

SAWMILLING SECTION.

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Editor: W. T. IRVINE.

The Annual General Meeting of the Federation was held at the Accountants' Chambers, Wellington, on the 14th July, when a fairly representative attendance of members was present from districts as wide apart as Totara North, Whangaroa, and Invercargill. In moving the adoption of the Report and Balance Sheet, the President (Mr. W. J. Butler) reviewed the work of the Federation from its inception when it was first assailed by the Dairy Industry in connection with the export of white pine, further inquiry being afterwards handed over to the Efficiency Board. Then came the assistance given the Board of Trade in framing regulations for the conduct of the industry, which although not approved by the Minister-in-charge, in their entirety, subsequently formed the basis and ground-work of the Regulations as they exist to-day. The agitation and denunciation of the sawmiller by the dairy industry has proved to be groundless, but had it not been for the fight put up by the Federation at the time, it is more than probable the export of white pine would have been unnecessarily restricted, if not ruled out entirely. The adoption of the Report and Balance Sheet was carried unanimously and the following officers were appointed for the ensuing year, viz.:—Mr W. J. Butler, Hokitika (President, re-elected); Mr H. Valder, Hamilton (Vice-President, re-elected); Mr L. M. Lane (North Auckland), Mr Jos. Butler (Auckland), Mr G. A. Gamman (Ohakune and Taumarunui), Mr S. M. Stone (Rangitikei), Mr J. D. Smith (Gisborne and East Coast), Mr D. Tennent (West Coast), and Mr J. K. Campbell (Southland and Otago).

A further agitation for the removal of the duty on the importation of oregon has arisen, and a question has been asked in the House of Representatives by Mr Harris (Waitemata) having this for its object. Inquiry was then set on foot by the Minister for Customs, through the usual channels, and a deputation from the Federation waited upon the Comptroller of Customs to explain the position from our point of view. It was held that owing to the high price of oregon as compared with our building timbers, and to the fact that the timber was not used in the erection of dwellings, but principally for larger buildings such as warehouses, picture theatres, and motor garages in the long lengths these require, the remission of duty would be of no assistance in relieving the housing problem, and the remission if granted would probably mean an additional profit to the importer. The present price of oregon say 60/- per 100ft makes it prohibitive for ordinary building when compared with rimu at 30/- to 40/- according to grade and quality.

We regret to chronicle the death of Mr E. A. Wickes which took place at Greymouth on the 29th July. A prominent figure in Sawmilling circles and one who took a lively part in the building up of the export trade to Australia, when local markets were glutted, his genial presence will be greatly missed by a large circle of friends on the Coast, and we extend to these and his relatives our heartfelt sympathy in their loss.

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The new award for the Wellington Country Sawmills situated within the Industrial Districts, and approved by the Conciliation Council come up for ratification by the Arbitration Court at a sitting held on the 2nd August, when Mr Grayndler, representing the King Country Union of Sawmill Workers, appeared to oppose the application on the grounds that he represented about 1000 workers along the Main Trunk line who had not been consulted, nor had an opportunity to discuss its provisions. Mr. Reed, the Secretary of the Wellington Timber Workers' Union took exception to the Court granting a hearing to a Union which was not registered under the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, and quoted an earlier judgment of the Court in support of his contention that the present case was exactly on all fours. After hearing argument on both sides the Court decided it could only take cognisance of Unions registered under the Arbitration Act and that an Award would be granted in terms of the agreement entered into between the Wellington Timber Workers' Union and the employers.

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In the light of the restrictions and regulations to which the Timber Industry is subjected, the following remarks made by Mr Nosworthy in the debate on the Financial Statement are of interest. "A part of the expenditure of the Government recently, had taken the form of subsidies on wheat and butter and he disapproved of this arrangement, believing the time had come to say that the people must pay the value of the articles they bought. Production was essential to the prosperity of New Zealand, and the proper basis of local prices, as well as of export prices was the market value."

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By the Test of war and reconstruction, forestry stands supremely justified. Without it the timber trade and wood-working industries would cease to exist. Its practice is necessary, and now more than ever profitable.