

in our district farther up the river from Seddonville. Once or twice when men were working—prospecting—they got a subsidy from the Government of 5s. a foot. That was handy in years past when explosives were cheaper than they are now. Now, 5s. does not go very far. I think it would be a good thing if a subsidy of pound for pound were given to small parties prospecting for gold. [Specimen containing gold handed to Committee for examination.] This quartz runs at about 28 dwt. to the ton. It paid us about £4 10s. a week when I was there.

*To Mr. Veitch:* I think the Inspector of Mines fixed the subsidy, and he is, I think, allowed to go up to 460 ft. at 5s. a foot, and after 460 ft. you get a further allowance.

*To Mr. Hudson:* As long as the subsidy is granted for genuine prospecting—to the satisfaction of the Inspector of Mines—I think it is a good thing to grant it to assist in the development of mining.

W. H. BOWATER examined.

I desire to say a few words in regard to timber. The timber output from this district is very small as compared with the output by our southern friends and from other districts in New Zealand. That is simply because they have better railway facilities. We have a very large amount of timber in this district, but most of it is lying idle awaiting the construction of a railway to bring it to port. The same railway that serves the coal will also serve the timber industry. I refer to the Gorge line, and ultimately we hope to connect with Karamea. In these districts there is a large amount of milling-timber, including a large quantity of beech, commonly known as birch. The latter timber is of very little use except for fencing-posts, rails, and so forth. It is stated that it is suitable for wood-pulp for papermaking. I think the Government should look into that matter and, if possible, establish the paper-making industry in this district. I know of no other place in New Zealand where there is such a large amount of this particular timber. The Nelson Provincial District contains large areas of it, and the greater portion of it lies in the Buller watershed. We request that the present duty on imported timber be maintained; also that the railage on imported timber should not be reduced. We have a large amount of unskilled labour, and we would suggest that it would assist to get over that difficulty if something were done in connection with the timber industry, and the same thing might be extended to other industries. Something in this connection might be included in the technical-school course. In the past our education has gone too much in the direction of turning out office-men. Scholarships might be established with the view of encouraging scientific work and research. This is done in America, and I think we might well take a leaf out of America's book in this respect. The next point is a very important one as far as millers are concerned, and that is the action of the Lands Department in taking certain roads over. We do not think that is quite a fair thing. We should have been paid for it. For instance, in our own case, we had to put in a road at our own expense. We also suggest that timber being a surface crop, where it is growing in the best land the Government should not expect the timber to be conserved for the future; but in the case of timber on the poorer lands I think it might well be conserved for future generations.

D. J. WILLIAMS, further examined.

I desire to say a few words in regard to agriculture. The farmers of this district are suffering under various hardships which the farmers in other districts do not suffer. The Buller County Council has done its best to assist the farmers. They took over some lime-works that were in private hands, and borrowed a sum of money; and the local body is selling lime to the farmers at £1 per ton. The farmers were paying £2 a ton prior to that. It is burnt caustic lime. We want the Committee to suggest to the Government that the farmers of this district are worthy of assistance. The climate is humid and the growth is phenomenal. In some areas the grass grows the whole year round—it is evergreen; but the growth of rushes, scrub, &c., is also phenomenal. The difficulty is to get a good burn. The farmer burns his land, sows his grass on it, and before he can clear it in any way it is covered with rushes, fern, and scrub, and his work is all in vain. The only solution is to bring the land immediately under the plough. In Canada the latest devices have been adopted for bringing lumber lands into cultivation. We suggest that the Government should purchase the necessary machines and hand them over to the Buller County, which will have an expert working them, and so assist the farmers to clear up the land. The work must be done after the milling-timber has been taken out and until the land is ready for the plough. The farmer should be charged a certain sum, spread over a specified period of years. Not much can be done here in that respect without assistance, and it is suggested that the Government should assist in this respect; and it is thought that handsome profits will be returned when our lands are cultivated and the district becomes self-supporting.

*To the Chairman:* The County Council would undertake the supervision of the machines.

ROBERT PATTERSON, Auctioneer, examined.

I represent the Crown tenants on the Nelson Land Board. The Under-Secretary of Lands was asked on the 29th November last to supply log-haulers to settlers, but so far the Board has not had a reply. I hope the Committee will see that the Department attends to the matter. The lands in the province are heavily wooded. The bulk of the timber is birch, which will not burn. There should be a log-hauler in each county, under the control of the Agricultural Department or of the County Council, and the settlers should have the free use of it. For every acre of ground cleared a return will be provided. The price of the haulers is £800 each. By using the hauler the cost of clearing is £3 per acre, as against £80 by hand. Land could then be brought under cultivation in two years, as compared at present with an average of twenty years.

*To Mr. Hornsby:* Brown-birch is not suitable for making paper. It might be used in place of hardwood, which is now imported. Brown-birch bark is used for tanning.