

Damage to lands.

The Commissioners divide the classes of damage to lands into three groups—(a) the lands completely destroyed; (b) the lands seriously affected; (c) the lands temporarily affected, but not permanently injured to any serious extent.

Total destruction of land.

The (a) class of lands, totally destroyed, includes those lands on which there is a deposit of mining tailings and silt of so great a thickness as to render the lands of little or no use. This thickness, after careful personal examination, the Commission fix at three inches and upwards.

Partial destruction of land.

The (b) class of lands, seriously affected, are, in the estimation of the Commission, those areas where the thickness of deposit is less than three inches, in which case it is believed that the silt can be ploughed in and the land resown.

Temporary damage to land.

The (c) class of lands is where the deposit of sands or of slimes has been less than three-quarters of an inch in thickness. It appears certain that these lands, though reduced in value to some extent, have not been permanently injured, as the grasses will break through, and in time, by the action of earthworms and other natural causes, the slimes will be disseminated through the surface soil.

Agricultural Department: Report *re* silts.

Attention is drawn to a very valuable report by Mr. B. C. Aston on "Ohinemuri Silt Investigation," as published by the Chemistry Division of the New Zealand Department of Agriculture, and appearing in the annual report for 1909. From this report the Commissioners are confirmed in their view that there can be no nutritious properties in tailings, which consists for the most part of finely comminuted quartz, having no manurial value. On heavy clay lands the presence of fine quartz sand might have a beneficial effect, but there is naturally quite enough sands in the affected lands, and the application of more from successive floods is a matter to be deplored and prevented.

Land-areas affected.

At the suggestion of the Commissioners, the Ohinemuri County Council, who throughout the inquiry held a neutral position, employed Mr. C. R. Bellingham to visit and schedule the whole of the affected areas, and the results of his investigation are given in the return (Exhibit No. 60) appended hereto, and summarized as follows:—

Survey District.	Block Number.	Total Area of Holding.	Area totally destroyed.	Area affected deleteriously.
		Acres.	Acres.	Acres.
Waihou	VII and VIII	2,139	..	1,779
"	XI and XII	843	..	843
"	XII	3,324	137	2,955
"	XVI	1,266	110	1,070
Ohinemuri	IX	518	..	518
"	XIII	1,886	124	342
		9,976	371	7,507

The Commissioners have not had the time at their disposal to fully check this return or to have an independent one made, but are satisfied that it may be assumed to be approximately correct. The 371 acres given as totally destroyed probably corresponds with class (a); but they are not able to assess what portion of the 7,507 acres would belong to classes (b) or (c).

Survey of affected lands.

The Commissioners recommend that Your Excellency should forthwith appoint some competent person, who should proceed to this district and prepare from personal observation and approximate measurements a return giving particulars of the three classes of lands affected, so that if the recommendations of