

received was to the effect that their information was confidential and would be given the Board of Trade only. Thereupon the Federation moved the Board to apply for same, but so far we are unaware of the result. The allegations are of course not capable of being substantiated, but in the meantime statements of the kind circulated through the Press Association are calculated to do a deal of injury before they can be overtaken and contradicted.

We have been notified of the registration of the King Country Sawmill and Timber Workers' Union of Workers, and of a demand they make for increased wages and new conditions of employment. Amongst these are Preference to Unionists, no reduction of wages now being paid over Award rates, no Asiatic labour, house rent free, employers to supply all tools, travelling time to be allowed one way from nearest accommodation, 47 hours a week with time and a half for overtime, etc. Individual sawmillers have been circularised and asked to meet the secretary and representatives of the Union, but as all reasonable grievances have been satisfactorily settled by employers as they arose, and probably higher wages are being paid than any Award would allow, sawmillers are of opinion generally that the constitutional course of making application to the Conciliation Board must take place, if they wish to seek an Award.

### The Timber Trades Outlook.

One does not need to possess an inside knowledge of the timber trade in Australia to come to the conclusion that in certain important lines the supplies are short, and the profits are correspondingly good. Builders and other consumers know to their sorrow that anything "soft" is saleable in Sydney to-day at almost any price the holder likes to ask. It is a case of take what you can get. Australian forests cannot supply the deficiency because past administrations paid no heed to future requirements. America and Canada do not just now court the Australian markets, because shipping is scarce and Europe provides a more profitable field for exploitation under conditions of after-war reconstruction.

Australia is, therefore, in a somewhat parlous condition. To some extent the demand for soft woods might be met by the use of the valuable brush wood to be found in various parts of the Commonwealth, but meeting the demand to-day would mean worse misfortune in years to come, because it would entail further depletion of the not-too-plentiful forests. But soft wood timber of unexcelled quality is available in somewhat limited quantities, and the existing shortage should be the occasion for popularizing its use in preference to perpetuating the call for imports from across the Pacific. Take the case of timber required in the butter trade, and it is a by no means inconsiderable quantity. It has become a recognised custom to make butter boxes from New Zealand pine, but New Zealand is not so keen now as it used to be about exporting its softwoods for this purpose, and the butter factories are faced with

difficulties. There are prejudices against the use of New South Wales timbers, but the objections have been proved to be only prejudice. And so it is in other lines.

Such antipathy as there is in the Commonwealth to the use of Australian timbers must be overcome. This great island continent is quite capable of being made self-dependent for timber, as it is for many other requirements which we now purchase from foreigners; but if we are to derive the proper benefit from the forests there must be proper management. Probably if the timber merchants were given a free hand to-day they would cut sufficient soft woods locally to meet the heavy call upon the market, and they would find the business a paying one—they would quickly create a demand for the Australian article. But they would leave future generations in a worse state than they themselves and the general public are to-day. Therefore a strict policy of forest conservation and observance of the most scientific principles and practices of silviculture must be closely adhered to. It is a terrible indictment of Australian forestry as it used to be, that the building of war-service homes should be dependent upon the importation of many millions of feet of Canadian and American soft wood timber; but should a similar demand arise twenty-five years hence, the position will not be any better unless Australian Forestry Commissioners and Conservators are permitted to manage the forests without political interference, and, in the reverse, with a keen regard for future needs. The soft wood problem is a big one for Australian foresters; but it is not too big for them if they are permitted to carry out the Acts under which they hold office.

### The Seasoning of Wood.

Practically all wood, before being put into use, is either seasoned in the air or dried in a kiln. The main objects of seasoning are to increase the durability of the wood in service, to prevent it from shrinking and cracking, to increase its strength and stiffness, to prevent it from staining, and to decrease its weight. The sooner wood is seasoned after being cut the less is the chance that it will be injured by insects which attack unseasoned wood, or decay before the time comes to use it. Wood that is to be treated with preservatives needs in nearly all cases to be seasoned as much as wood that is to be used in a natural state.

Wood has a complicated structure. The walls of the cells of which it is made up shrink and harden when moisture is removed from them, and, unless timber that is to be air-seasoned is piled in the right way, or conditions in the dry kiln are maintained in accordance with certain well-defined physical laws, the material is likely to warp and crack, or in some way to be damaged seriously. Until recently proper methods of seasoning received comparatively little attention from manufacturers, and large losses, especially among woods that are difficult to dry, were the rule. Sometimes as much a 20 per cent or 25 per cent of the seasoned lumber was rendered unfit