

of the scheme of river improvement and upkeep. Provision would have to be made for the assessment of a special charge to cover the cost of works of drainage or outfall done to benefit special lands.

5. The fifth reference made to the Commission was that it should generally report its opinion on all matters arising out of or touching upon the inquiry. As in the preceding portion of the report the Commissioners have touched upon various collateral matters in addition to those referred to them under each heading, they have little to add thereto.

REFERENCE CLAUSE 5.

Fishing industry.

It may, however, be a convenient place in which to express the opinion of the Commissioners that the fishing industry at the Thames, as relating to the Hauraki Gulf, has not been seriously affected by the discharge of tailings into the river. The fishing industry is one which is everywhere subject to considerable variations from natural causes, and to fluctuations sometimes arising from the depletion of the fishing-banks by excessive working. The Commissioners regret that there should be a risk of further damage to the Thames fishing industry by the carrying-down of fine slimes into the Hauraki Gulf, but are satisfied that this cannot be avoided, and that the local fishing industry must, if trouble arises, give way to the general benefit to the Dominion caused by the continuance of the mines. They are of opinion that any further change in the fishing-fields will be very gradual, and that the fishermen will in a similar gradual manner adapt themselves to the new conditions, and they also think it probable that, with the improvements now being carried out and proposed in the Paiko River, the fish may change to that stream from the mouth of the unquestionably polluted Thames River.

The Commissioners therefore recommend that there should be no compensation provided now or in the future to the Thames fishermen.

Tree-replanting.

The Commissioners noticed in many cases that the removal of the bush from the hillsides had been followed by serious slips of the soil. The effect of these slips must be that large quantities of soil will find their way to the streams, and that the escarpment so caused will be of no value for carrying grass. The Commission recommends that on all hillsides where there has been, or is, an indication of slippage the lands should be replanted with suitable trees. It is understood that some 6,000 acres of bush lands have been cut out in the Waihi and Waitekauri district for mining purposes, and that such land is of but small use for grazing purposes. The Commission urges that in such cases it should be compulsory on the mines benefiting by the use of the timber to reforest the lands. It cannot be too strongly urged that the maintenance of bush on hillsides, by holding back the rain-waters and permitting them to flow off slowly, tends to reduce the magnitude and violence of floods, and that the vegetation, whilst itself absorbing rain that would otherwise flow off, also prevents the removal of the soil into the streams.

SUMMARY.

Summary.

The Commission respectfully summarizes its recommendations as to what should, in its opinion, be done to deal with the evils that it was set up to investigate, as follows:—

(a.) *As to Affected Lands.*—That a survey be promptly made of the lands affected by recent flooding; that, as the results of such survey, a Stipendiary Magistrate be authorized to fix the amounts of compassionate allowances to be awarded for total or partial loss of land, and of stock and income therefrom.

(b.) *As to the Use of the Rivers as a Sludge-channel.*—That the 1895 Proclamation be revoked six months hence; that a new Proclamation should be issued permitting slimes to be placed in the Ohinemuri River, and, from existing