

John Sellwood: I am a settler, on freehold (441 acres), in the Parish of Mangawhai, and have 304 acres of leasehold from the Government. I have been here ten years. The Austrians first began to bother me last September. I have often shown them my boundaries; they know them perfectly well. They come in and dig gum from my property. When I have warned them off one part of my ground I come back and find them on another part. They are taking my property. They may as well come into my garden and take my potatoes. I was not one of the settlers who signed the petition complaining to the Government. I heard a great many complaints from the other settlers about them trespassing on their property. We had a meeting last November to see if a tax could not be put on diggers, so as to have something to spend on the roads. We thought 10s. would be enough. It is the gum traffic that cuts the roads up more than anything else. There is an elderly digger on my property who has a wife and several children; he did not know where to get gum. I allowed him to dig here. The Austrians undermine the ground like rabbits; they clear it right out, and pitch it about in every direction. The settlers do not sell much to the diggers, as the diggers get everything from the storekeepers. I only make enough butter for my own use. There is no Road Board; the County Council is the only local body here. The rates are $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the pound, and a special rate of $\frac{3}{4}$ d.: total, 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. The settlers paid last year £180 towards hospital and charitable aid, and not a settler in the county benefited by it. My only complaint against the Austrians is that they encroach on my own ground. I think the settlers have the greatest right to the gum on Crown lands, as they are making a home in the district.

John Billich: I am a Dalmatian, and was a farmer there. I left Dalmatia ten years ago. I went to Australia first. I have been in New Zealand six years. I went straight to the gum-fields. I was working on the Wairoa side first—at Mitchelson's, at Mangawhare. Austrians work in camps of fifties and sixties. Every man works for himself, and on occasions they work together. We worked in the swamps, but did not systematically drain them. We made a few shillings above our living. I did not see anything about the gum-fields of New Zealand in the Austrian papers. The Austrian papers did not (in my time) encourage emigration to New Zealand. There are a great many Austrians on the fields now not making tucker. The reason the Austrians come here is because one of us makes a little money, and he does not put it in the bank; he sends it Home to his people, who are sometimes in great want of money. Then, others at Home, hearing that a digger in New Zealand has sent Home £10 or £20, thinks that New Zealand must be a good place. He says, "I will go there and get some money too." I have never heard that any Austrians came to New Zealand under contract, and I believe that if such a state of things had existed I would have heard about it. At the time I was at Mitchelson's I heard people say that such was the case, but I never could obtain any proof from any of my countrymen that it was so. In the case of any of my countrymen who have not got money to emigrate to New Zealand, they generally apply to some one at Home who can advance the money, and, if they are known to be respectable and reliable, the money is advanced on condition of their paying the capital back again and interest for it. I have never heard that several Austrians borrowed money and came out together, one of their number having to look after the money and see that it was sent back again to Austria to the money-lender; but the fact is that when ten or twenty men are together, and one can speak English well, the others naturally look to him to be their guide—to advise them where to go and what to do, and so that man frequently comes to be looked upon as a boss of that party. I think if the Government were to reserve a block or blocks of good land for the Austrians they would, many of them, become settlers, and perhaps introduce the vine and olive, &c. Of course, the older people, and especially the married ones, would, as a rule, return to their own country. The majority of the young men are unmarried in this district. Most of the men come from Dalmatia. There are no Albanians amongst them, but there are a few from Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Croatia. I have not seen any Turks amongst them. Most of them have been sailors and farmers. It costs from 5s. to 6s. a week to live in Austria. It is nearly three times as expensive to live here as at Home. They average 10s. a week for tucker. I deliver the tucker myself, so that I ought to know. There are very few drinking-men among them. The average earnings are about £1 a week above tucker. Most of them send three-fourths of their savings Home. There are a number of young men who do not send their money Home at all. They put it in the bank; and I know several of them who have from £500 to £600 in the bank. Those that come out very young escape military service, but if they return to the Home country they will be drafted in, if fit for service. Any of the young men who have left Home after signing any of the military papers and return to Dalmatia again will be punished, in addition to having to serve in the army. Those who have left before twenty-one years of age, and who return to Dalmatia again when they have reached middle age, will, in most cases, not be drafted into the military service.

Francis Shannon: I have a freehold at Te Arai of 240 acres. I was born in the country, and have always lived here. I am practically acquainted with the gum industry. The principal thing I would draw your attention to is that there is a very large district here, situated back from the port eight or nine miles. The road for about four miles passes through gum-land, which supports from fifty to three hundred and fifty diggers. That land contributes nothing towards the local revenue, and the traffic is very considerable from the gum trade, from which there is no return. I think a license-fee of £1 a head should be enforced, and the proceeds spent on the road. The Austrians seem to be a hard-working, industrious people. Settlers complain about the Austrians trespassing on their private property, but I consider they are no worse than the Britishers are in that respect. I have had Britishers trespassing on my own property when it was known that I was away. I consider the large influx of the Austrians, who divert a considerable proportion of the money they obtain from the gumfields to their Home country, a decided evil, which requires remedying in some way or other. A stop should be put to this influx.