

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

[FRIDAY, 7TH AUGUST, 1903.]

T. W. KIRK, F.L.S., examined. (No. 1.)

1. *Hon. Mr. Pitt.*] Do you consider that this Otahuhu Orchard is an object-lesson that the codlin-moth can be successfully coped with by the Department or by any one who understands the process recommended by the Department?—Yes, certainly.

2. And as regards the cost of working the orchard by the Department, which has to pay for all labour and so forth, how would it compare with the expenses of the settler, who has his family to assist him, and who understands the methods recommended by the Department?—Probably the cost would be twice as much to the Department.

3. Would it not be better for an old orchard to be trimmed back—would it not be better to trim all the trees together?—That would depend upon the condition of the trees. It may be better to prune back, or to prune sharply back.

4. *Mr. Buddo.*] Will you state, Mr. Kirk, whether, in your opinion, a younger orchard—I mean trees that are not so old as eighteen years—could be more successfully dealt with?—Undoubtedly it could.

5. Would the fact of this orchard being so very old militate against successful results?—Yes; old and neglected orchards are more difficult to deal with.

6. What is the Department's opinion as to the age an orchard should be kept without replanting?—Well, that is a question I cannot answer. It depends so much upon the local conditions and on the treatment it has received, and, of course, on the varieties of trees you are dealing with.

7. Is there any export of fruit from the Province of Auckland?—No; not export from Auckland.

8. Outside the colony?—No; practically none.

9. Is there any export from any other part of the colony to places outside of it?—Usually. In this report [produced] the figures are set out for each port. The amount of exports from the colony are as follows: Auckland, 1902, £103; Wellington, 1898, £136; Christchurch, 1898, £1,664, and in 1899, £950, 1900, £1,052. I reckoned there was practically no export from the colony last year.

10. Are you of opinion that a canning industry would be of assistance to the settlers in the colony?—Most decidedly; I have been urging that for some years past.

11. With your experience, are you of opinion that the industry would be taken up by any considerable number of settlers if it was found to be successful—that is to say, that trees could be grown free of insect life, and that there was established a market for them? Is the feeling on the part of the settler strong enough to take up fruit-growing if the orchards can be kept free from insect life?—Decidedly so.

12. Is the codlin-moth troublesome in other parts of the colony besides Auckland?—Yes; Nelson comes next of the worst places.

13. In any other places—in Otago Central, for instance?—It is scattered. They are not much afraid of it in Otago Central.

14. Why does the Department recommend arseniate of lead as against arsenic and soda?—We recommend it because of its facility of application, there also being no risk of scorching.

15. Is it a fluid preparation?—Yes, and put on by the spray-pump.

16. Does the settler obtain it as a fluid preparation?—He can get it as a powder, but he usually obtains it as a fluid preparation.

17. *Mr. Massey.*] I think, Mr. Kirk, that you expressed the opinion that this orchard was an object-lesson to the fruit-growers in the colony: how can it be an object-lesson when it has proved not to be a commercial success?—I would just like to repeat this statement: that the orchard was taken over with the primary object of showing that the codlin-moth could be controlled. The Auckland people said it was impossible to control the moth, and they considered that orchard was the worst that could be given to us in the district. If you were wanting a "commercial success," we should have severely pruned; there would have been no fruit for two years, and we should have been doing no spraying for moth for two years, but should have freed the orchard from the moth because there would have been nothing for the grubs to feed on for that period. The whole object of this orchard was to show the efficacy of spraying and proper treatment.

18. Have you got the receipts and expenditure in connection with this orchard?—They are in Auckland. I can get them if they are required.

19. Did it not strike you that the Committee would require them?—No; it did not occur to me.

20. I understood you to say in answer to the Hon. Mr. Pitt that this orchard cost the Department twice as much as it would cost the private individual: would you explain that?—I said probably twice as much. In the first place, if you are attending to your own orchard you are on the spot yourself. You have got your own horses, and your own farm implements, and the assistance of your family. Now, we have to hire all that, and we had to depend upon a man engaged for the day.

21. Did you not have a man in charge of this orchard?—Not resident there. It was not large enough to engage a man permanently there.