

100. Could you indicate the class of soil most suitable for growing vines?—I should consider the Oamaru soil very good. I think the Government should give some encouragement and assistance to fruit-growers. I understand that assistance is being given in the dairy industry by sending round a capable expert as teacher. We have many settlers who have commenced fruit-growing, but have really no knowledge of the industry. It is just the same as many small farmers who have commenced dairy work, but know but little about it. I am convinced that if a little instruction were given in this way a great deal would be done towards encouraging the fruit-growing industry. I think it might be given at a very small expense. Then, again, I think there is an actual neglect of public duty in the fact that no attention is paid by the Government towards ascertaining the life-history of fungi and insects injurious to fruit-growers, and making experiments as to the best way of overcoming them. This is the only colony in the Australasian group in which something of the kind is not being done. There should be an experimental station for the benefit of fruit-growers and agriculturists. For instance, the most important matter to which the attention of fruit-growers can be directed at the present time is the selection of suitable stocks for the different kinds of fruit. I am convinced that if a station of this kind had been formed twenty years ago we should have had large exports of many items which are scarcely known in cultivation at present.

101. As far as New Zealand timbers are concerned, it is said that tawa gives a flavour to butter: can you give the Committee any information on that point?—I think it must be a mistake. Either the timber was not properly seasoned, or some other timber was substituted.

102. Do you think the tawa timber can be safely used for butter-kegs?—Yes; it has been used for years with excellent results. The making of butter-kegs is a very important industry in Taranaki. They have a large export of butter kegs and casks to most parts of the colony.

103. From your knowledge of tawa timber, you do not consider there is anything deleterious in the sap of the timber?—Certainly not, so long as the timber is properly seasoned. Any timber would give a flavour if used unseasoned.

104. The same remark would apply to the use of totara?—Yes; I consider totara a suitable timber for that purpose. Kauri has also been used with advantage.

105. It has been said by some witnesses that totara, being a porous wood, drew the flavour out of the butter?—I do not see why it should; it is not what I should consider a porous timber.

106. But from your experience you consider that totara and tawa are the best fitted for the making of butter-casks?—Yes; I do not think you could get many better than tawa. I think that is proved by experience. The manufacture of tawa for that purpose, curiously enough, was commenced in Canterbury, where there is no tawa. They had to get their supplies from the Sounds.

107. Is there tawa timber to be found in the South Island, with the exception of the Sounds?—No; it grows a very short distance southward.

108. You also think the kauri a suitable timber?—Kauri was used very extensively in Auckland. I understood that, when thoroughly well seasoned, it was always used with advantage.

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TUESDAY, 9TH SEPTEMBER, 1890.

Mr. R. HOBBS, M.H.R., examined.

109. *The Chairman.*] You have been interested, I understand, for many years in fruit-growing?—I have for the last twenty years.

110. *Mr. Walker.*] What description of fruit?—I have over thirty acres of orchard, principally apples.

111. *The Chairman.*] We shall be glad of any information you may give us on the subject of fruit-growing?—I have jotted down one or two ideas which I thought might assist the Committee. I suppose you recognise the importance of this industry?

112. We fully realise the importance of the industry, and will be glad if you can show us how it may be developed in any way—not only as regards green fruit, but by canning, evaporating, drying, crystallizing, or any other means?—These processes are all carried out upon a very large scale in the United States of America and Canada. I have taken much interest in them.

113. *Mr. Walker.*] In Australia also these processes are carried out?—Yes; but not so much in Australia. I have no doubt that we shall have to adopt all these plans to utilise our surplus fruit, which is bound to accumulate.

114. *The Chairman.*] Will you give us your own experience?—I do not think it is very important that I should give you my own experience, which is on a very limited area; but from information which I have obtained and know to be correct, I can speak with some confidence. I have been collecting information on the subject for a great many years, and on all matters also connected with fruit-growing. I think, therefore, it is only right that I should put those things which I regard as being of the greatest importance before the Committee, and, through the Committee, before the country. For instance, in Tasmania, the importance of the fruit industry is fully recognised by the Government of that colony—certainly far more than by the Government of New Zealand. For instance, as regards the codlin-moth pest, they have endeavoured to cope with the evil by more stringent legislation. The Government of Tasmania also have manifested their interest in the industry by instructing their Agent-General in London to look after all matters connected with the shipment of fruit coming from Australia—that is to say, the questions of freight, cool-chambers, and like matters. In support of these remarks of mine, I quote the following resolution passed at a meeting of the Fruit-growers' Association of Tasmania: It was resolved, "That, in consequence of increased space required next season for shipment of fruit to London, the Chairman be requested to write managers of P. and O. and Orient Companies suggesting that a hold in at least one vessel of each company calling at Hobart next season be lined