

APPENDIX.

NOXIOUS WEEDS QUESTION.

REPORT OF MR. E. HAMILTON.

As requested by the Board, I have carefully examined some hundreds of letters that have been received in reply to their circular about noxious weeds, which were sent to 144 Road Boards, 56 Town Boards, 117 County Councils, 110 Borough Councils, 87 agricultural and pastoral associations, and to the 12 provincial secretaries of the New Zealand Farmers' Union (who sent about two thousand circulars to their members).

I have also gone through all the discussions that have taken place at the agricultural and pastoral conferences during the past twenty-five years, and it must be admitted the results are somewhat disappointing. It shows what a difficult subject it is, when so many practical experienced agricultural experts can suggest so little that can be done to improve matters.

One point, however, is quite clear. Practically all the public bodies are agreed that a Noxious Weeds Act must be retained on the statute-book. Only two—Kiwitea and Clutha—are in favour of its abolition, and only eight recommend that portions of the counties be exempted. Only three—Waipa, Whakatane, and Malvern—favour delegating the administration of the Act to the local authorities. Nine recommend non-enforcement in respect to Californian thistle; while seventy-seven are in favour of the total enforcement of the present Act. The remaining replies are either of an indefinite character or merely contain minor suggestions.

Mr. E. Clifton in his reply states the result is that it may be fairly accepted that the consensus of opinion is that in the best interests of the community a control is necessary, and that this control should continue to be confided to the State. The question, he says, resolves itself into one of the administration of control; that it should be so exercised and maintained that the maximum of efficiency with the minimum of irritation should result. He adds, it was decidedly the method of exercising this control that was chiefly discussed by the delegates who addressed the Council of Agriculture on this subject. The necessity of control was probably the principal reason. There was also the fact that the Parliament of the Dominion would most unwillingly reopen legislation on the subject of noxious weeds, and that most certainly the question could not be entertained at present. The chief considerations, he says, may be set out as—(1.) Is the method of control reasonably sufficient? (2.) Can it be increased without undue cost, hardship, and irritation on the community? (3.) Is the statute administered with discretion? (4.) Which weeds should be more specially controlled? (5.) Control on Crown and Native lands. As no one in New Zealand has had a wider experience of the administration of this Act than Mr. Clifton, we attach a copy of his reply, which deals fully with these points.

Setting aside for a time the many minor suggestions that have been made for the control of particular weeds, we may indicate the more wide-reaching recommendations that have been made to grapple with the problem in this and other countries.

A very exhaustive discussion on the subject took place at the Agricultural and Pastoral Conference held in 1913, when Mr. A. H. Cockayne read a paper on the weed problem and its significance to New Zealand agriculture, a summary of which is attached. He urged the need for a weed-survey, and stated that he would include as necessary in such a survey the following:—

- (1.) The present distribution of each and every weed in all districts of New Zealand.
- (2.) The loss caused by each weed on varying types of land devoted to different purposes and of different values.
- (3.) The range of dispersal of each weed in New Zealand through both controllable and uncontrollable means.
- (4.) The thorough study of all methods of mechanical control of each established weed, and their cost.
- (5.) The thorough study of all indirect methods of weed-control, such as intensive farming, thorough cultivation, drainage, manuring and stocking systems; in fact, any work that is likely to increase the conditions favourable for the development of the required crops, and at the same time reduce the conditions favourable for weed-development.
- (6.) The cumulative effect on all types of land of weeds that are not controlled.
- (7.) The study of the cost and practicability of eliminating the migration of weeds.
- (8.) Very careful data on the increase of production on weed-controlled areas correlated with the expense of undertaking such work.
- (9.) The effect of prevention of flowering on perennial weeds.
- (10.) The study of the phenomena of replacement on occupied land and the causes.

Mr. Clifton during that meeting also pointed out the necessity for classifying the various kinds of land, and suggested the appointment of a special Noxious Weeds Commission. He said: