

1921

KENYA

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From: IMPERIAL INSTITUTE.

DATE: 29TH JULY

For circulation:-

SUBJECT

EAST AFRICAN CEDAR

Mr.

Mr.

Mr.

Mr. *Went*

Mr. *Lambert*

Mr. *H. Bond*

Mr. *G. Fuller*

Mr. *Wood*

Mr. *Churchill*

Enclosed copy of corres. with B.O.T. as to and proposes to carry out further investigations in the matter. Asks for copy of Mr. Battiscombe's memo. in resp. referred to.

MINUTES

Mr. A. ... (4301/20)

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IMPERIAL INSTITUTE
OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM, THE COLONIES AND INDIA.

SOUTH KENSINGTON, LONDON, S.W. 7.

29 July, 1921.

Sir,

The Imperial Institute has recently received a communication from the Department of Overseas Trade on the subject of East African Cedar, forwarding a copy of your letter No. 20170/1921 of the 3rd May last and its enclosures.

A copy of the reply which has been sent to the Department of Overseas Trade, summarizing the action which has been already taken in this matter by the Imperial Institute, is attached for your information.

The suitability of this East African Cedar for pencil making should be definitely settled before new concessions are granted to exploit the trees in the forests of Mount Kenya, and the Imperial Institute

proposes

The Under Secretary of State,

Colonial Office,

S.W. 1.

IMPERIAL INSTITUTE, 15)

London, S. W. 7.

25th July, 1921.

Sir,

With reference to your letter No. 2410/ED of the 19th May last, I now send you the following observations on the subject of East African Cedar.

Specimens of this wood were first received at the Imperial Institute in 1905 and a report giving the results of their examination will be found in Bulletin of the Imperial Institute Vol. IV (1906) pages 15-18.

The question of the possible utilisation of the wood for pencil making was considered by the Imperial Institute at that time, and the results of the enquiries which were made appeared to be promising. The wood was considered by experts to be well adapted for use in the manufacture of pencils and considerable interest was taken in it, particularly in view of the increasing difficulty in obtaining supplies of suitable pencil cedar from the United States. The result of these enquiries was that a firm of timber merchants offered to take a trial consignment of the wood at a fixed price, whilst a large firm of pencil manufacturers expressed their willingness to purchase prepared pencil slate if these could be made in East Africa.

These offers were transmitted to the Government of the East Africa Protectorate, but the Imperial Institute

WAB

The Comptroller-General,

Department of Overseas Trade,

35, Old Queen Street,

S. W. 1.

was informed in 1907 that a loss had been sustained by the Forestry Department on a consignment of cedar logs forwarded to the United Kingdom, and that the price offered by the merchants would not leave a large margin for profit. In view of these facts the Forestry Department apparently did not consider it worth while to proceed further with the matter at that time.

Since that date however the Imperial Institute has been in touch with firms in East Africa interested in the subject, and in 1915 the Equator Saw Mills at Molo reported that they had installed machinery for the production of pencil slate and were in a position to take orders. They stated, however, that certain pencil makers considered the East African cedar to be much harder than the Florida wood, and at their request the Imperial Institute made enquire as to the practicability of applying to the East African wood a softening process such as is commonly used to improve the working qualities of certain grades of American cedar. It is understood that the firm now employ a method of softening the East African wood.

It may be mentioned in this connection that both in East Africa and in the United States the quality of cedar wood is influenced by the situation in which the trees grow, and the Imperial Institute therefore suggested to the Equator Saw Mills that the trees utilised for pencil wood should be specially selected from situations known to produce wood of the best quality. In reply, the Manager of the Mills stated that on account of transport difficulties it was not then possible to select the timber with the care practised in the United States.

The results of the enquiries made by the Imperial Institute on this subject indicate that carefully selected

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East African cedar, subjected if necessary to appropriate softening treatment, should find a market in this country for pencil making. It is very desirable that the suitability of the wood for this purpose should be definitely decided before any concessions are granted for the exploitation of cedar in the forests of Mount Kenya. It should be borne in mind, however, that while the working qualities of the wood and the technical preparation of the slats are matters of great importance, the question will ultimately depend upon the price at which the timber, or the finished slats, can be delivered in this country.

The Imperial Institute propose now to re-investigate the whole subject in conjunction with the Conservator of Forests in Kenya with a view to obtaining definite decisions on the points still at issue. In this connection it would be of interest if copies of the reports received by the Department of Overseas Trade from pencil makers could be supplied to the Imperial Institute.

The question of establishing pencil factories in Kenya, as suggested by Mr. Batticombe, will require very careful consideration, since the industry is a highly technical one needing skilled operatives. As regards the local supplies of graphite which Mr. Batticombe suggests might be used in making the pencils, it may be mentioned that samples of graphite from East Africa hitherto examined at the Imperial Institute have been of poor quality and unsuited for the manufacture of pencils for which graphite of fine quality is required.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Sgd.) WYNDHAM R. DUNSTAN.

DRAFT

The Hon. Secy. for the Colonies
present his copy to The

Director of the Imperial Institute

MINUTE

and is directed to signify

Chairman

Mr. Parkman

Mr.

Mr. Grindell

Mr. ...

Mr. H. Road

Mr. G. Pridmore

Mr. Wood

Mr. Churchill

for approval and return, a

copy of the memorandum on the

Forest and Timber Resources of

British East Africa, to which

reference is made in the latter

over

*Forest & Timber
of B.E.A.
4/11/11*

from the Imperial Institute N^o. 3249/2
of the 29th July.

from the Imperial Institute N^o. 3219/24
of the 29th of July.