

one) were Austrians. One of these came to Auckland with a letter of introduction from my brother to me, as he could not write or speak English, with a request that I should accompany him to the Bank of New Zealand to arrange for the transmission of a sum of money—nearly £1,000—home to his friends. I believe that to be the sole cause that has stimulated the immigration, as there were others of the ten concerned who also sent money home. I have talked to several storekeepers about the Austrians, and they all give them a good character as being law-abiding, industrious, and good diggers; also good customers to the stores. I am informed by my brother that the average cost of living amongst them is 9s. to 12s. a week, and that they are not flush of money on their first arrival, and, being very averse to getting into debt, they live very frugally until they can sell some gum, after which they live as well as any one else. I believe they do not spend much money in liquor. I do not think they come here with the intention of settling; they do not bring their wives and children. There have been a certain number of that nationality digging gum for ten or twelve years; they were probably runaway sailors in the first place. Notwithstanding the influx, and the increase of the price of gum during the last six months, the production of gum has not increased. I wish to bring under the notice of the Commission two advertisements in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of the 18th and 20th March, 1893, asking in the one case for twenty men, and in the other for ten, to make up a party to work on the New Zealand gumfields, and the address was to the New Zealand Labour Agency, 19, Macquarie Place, Sydney. These advertisements were referred to in a Sydney and an Auckland paper, and it was insinuated that the gumfields on which these men were to work were on the land of a member of the House of Representatives. Myself and all my friends considered that I was the person alluded to, being the only member interested in gumfields. In consequence of this I took steps, through my Sydney agent, to have the matter investigated. A detective was employed, who discovered that the advertisements were the work of two swindlers, who proposed to cheat the persons applying to be taken, by getting an advance of money which would give the swindlers £1 4s. 6d. profit. The documents which I now hand in will show that the so-called New Zealand Labour Agency in Sydney was only eight days in existence, and was simply a swindle. They will also show in more detail the results arrived at by the detective. The price paid for gum at our stores can be ascertained on the spot, but the amount of money paid away must be considerable, judging from the amount sent to the stores which does not come back again. It is a condition that the men get their stores at our places. We do not give credit except in cases where the men have no money to buy stores. We prefer to pay ready money for gum, and to receive ready money for stores. I do not think there is anything that can be called truck on the fields. We are obliged to give credit in some cases, or allow the men to starve, when they have not got a penny. There are many men of British race who have large savings; there are two or three men who have some thousands of pounds in the banks. I am not aware of any cases of men digging for wages. Of our leases, the Opanake Block is good land, but of the rest I should think there is not more than 5,000 acres out of the 44,000 that would be good for settlement. The Government have some good blocks adjoining. I think a good many of the gum-diggers would be very glad to take up land if blocks were set aside for them. Many have their wives and children with them. On the other hand, a great number would never settle in any circumstances. The want of roads is a great difficulty. There is land within twelve miles of the Kaihu River, which for quality is unequalled in the colony. I do not favour an export duty for the purpose of road-making, but I think a license to dig might be advantageous. It should be made county revenue, for road-making. I think an export duty would fall on the digger at first, but that would probably not last long; it would work back to its present position. I think the prices in the foreign markets are ruled by the prices paid in Auckland, which again are ruled by the supply, or competition. I think the license should be taken by all, whether digging on Crown or leased lands—say, 10s. per annum for leases, and £1 for Crown lands. The license-fees paid now to leaseholders is by way of rent.”

*Carl Seegner* (German Consul): There is very little to add to the evidence I gave in 1893. The quality of kauri-gum is still deteriorating. Prices are temporarily high, but that is only a spurt owing to very small stocks in America and in England. It is a moral certainty that in a year prices will be down £15 or £20. Prices have never been as high as at present. The direct export of gum to France has entirely ceased. I was in France in 1894, and went all over it where I had formerly customers. I tried my very best to get orders, but we could not get them against the East African gums—Zanzibar and Madagascar. Kauri was used in the north, but in small quantities, and large quantities of gum came from Africa. There are also large quantities of gum being introduced into Belgium and Germany from the Congo District. The Congo gum is exactly like kauri re-scraped. In England, kauri was in more general use. I am quite sure an export duty would harm. I have no idea what the export of Madagascar gum is. Madagascar gum is not used, only because it is cheap and nasty. If an export duty were put on kauri it would affect the price, and the competition with other gums would be stronger and stronger. I have tried to get the figures of the export of Madagascar gum, but have failed. It goes to France, Italy, Germany, and Austria, and all through these countries they would take kauri-gum; they have no preference, but they buy the cheapest, and what pays them best. They know exactly what good gum is. Nobody says anything against the quality of kauri: it is the best; there is not the slightest doubt about it. I have notes of having *viséd* about 150 passports. I believe they only refer to soldiers. The original Austrians who came here came as ordinary sailors, and they are still here, engaged in the fishing. The entries in my books would not give you an idea of how many Austrians there may be in the country. I think the young Austrians who come into this country would make good settlers. They are honourable, trustworthy, and very industrious. I know nothing about British gum-diggers having a grievance, and feeling themselves supplanted by the Austrians. I think if a man comes here and works he can work as long as he likes, and he has a right to do with his money as he likes. It would certainly be a good thing for the country if the Austrians would stay, and not send their money away, but I believe that comparatively little money is sent away now. I believe