



SAWMILLING SECTION.

[This Section is published by arrangement with the Dominion Federated Sawmillers' Association (Incorp.) in the interests of the Sawmilling Industry of N.Z.]

Editor: W. T. IRVINE.

Following up the remarks made in our last issue respecting the position of the sawmilling industry on the West Coast, as it may be affected by the new regulations if carried out in their entirety, we now publish in another column a statement made by one largely interested, which appeared in the "Post" of a recent date. From this it will be seen that although a miller operating on Crown lands may hold the maximum reservation of 1600 acres in addition to the license of 400 acres he is operating, the regulations as intended to be imposed by the Minister of Forests, would preclude any export of timber from these reservations. This would, therefore, mean the serious restriction of a legitimate business he has laid himself out to cater for, and would probably ruin several of the millers who have installed plants and laid down extensive tramways relying upon the good faith of the Government to carry out their part of the bargain. So far as the loss of revenue that will be sustained by local bodies is concerned, they are strong and able enough to watch their own interests, and in the face of the promise made by the Hon. the Premier that there would be no interference with the revenue derivable from the sawmilling industry, no doubt they will have something to say to Mr. Massey on his return. But the attitude of the powers that be, practically amounts to confiscation, and we cannot believe that such will be the case, or that the policy now promulgated will be carried out without modification. At the meeting of West Coast local bodies, representatives of the sawmilling industry, and Sir Francis Bell, held at Hokitika lately some very plain speaking took place regarding the whole position, but this did not appear to impress the Minister who stuck to his guns and stated that it was a Government policy matter from which he would not depart, whatever his successors might do. Reference was again made to the method of introducing the legislation which resulted in the regulations as now framed, and which practically mean Government by Order-in-Council, and steps are to be taken to bring the matter up in the House with a view to counter existing conditions and proposals. In fact, Mr. T. E. Y. Seddon, M.P., thanked the Hon. Sir Francis for his candid attitude and stated in turn that he would do all in his power to have the regulations altered and the reserves lifted. A series of resolutions were then passed at the meeting which leave no manner

of doubt as to the fight the West Coast intends to put up for its rights.

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The statement made by Sir Francis Bell in explanation of his attitude, and by the regulations—as it appeared to our evening contemporary is also published in this number for the information of our readers who may not have seen it. In this he is reported to have stated that the conference demanded the right to cut without limit, and to export without limit, and if this demand were made we can only reply that it is not in accordance with the agreement entered into by the Board of Trade, and the Sawmillers' Advisory Committee, whereby a definite reduction of export has been agreed upon, and the full supply of all domestic needs guaranteed. It should, however, be again pointed out, that owing to the Australian market absorbing a greater proportion of rough box timber than could otherwise be used in this Dominion a larger return of output per acre has resulted, than would have been possible without the export trade.

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The "cut" in the railway service still continues, and all timber traffic is held up. Millers are doing their utmost to keep all hands employed, but there must be a limit to this for financial and other reasons if the normal traffic is not brought into operation very shortly. On branches adjacent to a coal supply—such as Greymouth and Whangarei lines—we understand traffic proceeds as usual. The chief sufferers being, Main Trunk, and Rotorua line millers, and those operating in Southland.

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The seamen's strike in Australia is having its effect upon us, too, in a very practical fashion as evidenced by the non-discharge of the steamer Inga, which arrived at Wanganui about a fortnight ago with a cargo of coal for the Wanganui gasworks, and has not yet begun to unload because her crew are non-unionists. It was hoped to arrange for a certain amount of timber for back loading to be shipped by this vessel from Wanganui to stiffen her before proceeding to Greymouth to fill up, but the whole business is held in suspense pending a settlement of the strike. The industry of the world seems to be in the melting pot, and we can only hope that, even if it be through suffering and pain, better counsel will soon prevail and so put an end to the turmoil.