

only mentioned in order to demonstrate that it has been universally assumed that the miller had a good title to both his sawmill license and reserved areas; otherwise no sane man would incur such an expenditure to work a bush of 400 acres, giving him perhaps three years' work.

### Question of Export.

"Before dealing with the effect of the Minister's intended action, we may consider the question of export. There is good ground for claiming that if the Minister's proposals were equitable when applied to other parts of the Dominion, which we deny, they should not be enforced on the West Coast. The export trade to Australia in rimu had its origin in the Greymouth-Hokitika district, and large sums were spent in introducing the timber to Australia, some eight or ten years ago. In those days the West Coast sawmiller was tolerated, and found employment for labour and capital by shipping to Australia when the Dominion market failed to absorb the output. He was still tolerated in the earlier part of the war period, when he found loading for steamers which would otherwise have gone empty to Australia, and kept his mills running in spite of the stagnation in the Dominion timber trade. But towards the end of the war period prices in Australia began to rise, and other sawmilling districts began to seek the Australian business to the neglect of their natural markets. The West Coast millers never failed to supply their home markets Wellington and Christchurch, so far as tonnage was available, and any shortage which exists or has existed in these centres is due, so far as the West Coast is concerned, to lack of tonnage only. The outcry raised by the builders and buttermen over the alleged shortage of timber, ultimately led to the restrictions on export which have been in force for the last year or so. They were probably at no time necessary as applied to this part of the Dominion, but are being administered by the Board of Trade with complete satisfaction to West Coast millers.

"It was early recognised that the sawmillers' position here is totally different from that in most other parts of New Zealand, where they have direct rail communication with their markets. It was seen that it was immaterial what source supplied the Dominion markets, so long as their demands were met; and the commonsense plan was adopted, in effect, of letting each district find its natural outlet, provided the wants of the Dominion are first supplied. The Australian market is the second natural outlet for the West Coast, Canterbury being the first. At the moment, more steamers are available for the coastal trade than there have been for years, and there is some prospect of stocking up the yards in Canterbury. After this is done, there will be a reversion to the old order of things, when it was necessary to send half the output to Australia.

### Limitation of Output.

"But it is at this point that the Commissioner of Forests steps in and says that by the issue of a Gazette he will cut down the production of every mill

by half, so soon as the miller has cut out his sawmill license and desires to acquire one of his reserved areas instead. The fact that this may happen to-morrow or three years hence does not make the position any better. Indeed it makes the action of the Commissioner of Forests all the more inexcusable and unjust, for it means closing up one mill to-morrow, while another may have three years' unrestricted run. Further, it will operate directly in the interests of the miller-freeholder, who will not be interfered with, while the man on Crown land will be squeezed out. It is incredible that such an undemocratic reactionary policy can be endorsed by the men who form the National Government.

"The cynical indifference with which the Minister regards the extinction of a man's means of living is a revelation," the statement concludes. "He said in so many words at Hokitika, that, if the Dominion trade was not enough to keep all the mills going, the number of mills must be reduced. It need hardly be asked which would be the first to go under, the big men or the little. We have dealt only with the outrageous injustice which the Minister proposes to perpetrate, and have not touched on his ridiculous theories as to 'demarcation, regeneration,' and so forth. Perhaps we may be allowed at a later date to say something about the hare-brained schemes of his forestry advisers."

## Timber Trade.

### Government Forestry Policy.

#### West Coast Protests.

In response to a request from a "Post" reporter, Sir Francis Bell, Commissioner of State Forests, recently made the following statement regarding his conference with local bodies and millers on the West Coast of the South Island:—

"I was invited to meet a conference of various local bodies of the West Coast of the South Island at Hokitika on 1st July to hear their objections and those of the sawmillers of the West Coast to the recent forestry legislation and regulations, and, on my part, to explain their effect. There was a very large attendance, including representatives of all local bodies, of the sawmilling industry, and of chambers of commerce. Addresses were delivered by several gentlemen, putting before me the various objections to the legislation and regulations as affecting the income of local bodies and general industries of the West Coast. The local bodies are entitled to a part, and in some areas to the whole of the royalties derived by the State from timber cut upon Crown lands, but are not entitled to any part of the revenue from royalties in State forests, and therefore the recent proclamation of a large part of the timber mining areas of the West Coast would have later the effect of reducing the revenue of local authorities, and has the immediate effect of superseding the authority of the warden, whose jurisdiction does not extend over State forests. I admitted at once to the conference that the revenue