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## New Zealand R.S.A.

### Control of Timber.

An explanation of the manner in which the Government's timber control system is protecting the local market is given in a statement given by the Minister-in-Charge of regulations governing the export of certain varieties of building timber (Sir Francis Bell). He says that the export is controlled in such a manner that the limited permits do not reduce by one board or plank the maximum available for the New Zealand market. The latest increase (as from 1st July) in the price of timber was wholly due to an increase of wages at the mills.

The Board of Trade, says the Minister, has positive evidence that on the average the factor of wages is responsible for 70 per cent of cost of timber at the mill. Despite the increase which millers have been allowed to make by reason of increased cost of production the price of building timber on the New Zealand market to-day is very much less than the figures offered for export, so that a large saving is effected for the people of New Zealand by the agreement under which the millers are not able to take advantage of the world market. The prices fixed for New Zealand ports. At present it is impossible prices which could be obtained for export. The local prices are based strictly on the cost of production with only a reasonable profit for the millers.

When the regulations restricting export of building timber were gazetted, there was a fairly large export with Australia by certain mills. Action was immediately taken to reduce these mills' exportations and to prevent exportation by new mills. In the case of rimu the maximum quantity that could be exported during a year was definitely fixed by Order-in-Council, and provision was also made for a yearly reduction of that quantity so that mills which had formerly been doing a large export trade could gradually readjust their business. As new mills cannot complain of hardship by a sudden prohibition of all export trade, they are not allowed to begin exporting. The export of totara and heart matai has been absolutely prohibited. At no time since the quantities of certain timbers for export were fixed have the quantities so allotted amounted to the maximum stated in the Order-in-Council. Since 1st April no export of building timber whatever has been permitted except from the West Coast and the North of Auckland district. The export permits issued to these two districts are subject to the condition that full advantage must be taken of all shipping available for New Zealand ports. At present it is impossible to lift from these outlying mills the whole of their output for the New Zealand market, and if export was absolutely prohibited, such a bar would not put another stick of building timber on the local markets. The only effect would be to block the mill skids, and then the mills would have to cease operations, with a loss to employers and workers alike.

The Board of Trade, with the personal help of the Prime Minister, has been constantly endeavouring during the past years to obtain adequate shipping for supplies of building timber for the Dominion's many needs. The output of the mills was larger for the past year than it has ever been, and this big production could have been increased if sufficient labour had been available. Even with the increasing supply a shortage of timber continues, because the demand continues to be abnormal (far in excess of the production). However, by the operation of the new building resolutions it is hoped that the position, in regard to essential building, will be gradually improved, for the use of all timber is now subject to permit, and the Board of Trade is checking the diversion of timber to non-essential works at this stage.

#### COPY OF LETTER RECEIVED FROM THE BOARD OF TRADE.

Wellington, June 2nd., 1920.  
Dear Sir,—From the newspaper this morning the Board notes that a discussion took place at the meeting of your Association yesterday, and that a resolution was passed as follows:—  
"That in the opinion of this conference the present shortage of house property, the excessive prices thereof and the scarcity of building operations is largely the direct result of the wholesale exportation of building timber by most of the large timber corporations throughout New Zealand, and that the Government be urged to stop such exportation and to commandeer all available building material for the erection of homes."  
I am directed by the Board to draw your attention to the fact that on 19th

August, 1919, an Order-in-Council was gazetted prescribing the maximum quantities of rimu and kauri that might be exported from New Zealand during the prescribed periods, a percentage ultimately reducing export to a minimum. Under this Order-in-Council no timber can be exported without a permit being issued by the Board of Trade.

After considering the claims of the saw-milling industry to export, in conjunction with the requirements of the New Zealand market, the Board authorised the issue of permits in respect of rimu, for the period 1st July 1919, to 31st March 1920, amounting to 20,390,600ft., and in respect of kauri, for the period 1st October, 1919, to 31st March, 1920, amounting to 3,267,000ft. Complete returns now to hand of the extent to which these permits were operated show that the total quantity of rimu exported during the period above referred to was 8,503,000ft., and of kauri 384,000ft. The whole of this export has taken place from the West Coast of the South Island and North of Auckland mills. As showing the effect on the export trade of the control exercised by the Board, I quote the following figures in regard to the export of rimu and kauri during recent years:—

Year.	Rimu.	Kauri.
1916 ... ..	15,312,000	12,411,600
1917 ... ..	22,167,000	14,047,625
1918 ... ..	30,391,000	7,707,411
1919 ... ..	8,503,000 (9 months).	384,000 (5 months).

Notwithstanding this reduction in export, the output of timber from sawmills in New Zealand has been very materially increased, thus providing for the New Zealand market a much larger supply of building timber than has been available at any time in the history of the Dominion. All export permits issued hitherto have been subject to a reservation that they might be suspended by the Board at any time should any user of timber in the Dominion be unable to obtain a supply and be willing to avail himself of the timber destined for export.

The whole of the export of building timber at the present time is taking place from the West Coast of the South Island and from the North of Auckland province. The West Coast sawmills, if shipping were available, could place a large proportion of their output in Wellington and Christchurch, but the North of Auckland mills, especially Hokianga mills, are called upon to pay a very high rate of freight to the New Zealand market, and at the present time shipping from Hokianga to New Zealand ports is practically unobtainable. Should, however, the Board be able to arrange shipping from Hokianga to any New Zealand market, the timber produced in that district will become available for use in New Zealand. In fact, during the last few days arrangements have been made with the Public Works Department to place an order for a substantial amount of timber with the Hokianga mills, this being possible as arrangements could be made for the Government steamer to lift the timber.

The present abnormal demand for building timber in the North Island has resulted in the whole of the output of the Main Trunk mills being absorbed into the district between New Plymouth, Wanganni, Palmerston North, Napier, and Auckland, with the result that Wellington is almost entirely dependent on the West Coast of the South Island for its supplies. The difficulty here lies solely in the shortage of suitable shipping.

The statement reported as having been made by Mr Harper, one of the delegates to your Conference, is substantially correct as far as the position on the West Coast is concerned. All the shipping at present available from the West Coast for timber to New Zealand ports is being fully utilised, and should it be found possible to make further space for timber available, the West Coast sawmills will supply.

In regard to prices, the Board's accountants recently investigated the sawmiller's costs of production, and the Board has fixed prices for timber in New Zealand without taking into consideration the fact that much higher prices can be obtained by export. The prices are fixed purely on the basis of cost, to allow a reasonable return on the capital invested in the industry.

As illustrating the difficulties of the position, I am directed by the Board to point out that some of your members have recently acquired sawmilling areas on the West Coast of the South Island, and have commenced operations, and they naturally feel aggrieved at being compelled to

place their output on the New Zealand market at New Zealand prices when they could obtain a much higher price by export to Australia.

The position in regard to the shipping difficulty experienced arises from the fact that New Zealand is a coal importer from Australia, and timber, especially from the West Coast, provides suitable back loading for the coal boats. If this back loading were not available it is obvious the cost of carriage of coal would be considerably increased.

Considering all the circumstances of the case, it is difficult to see what more the Government could do to restrict export without inflicting considerable financial loss on the sawmilling industry, and probably causing unemployment. Although, as pointed out above, the production of timber has considerably increased in New Zealand, it has not yet reached its maximum on account of the fact that this industry along with others, is feeling the effects of the acute labour shortage. For instance, employment could be found for double the number of men in some districts.

You will see from the above that two facts are clearly deducible:—

1.—That the production of timber at present is greater than at any time in the Dominion's history.  
2.—That the export of building timber has practically ceased, except from Hokianga and the West Coast of the South Island, and that any further restriction of export could not result in making more building timber available for New Zealand unless more shipping could be provided.

The Right Hon. the Prime Minister, in a recent statement, made the information contained herein known to the public, but possibly this may not have come under the notice of the members of your Association.

—Yours faithfully,  
(Sgd.) J. W. COLLINS,  
Secretary.

#### WAR TROPHIES.

In addition to asking the loyal co-operation of all soldiers for transport publications for the public library, we are anxious to receive on behalf of the Southland War Museum a collection of trophies. It is very important that nothing be lost that will be in any way a war trophy. Southland soldiers have played an important part in the war and we must preserve, for the benefit of those who follow, something of a tangible character.

Every part of the Dominion is seeking a collection of trophies and we must not be behind. Numbers of articles which have been brought from the battle front are being lost sight of, and we would be glad to receive anything at all. Name and address must be sent, also full particulars of article, where found, stunt, etc. Articles can also be displayed in the museum and remain the property of the sender, but can we, as representing Southland soldiers, make a direct gift to the people. Trophies can be sent to "The Digger" office direct, box 310, Invercargill; or to Mr Crosby Smith, Athenaeum Buildings, Dee street, Invercargill.

#### MISSING.

23/2103 TURNBULL G. P.

The above-named left New Zealand with "E" Company, 10th Reinforcements, and returned to New Zealand by "Remuera," October 1919.

Any information regarding present whereabouts of the above-named will be gratefully received by his relatives. Reply to: General Secretary, N.Z.R.S.A. Wellington.

#### SOLDIERS!

The Invercargill Municipal Library are anxious to have a complete file of all publications on transports, or others published by the soldiers. It is fitting and in the interest of all concerned that this file should be obtained, and copies from soldiers will be greatly appreciated. All copies should be accompanied by the sender's full name and address, and will be acknowledged through the columns of "The Digger." We have undertaken to help the librarian in this matter and would appreciate the action of returned men in helping to bring it to a successful issue. Copies can be forwarded to "The Digger," Box 310, Invercargill, or to the Public Library direct.

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Oppenheim).

THE HOUSE OF DANGER (Ray  
Thrine).

GUILE (Heaton Hall).

THE LOST MR LINTHWAITE (J. S.  
Fletcher).

THE CAMP OF FEAR (Leslie Howard  
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