

IMPROVEMENT OF SEEDS.

The important question of the improvement of seeds was fully gone into by the Board, and we recommended that steps should be taken to initiate a weed survey; also to prevent the dissemination of unclean seed by the enactment of a Seeds Bill on similar lines to those that had been adopted by the Australian Commonwealth and by several of the States of North America to stop the sale of unclean seed. As not only farmers, but also merchants, were interested in the question of the Seeds Sale Control Bill, it was agreed that it was only fair that the Bill should be sent to them as well as to farmers for their consideration, and a recommendation to this effect was accordingly sent you.

PASTORAL LANDS.

The improvement of pastoral lands was discussed at some length, after we had had the advantage of hearing an interesting paper in connection with it read by Mr. W. D. Hunt, one of our members, who has a large knowledge of the subject. The following resolutions were subsequently passed and sent on to the Hon. Minister of Lands:—

- “(1.) That the deterioration of these pastoral runs is largely caused by the tenure under which they are held.
- “(2.) That if the tenure was freehold the owners of the land would very soon find out the best way to improve them, and in most instances would do so without any further action of the Government.
- “(3.) We therefore recommend that the land should be offered for sale.
- “(4.) That the areas in which the land is offered should be such as, having consideration to a reasonable limitation of areas, would enable the owner to have a sufficient number of sheep (having regard to the hazards natural to high country) to allow for losses and yet ensure an income from the investment of his capital. Further, that in cutting up the area regard must be had to the height of the country, the class of land, and the situation.”

A considerable amount of experimental work has already been done by the Department in connection with this matter, and some success achieved so far as regressing the runs is concerned, although there has been no attempt to grant the freehold of the pastoral lands.

GRASSING THE TAUPO COUNTRY.

In regard to the question of grassing the Taupo country, which arose from a paper read by Mr. J. A. Pond, F.R.G.S., at the conference of the Council of Agriculture held in 1914, inquiries from the Lands Department showed that it recognized the importance of this matter, and the Board hope that all that is practicable will be done by experiments to ascertain the most satisfactory treatment of that class of land. A map supplied to the Board by the Lands Department shows the enormous area yet to be dealt with on the Central Plateau. The unquestionable success of many of the experiments which have been undertaken in reclaiming what was thought at one time to be waste land and bringing it into cultivation with the assistance of manure and clover makes this question one of moment, as there is such a large area which could be made suitable for settlement.

SAND-DUNES.

The question of planting the sand-dunes has received our consideration, and we had a valuable paper on the subject, giving full information as to what had been done in other countries, from Mr. E. Phillips Turner, of the Lands Department. The Board recommended the Minister of Lands to establish a small experimental nursery alongside the sand-dunes in the Rangitikei district, but this has not been acceded to on the score of want of funds for that purpose. It might mean the expenditure of £100, but if given effect to the trees would be ready when money was available to plant the dunes. Already there has been considerable success in planting, but there is a great tendency to curtail the area which is necessary to properly protect the surrounding land from the encroachment of the sand, and we would again point out that the sand-dune area of New Zealand, which Dr. Cockayne has reported to be of the extent of 314,000 acres, should be reserved for planting as soon as money is available.

EXPERIMENTAL FARMS.

The members of the Board personally have visited the various farms under the control of the Department of Agriculture, and, after long consideration of the position, drafted the report which is now in your hands.

EXPERIMENTAL PLOTS.

The Board had several discussions with Mr. Pope, Secretary for Agriculture, with Mr. Brown, Director of the Fields Division, and with Mr. Aston, Agricultural Chemist, regarding experimental plots, and the importance of closer co-operation between the Education Department and the Department of Agriculture was fully discussed.

At the Board's request the Department of Agriculture has made a start with agricultural and pastoral demonstrations on the experimental plots on the reserve offered by the Ashburton High School, after conferring with the Board of Governors of the Ashburton High School thereon. We believe these are going on satisfactorily, and we hope that this is only the beginning of co-operation between the two Departments on similar lines.

The Board cordially support your decision to locate the professional staff of the Department of Agriculture connected with experimental plots and the farms at the Weraroa Central Development Farm, as we see much advantage both in the interests of research and education by such a step being taken.