

As a member of a firm of timber agents, which has no part in the sale or handling of Russian goods, I am writing the following in an attempt to describe to the public the present position of the timber trade, as it affects not only our own trade in Great Britain, but that of our friends in exporting countries other than Russia. I should like to make it clear first, that the sale of large quantities of Russian timber to Great Britain over a period of years has adversely affected my firm to a very great extent. I think therefore the views which I put forward may justly be considered more worthy of respect.

In default of Government intervention a large quantity of Russian Timber has been sold and will continue to be sold to this country. Over the past few years the quantities sent to England have constantly increased with the result that at the end of the year importers have been faced with a continually declining market owing to super-abundant stocks in the autumn and winter months.

The Russian Softwood Buyers Corporation then stepped in and endeavoured to save the Timber Trade of the country, and incidentally themselves, from this decline and bought the whole Russian output for 1929 and 1931 with a fixed maximum which the Russians were allowed to ship to Great Britain. I do not propose to discuss whether they were right in so doing or not. I simply state the fact that they saw no other alternative between this method and eventual ruin.

Efforts have recently been made and are being made to induce the Government to intervene or at least to create such a strong anti-Russian feeling as will induce big consumers of wood in this country (such as Railway Companies, Corporations, etc.) to refuse to buy Russian Wood. Again I am not proposing to discuss whether the allegations of slavery are justified or not and I fully believe that the anti-Russian propaganda is quite sincere and carried on by those who detest tyranny in any form.

The effect of this movement however is having very unforeseen and indeed almost disastrous effects, not on the Russians against which it is directed, because they have sold their output to this English Corporation, but on the English Timber Trade as a Whole

(particularly on those who have been forced in self-defence to buy the Russian output) and furthermore on those whom it was hoped that the anti-Russian agitation would benefit, namely our friends the Swedish and Finnish timber producers. They have been seriously harmed by this agitation, because resales by the importers to the consumers of the Russian wood have been seriously hampered. Now this Russian wood is largely at present in the hands of importers. Owing to financial stringency they cannot buy much Swedish and Finnish wood until they have resold the Russian wood to the consumers, and consumers seeing the resales of the Russian stocks going very slowly and knowing that the Swedes and Finns inspite of heavy reductions in output have heavy stocks on hand anticipate a reduction in prices, with the result that very little Swedish and Finnish wood has been sold.

Thus the anti-Russian movement has had no effect at all on the Russians, a very serious effect on the English importers, particularly those who acting with the best intentions have endeavoured to save the trade from ruin and an almost disastrous effect on the Swedes and the Finns.

I trust that I may be forgiven if I close by making an appeal to the consumers of wood, whatever their feelings may be as to the Bolshevik tyranny, to realize that for this year at least their refusal to buy Russian wood harms everybody concerned except the Russians.

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