

In the first place, they had the high pastoral country, where there could be no great profit per acre. In such country, where it did not menace other lower country, it appeared simply absurd to enforce the Act. The same applied to a great portion of the Crown and Native lands. Most of these areas were the reject lands of the colony, and would not stand a great expenditure. The next would be the better type of pastoral land. In this case, as much of this country was on a lower level, the danger was that if it became weed-infested it menaced the agricultural lands. So far as Californian thistle was concerned on those lands, he did not recognize that it was of any serious importance. The third class would comprise the richer agricultural lands of the Dominion: there the Act should certainly be enforced. Mr. Pope, too, has long advocated that something should be done on these lines. Mr. J. D. Hall (Canterbury) moved, and Mr. Orbell seconded, that it was desirable to set up a Government Commission, comprised of landowners, departmental officers, and scientists, to inquire into the area and locality of lands affected with weeds, noxious or otherwise. The amount of damage that was done, and the methods by which the weeds might be dealt with, could also be inquired into. This was agreed to by the Conference.

I understand that the Hon. T. Mackenzie, when Premier, had approved of this proposal and decided to give effect to it, but as three other Royal Commissions had been appointed he thought it was better not to set up another at the time.

Mr. Pope, in September, 1912, while opposing such a Royal Commission on the ground of expense, recommended the appointment of a smaller one, composed of three or four officers of the Department, to divide the lands of the country into several classes; to state the extent to which the clearing of noxious weeds should be enforced on each class of country; to consider the vexed question of noxious weeds on Crown lands, and to determine those areas of Crown and unoccupied Native lands which the Government should deal with; and finally to submit definite proposals, which could afterwards be referred to the Parliamentary Agricultural Committee, and be brought into operation by an amendment to the Act. But up to the present none of these recommendations have been given effect to, and it seems there is little prospect of such a Commission being set up at the present juncture.

Although the replies to the Board's circulars were somewhat disappointing in some respects, they were of value inasmuch as no one previously could have assumed that the demand throughout the Dominion for legal control was so overwhelming and unanimous. This raises the question whether it might not be desirable to go a step further and send out another circular asking the farmers to give the names of the six worst weeds in their district and the most effectual means of combating them. Some most useful and definite information was collected in this way from a number of practical agriculturists in Great Britain.

The number of replies received from districts in which some of the worst weeds, such as Californian thistle, have not yet appeared suggests the question as to whether something more could be done to interest the boys in the rural schools—to teach them to identify the farmers' enemies, and so to call early attention to any new-comers before they grew too numerous to cope with. You are doubtless aware that Mr. T. W. Kirk prepared a number of leaflets which were published and distributed by the Department, and thus spreading much valuable information throughout the country about our most dangerous weeds.

The Canadian Government have gone a step further in this direction and distributed free to all the public libraries, colleges, public schools, agricultural societies and clubs a very fine work containing a large number of coloured plates of the farm weeds of Canada and their seeds, with simplified technical descriptions and details as to the best methods of checking their spread. The Dominion Executive of the New Zealand Farmers' Union urged that something like this should be undertaken in New Zealand. This course has also been adopted by the Victorian Government, and Dr. Ewart, the Victorian Government Botanist, in 1908 called attention to a plan for checking weeds by offering prizes to school-children, and mentions an instance in which prizes offered by a Magistrate resulted in the scholars bringing in twelve thousand plants of ragwort during the first four days, and this number quickly rose to nearly twenty thousand plants.

Closely connected with the question of the spread of weeds is that of the impurity of seed. The chief means of introducing and spreading weeds is by unclean seed. The most obvious method of checking weeds is to prevent them seeding.

The Australian Commonwealth are attempting to stop the introduction of injurious alien weeds by prohibiting the entry of the seeds of nearly a hundred of the worst weeds, such as are found as impurities in badly cleaned agricultural seeds. Farmers have long been urging that something on these lines should be attempted in New Zealand. Seven years ago Mr. Perry carried a motion at the Agricultural and Pastoral Conference asking the Minister of Agriculture to bring forward a Seeds Bill, so as to allow publication of full particulars of the testing of seed and to prevent the sale of inferior and unclean seed, and that we think is a recommendation the Board might reiterate. Mr. Kettle at that gathering urged that they should stop the sale of all but machine-cleaned seed.

The Iowa Seed Law, which has formed the basis for the seed laws of several States in America, provides that no person shall sell, offer, or expose for sale for the purpose of seeding any agricultural seeds unless they are free from the seeds of the following weeds: Charlock, quack-grass (*Agropyron repens*), Canada thistle, wild oats, clover and alfalfa dodder (*Cuscuta epithymum*), field-dodder (*Cuscuta arvensis*), and corn-cockle. And when the seeds contain more than 2 per cent. by weight of impurities or of a number of specified weeds—including docks, burr clover, sorrel, yellow trefoil, bracted plantain (*Plantago aristata*), bindweed, black mustard, smooth crab-grass, and a few others—the approximate percentage of each shall be plainly indicated in