

SAWMILLING SECTION.

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Editor: W. T. IRVINE.

Referring to the report of the Conference of Crown Lands Commissioners with Sir Francis Bell, which was given in full in our last issue, we now reprint, particularly for the information of members at a distance, copy of the remarks made at an interview granted to a contemporary by the President of the Federation. In this he traverses the statements of Sir Francis, and shows amongst other things that outside markets have absorbed a large quantity of timber used for making rough boxes, which otherwise would probably never have been sawn up for our local markets, and that, for this and other reasons, it is uneconomical to restrict export. We must repeat that the restriction of export, together with limitation of price for home consumption, in times of peace is a hardship to our industry, which we have every reason to resent. Let the Government put any reasonable restrictions on new sawmilling areas within their jurisdiction, but where millers have acquired their rights either from the Crown or otherwise without restriction, and when war conditions do not obtain, they have no right to interfere and single out our industry for special treatment and regulation, and we must continue to fight for our rights.

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At the Farmers' Union Conference, held in Wellington recently, a dominant note was sounded protesting against any limitation of export of their products, and the removal of all restrictions now the war has ended, and we cannot see why the principle should not apply to timber. The Conference also claimed that the butter equalisation scheme should not be borne by the industry, but that any loss sustained through limitation of price for home consumption as compared with that obtainable for export, should be a charge on the consolidated fund. If the principle is held to be a good one in the case of dairy produce, why not again in the case of timber? Farmers are well organised and it would appear they intend to run the next election and bring forward candidates in their especial interest. It would, therefore, be only fitting if the timber industry awoke to its interests more completely and induced some of their number within the country sawmilling districts to take up the cudgels and bid for a seat in the House of Representatives, so as to obtain a reasonable hearing in all questions affecting them.

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The housing problem appears to become more acute daily, and one hears of considerable premiums being offered to agents to secure houses for

clients. If it be true that 7000 soldiers have married abroad, it is clear that housing accommodation will be required for them on their return. The shortage appears to be general throughout New Zealand and houses are being sold by the owners over the heads of the tenants in possession, the result being that the latter are in some cases being sued to give up the tenancy and cannot do so because they have nowhere to go. The problem will have to be faced by Municipalities and the Government, and we notice the Hon. G. W. Russell states that £5,000,000 can be found for the adequate housing of the people. If the recommendations of the Town Planning and Housing Conference are carried out builders have a busy time ahead of them.

Timber Supplies and Restriction of Export.

Replies to Statement by Sir Francis Bell.

A statement was issued recently by Sir Francis Bell, the Minister-in-Charge of the Forestry Department, concerning the conservation of the timber supplies of the Dominion. For some days a conference of timber millers has been in progress in Wellington, and recently the chairman of the Conference, Mr Butler, gave the "Times" an interview covering a number of the points mentioned in the Minister's statement.

"With respect to the restriction of exportation," said Mr Butler, "there are good grounds for believing that the restriction recently proposed by Australia on the exportation of coal is to some extent a retaliatory measure. Although it may be contended that there is ample room in New Zealand for the profitable conduct of the industry without the aid of foreign markets, it is a notable fact that the foreign markets that have been developed have to a very large extent absorbed a class of timber that could not be placed on the New Zealand markets. In the case of the West Coast bushes this is very noticeable, and it is a fact that the output per acre has increased to such an extent as to recompense any excess of wastage of New Zealand forest asset that it may have been claimed has occurred through exportations. This has been confirmed by official reports of the rangers. The chief aim of a progressive forestry policy should be to utilise the whole of the forest products.

"As to the assertion that the high prices obtained for our woods outside New Zealand had inflated their price within New Zealand, it should be borne