland. Besides the stimulus that would be given to the employment of labour, and higher wages that would result from a corresponding increase in the output, providing food in abundance and thereby reducing the present high cost of living, it would enable us to take our full part in the development of the nation. As to the repatriation of soldiers and all the talk of putting them on the land, I may say that as things are at present we cannot get enough lime for our present requirements, and if the Government is going to make a big increase in farmers by settling soldiers on the land they will also require to adopt my suggestion and make a corresponding increase in the local output of lime.

There is another subject which I would urge on the consideration of your Committee—that is, a cheaper and more adequate supply of superphosphates. The Government should take action to acquire a suitable place for the manufacture of superphosphates, either by the acquisition of some of the seams of phosphate rock already opened or by prospecting for new deposits. I am aware that the Government is offering a substantial bonus for the discovery of a payable deposit, but it is not likely to be a success, as few private prospectors have suitable machinery. I am certain that the best way of handling the prospecting would be through the Geological Department starting a staff of men equipped with the proper machinery and a qualified geological expert to direct the prospecting, and make a thorough search in all the likely places. I have had correspondence with the Minister of Agriculture as far back as the middle of September, 1914, in regard to the phosphate deposits in Samoa, and I then suggested that a concession be reserved to supply New Zealand with superphosphates if the islands were annexed by the New Zealand Government at the final settlement. The Minister of Agriculture promised to give the matter his earnest attention. I hope the suggestion will not be lost sight of, as we have to import enormous quantities of this valuable fertilizer from Australia and other places. The importations from Australia alone for the quarter ended 30th June, 1918, are 7,230 tons, valued at £37,526; for quarter ended 30th September, 1918, 5,064 tons, valued at £26,500: totals for the six months, 12,294 tons, valued at £64,026. But as I think this is a matter more in Mr. Macindoe's subject, I will not go further on the superphosphates, as he will be likely to deal more exhaustively with it. I trust that it will not be urged against my proposal that a compliance with them would involve heavy expenditure by the Government. But there is nothing new in the idea, as I understand the Government has a carbonate-crushing plant now working at the Otira Tunnel. So far as expense is concerned, considerable expenditure has been incurred by this Dominion in developing other industries of less importance than agriculture.

I trust that your Committee will give the above suggestions your earnest consideration and assistance to develop our primary industries. By doing so you will earn the sincere gratitude of all the pioneers of the backblocks as well as the spontaneous gratitude of my committee.