

hands of men who had nothing to do with the production of it. This happened about two years ago, and for that same gum I could receive £7 10s. instead of the £4 15s. I know of an instance of a piece of land not far from here which I might have leased for £15 a year six years ago, containing about 200 or 300 acres of gum-land, and from this land gum to the value of at least £8,000 to £10,000 has been removed during that time. That field was supposed to be exhausted when the lease was offered to me. A few men are digging there now, and some of them are doing well, and I am of opinion that it will last for many years to come. The reason is that the gum is found in layers, and the earlier diggers did not sink below the first layer; and so we have two or three layers undisturbed. In some instances gum is often found at the trunks of and at the roots of kauri-trees under the surface of the ground, and sometimes at very great depths. A digger can live well on 8s. to 10s. a week on this field, and I believe that, as regards prices charged for stores, gum-diggers are treated better in the Waipu district than on most gum-fields. Giving an instance, the diggers were charged 3½d. for sugar here when on the other fields they were paying 5d. Potatoes are dear now, and could not be supplied to the digger under 10s. a hundredweight; tea is 2s.; candles, 6d. to 8d. For fresh mutton and beef I charge 4d. a pound; tinned meat, 1s. 1d. the 2lb. tin. I am of opinion that it would be of immense benefit to all concerned if it could be arranged that the Government should control the sale of the gum in the London and New York market, by the appointment of agents, so as to insure a steady and fair return for this product. I think the only way of preventing the Austrians flooding the country would be by a poll-tax, such as is levied on the Chinamen; but, still, I recognise the difficulty of dealing with the subjects of a friendly Power, and at the same time I have nothing to say against the Austrians personally.

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WAIPU, 29TH JANUARY, 1898.

*Nicolas Seutch*: I am a telegraph lineman, stationed at Waipu. I was born at Fiuma, in Lower Austria. I left my native country for the last time in 1861. I came from India to New Zealand, through Australia. I came here in 1864. I landed in Auckland in the same ship as the 60th Regiment. After various travels through New Zealand, in 1879 I was employed by the Telegraph Department, and have been permanently stationed here for the last seventeen years. It is difficult to arrive exactly at the causes which led to the influx of my countrymen. As far as I know, there is a person out here of the name of Paul Lopez (I am speaking of eighteen years ago); he was gum-digging at Dargaville, and made a little money. He went home to Austria, got married there, and brought his wife back to New Zealand with him, and also some of his relatives, and since then it seems to me that, by him giving them the idea that money could be made in the country at gum-digging, they have been advancing money to each other to come out. About seven years ago several of my countrymen were partners in a sweepstake, and the amount of the share which they drew amounted to £800 each. On the news of this reaching their relatives in Austria it further excited their desire to come out. They received an idea that New Zealand was a place where money was plentiful, and that it was a free country, where they could live an independent life, and be treated well by the colonists. Some of the younger ones objected to the military service, and that acted as an inducement for them to emigrate to New Zealand. I never heard that there were any companies or banks in Austria which were willing to advance money to these men to come here. I believe that some have received the money for their passages by the mortgage of their small places at Home, or, perhaps, on the security of their relatives, which would be the same thing; but I never heard that they came out under contract. I have had many conversations with these people, but never heard of anything of the kind. Most of them are brought up as practical workmen of some kind, either working amongst the olives or vines, or as stonemasons, or fishermen. In Austria, of late years, the crops have failed considerably with disease in the vines, and money has been exceedingly scarce; therefore it became necessary for some of them to go abroad and get money, in order to remit it Home to enable the others to exist through the bad times, and so try to recover their condition. I do not think the married people would be likely to settle in the country; in fact, it is only the single men who I think could be induced to do so, because the married ones have strong home ties; they love their country, and wish to be buried near the graves of their forefathers. It would be difficult to induce them to break up their homes and bring their families to a new country. There is, moreover, the difficulty as to the cost of the passages of a family. But the younger men have no idea of going Home if they possibly can help it; they would settle in New Zealand if the Government would offer them inducement to do so. I would strongly advise that the matter should be carried out in such a way as to satisfy them that it is the Government who is dealing with them, and not intermediary agents, as they, not understanding the language, would be rather afraid to enter into any arrangement with any one else but the Government. If they were made acquainted with the land-laws in an official way, and if some land could specially be set apart for them to start Austrian settlements, I believe it would be found that all these people would make very good settlers—that they would readily embrace the opportunity to settle. As far as I know, when the Austrians receive a little money, they send it on to their homes to give their friends and relatives an opportunity to come out and participate with them in the prospects of making a little money on the gumfields. This to a great extent will account for the influx of the Austrians during the last two years. Failure of the crops last year has been extremely severe, owing to the great heat. I admit that there is reason for grumbling amongst some of the British gum-diggers: the Austrians come here, they work hard, they thoroughly clear out the gum as they go, and then they go away leaving nothing to be gleaned after them by the digger or settlers, who in former times were always able to get a little gum to help them along; but so long as digging