

cleared adds an acre for grass land. It is true much low land only gives rough feed, but in the aggregate, thousands of cattle are now being raised on land which a few years ago was covered with standing bush. The sawmiller is the pioneer of the settler and as almost all the river bed lands are now grassed, expansion of grass lands is almost confined to land from which the timber has been cleared.

It must not be forgotten that in restricting the sale of timber cut off private land, the legislation is inflicting a grave injustice on this part of the Dominion. The North Island settler cut down some of the finest totara forests forty years ago, and burned this splendid timber in order to clear his land. He had the use and benefit of it all these years while those who have saved the timber have been waiting for a fair market. These latter have themselves now penalised for the benefit of those very settlers who years ago cut down their forest bank, and turned the land of forest into pastures. It is all very fine for them to squeak, but it is very unfair.

Mr. B. Ward said he heard the paper read with pleasure. It was an able one, but that did not surprise him when he knew the writer. Dealing with the regulations he expressed his inability to understand the reason why the restrictions had been made, whereby the settler was not allowed to sell the timber on his land, even if it were freehold. It seemed to him the limit of madness to prevent the sale of timber off the lands. It was inexplicable to him why the regulations had been introduced. He felt that they should not interfere with the industry in the manner that would result from the introduction of these restrictions.

Hon. H. L. Michel said he understood that the position was the outcome of the difficulty of the Department in arriving at the question of the payment of royalty on timber lands, owned by the Crown. He congratulated Mr. Murdoch on his able paper.

Mr. Gardiner Wilson gave instances of how he was removing red-pine off his farm, stating he was having a great difficulty with the government officers in the matter.

Mr. Murdoch, speaking in acknowledgment, referred at some length to the paper and the dangers arising to the industry, if the recent restrictive regulations were continued.

Milling Industry.

The New Regulations.

Commissioner of Forestry Criticised.

A representative of the West Coast sawmilling organisation, states that a recent article of the "Post" (commenting on the objections of the Westland County Council to the forestry policy of the Government) has been quoted in the "Greymouth Evening Star" and other papers. Therefore the "Post" has been requested to grant space for the following

explanation of the position of the milling industry in some districts, as affected by the new regulations:

"Restriction of Industry."

"The objections of the Westland County Council, as stated in the Post, were on three main grounds. With objection No. 1, Restriction of Settlement, and objection No. 3 Reduction of Revenue, the sawmillers are not concerned; but in the matter of objection No. 2 Restriction of Industry, they are vitally interested. It was only when Sir F. D. Bell visited the district (in the West Coast) the other day that he disclosed the full extent of his designs to strangle the milling industry; and it may be said at once that the sawmillers cannot believe that the policy of confiscation so brazenly advocated by the Commissioner of Forests at Hokitika is the considered policy of the Government.

"The Minister stated in the plainest terms that any fresh grant of a sawmill license, whether in exchange for a certificate of reservation or otherwise, would carry a condition absolutely prohibiting the export of rimu beyond the Dominion. To understand what this amounts to, one must explain the conditions on which milling bush is held under the Warden's Court, nearly all the milling bush being in mining districts, and held under this tenure. A sawmiller, on application, is granted a sawmill license up to 400 acres. On this he pays an annual rent of 1s per acre, merging in the royalty when he commences operations. He can also have reserved for him, on payment of an annual rent of 1s per acre (not merging in royalty), areas, not exceeding 400 acres each, up to a total of 1600 acres. When his sawmill license is cut out, he can exchange the title of one of these reserved areas for a sawmill license, and may take up a fresh reserved area, if such is available. It will be seen that the total maximum area which the miller may hold at any one time is 2000 acres, including the reserved areas.

Cost of Plant.

"Now, whatever the legal position may be, it has always been taken for granted that the miller possessed a right to convert his reserved areas in succession into sawmill licenses, without any new conditions attaching other than a possible increase of royalty. The reason for this assumption is evident. No prudent man would enter into the difficult and uncertain business of sawmilling unless he had in sight, as the very first condition, enough bush to ensure for his mill a life long enough to provide for the necessary sinking fund on his capital expenditure, and a reasonable interest return. The average present-day mill on the West Coast, built on the strength of a 2000-acre holding, at pre-war prices, costs from £2500 to £3000 to erect and equip. The mill-owner who can work his bush with a tram anything less than eight miles in length is lucky, and the average is more than this. But at eight miles the tramway cost, at pre-war prices, £1200 a mile, or, say, £10,000. This is a total expenditure of £13,000 for an average mill. These figures are