

# Sawmilling Section.

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With a view to pointing out the erroneous ideas which are held generally regarding the Timber Industry at the present time and which are given expression to constantly in the public Press, we inserted in our last issue an extract from *The Journal of the British Empire Chamber of Commerce in U.S.A.*, but unfortunately the extract in question was published in two parts, under the separate headings: "Building Material Shortage in New Zealand," and "Suspension of Duties on Lumber Imports Urged." The extract should have read continuously under the former heading, and our comments under the latter of course referred to the whole.

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At the recent meeting of the Dominion Federated Sawmillers' Association the Secretary, Mr. W. T. Irvine, was granted further leave on account of ill-health, and on July 28th, accompanied by Mrs. Irvine, he sailed by the Manuka for Sydney. He carries the good wishes of his many Sawmiller friends, and it is to be hoped that the warmer climate he is seeking will completely restore his health.

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Some interesting statements regarding the increases in cost of building in Wellington's suburban areas were made by the District Valuer of the Valuation Department (Mr. F. Martin) before the Assessment Court in Wellington recently. Speaking on building costs he said that in 1905, taking the average five-roomed house, the cost per square foot of floor space was 6s. 6d. In 1906 that price was increased to 6s. 8d., and in 1907 it was 6s. 10d. From July, 1907, until 1908 there was a slight slump in the Dominion, as well as in other parts of the world, and the price dropped to 6s. 4d. The price rose to 6s. 7d. in 1909, and increased as follows in the subsequent years:—1910, to 7s.; 1911, 7s. 2d.; 1912, 7s. 6d.; 1913, 7s. 9d.; 1914, 8s. 6d.; 1915, 10s.; 1916, 11s. 3d.; 1917, 14s. 6d.; 1918, 16s. 6d.; 1919, 17s. 6d.; 1920, to 20s. The same type of building at the present day cost from 20s. to 22s. 6d. per square foot of floor space for the best class of building material. The valuing system employed by the Department was based on a sliding scale, varying from 15s. to 20s. per square foot, according to the type of building material used. "I think the cost of building will come down," said Mr. Martin at a later stage of the proceedings. We hope shortly to publish figures giving the exact proportion that the cost of timber used bears to the total cost of the completed dwelling, and it will be interesting to see how much of the above cost of 20s. or 22s. 6d. per square foot of floor space that timber accounts for.

The Timber Industry in the Auckland District is reported to be still in a flourishing state with demand keeping up to supply, and the mills along the Main Trunk are still busy, though there are indications here of a slackening off in demand. On the West Coast, however, conditions continue to grow worse, and many mills are closed down for lack of orders; the same may also be said in regard to Southland. A report just to hand from the latter district indicates that trade is very bad, with no signs of improvement for some months to come. This difference in conditions between North and South may be largely accounted for by the fact that the Auckland Province still continues to receive good prices for its big butter export, whereas the South Island is more dependent upon wool; also that the mills on the West Coast and Southland—to a greater extent than those in the North—were dependent upon the export trade to Australia, which has now practically ceased.

## Value of the Forestry Department.

VIEWS OF FARMERS' UNION PRESIDENT.

Some observations upon Forestry were made by the President of the New Zealand Farmers' Union (Mr. G. W. Leadley) in his address to the recent Conference of the Union. Earlier in his address, Mr. Leadley had condemned the multiplication of State Departments. "I would exclude from the sentiments then expressed the Department of Forestry," he said. "I do not think there is any inconsistency in this, because, honestly, I do believe that this Department is needed and is calculated to be of immense benefit to the country.

"For fifty-eight years I have lived on the great Canterbury Plain. In my youth and early manhood I was familiar with its vast treeless, objectless expanse, I have seen it emerge from that condition and gradually assume its present form, and I know and appreciate the difference. I can understand why it was that the Koran commends to the especial favour of Heaven the man who plants a tree. I am fixed in this opinion that the Department of Forestry is necessary, and will, under proper and efficient direction, and with adequate support, be one of our most useful and profitable ventures.

"We may sometimes learn from our enemies. The other day in a work on this subject I read that before the war Germany had 25 per cent. of its total area under State forests, that 400,000 persons were employed in connection with them, and that