

dearer timber all round in the future. Attention was also drawn to the fact that the importation of timber meant money going out of the country, whereas every penny was required within the Dominion at the present time to cope with our internal financial difficulties and unemployment.

Mr. A. Entrican, engineer to the State Forest Service, endorsed Mr. Seed's remarks regarding the amount of timber available for fruit cases. He also expressed grave doubts as to the possibility of distributing boxes from America to compete with local supplies, even buying at present low prices, which are considerably below the cost of production. It was desirous that a meeting should be arranged between the Fruitgrowers' and Sawmillers' Federations, as the Forest Service was certain that with the co-ordination and pooling of the fruit-growers' demands, a satisfactory solution of the problem could be found. Mr. Entrican stressed the matter as being a vital one in the economic utilisation of our forest resources.—*Dominion*.

### Building Material Shortage in N.Z.

A late session of the Builders' Congress of New Zealand, held at Christchurch, took up the question of scarcity of building materials in this Dominion. Note was made of the marked shortage of lumber, cement and builders' hardware that was seriously restricting construction work in general, and especially the erection of suitable homes. No way seemed open to accomplish much towards relieving the immediate shortage.

Owing to these disabilities, contractors in general have found it quite impossible to offer bids for construction work on any other basis than that the owners should pay the cost price plus 10 per cent. as contractors' commission. This, of course, was found very unsatisfactory and expensive in many cases, for the reason that it was to the interest of the contractor to make the building cost as much as possible.—(From the *Journal of the British Empire Chamber of Commerce in U.S.A.*, Feb. 1921.)

### Timber for Butter Boxes.

#### EXPERIMENTS IN AUSTRALIA.

Experiments that he had made for the manufacture of butter-boxes from Victorian timber was the subject of the remarks by Dr. T. Cherry, formerly Professor of Agriculture at the Melbourne University, when addressing members of the 28th Annual Conference of the Australasian Butter and Factory Managers and Secretaries' Association.

He said that it was well known that the price of butter-boxes had been increasing. Substitutes which had been tried were not successful, and much money had been spent to overcome the tainting of the butter when certain timbers were used for box construction. He had commenced his experiments with *pinus insignis*, and had overcome this obstacle

by a process of steaming the wood and applying a coating of paraffin inside the box. When the butter was examined six weeks after being placed in the box no odour or flavour was perceptible. Dr. Cherry therefore contended that it was safe to use the timber under his treatment.

Mr. R. Crowe (Superintendent of Exports), said, that he had seen boxes used for packing butter that were unsuitable. Strong, untainted boxes should be used to prevent the export butter trade from falling into disrepute.—*Nelson Mail*.

### Suspension of Duties on Lumber Imports Urged.

The Builders' Congress passed a resolution to be sent to the Government urging that Customs duties on imported lumber be suspended for a certain period, and that the railway rates on foreign lumber be the same as on local lumber. This is a question that has been under discussion in the past with the New Zealand Government, as importers of lumber have found themselves greatly handicapped owing to the excess railway rates on imported lumber.

Resolutions were also passed urging the New Zealand Government to assist as far as possible in securing supplies, especially cement, since local production for the season is said to have been about 56,000 sacks short of normal.

The above paragraph might have had some little foundation in fact had it been published a year ago, but the position is now very much the reverse of what it portrays as ruling in this country. About the time it was published, in March last, we saw a sudden and most surprising reversal of the position regarding cement; a leap from scarcity to overabundance within a few weeks, and the excess in supply very quickly resulted in the closing down of at least one of our large cement works. To-day the same position has been reached in regard to timber, and already some eight mills have been closed down on the West Coast owing to scarcity of orders, and others in various parts of the country will quickly have to follow suit, thus throwing out of employment a very large number of men. The paragraph quoted is but on a par with the erroneous views that appear to be held almost generally regarding the timber position at the present time. What is wanted now is for the press generally to use every opportunity to create an atmosphere of confidence and thus assist the stabilisation of our industries.

Apropos of the timber industry at large it has been something of a pleasant fiction that we in New Zealand, and on the West Coast in particular, occupied an impregnable position regarding the certain flourishing future of the great timber industry we are destined to enjoy. However, New Zealand is not the only country with vast timber resources. We are feeling the pinch by the surplus