

commercial value, and did not appear to have become acclimatized in their new surroundings. As inquiries pointed to the conclusion that little if any good (and possibly harm) might result if the animals were imported, we decided to recommend that it was not advisable to grant permission to introduce the animals into New Zealand.

PROPOSAL TO STOCK GREAT ALPINE RANGE WITH OPOSSUMS.

We received a letter from the Director-General of Agriculture, forwarding a copy of a report from the Crown Lands Ranger at Dunedin on the proposal of the Otago Farmers' Union that opossums might be suitable for stocking the waste forest and scrub lands of the Great Alpine Range. It was pointed out that, although in some districts opossums were very plentiful, few complaints were received regarding their depredations, and it was agreed that the introduction of the animals might prove a considerable source of revenue to the country (as it was stated that black-opossum skins were worth £1 each) if the black or brown varieties were introduced, provided that every care was taken to prevent their introduction into districts where they might become dangerous to the fruitgrowing industry. The following resolution was accordingly carried:—

“That the Board heartily support the proposal to liberate opossums in the waste forest and scrub lands of the Great Alpine Range of the South Island on the condition that in all cases only the brown or black varieties be liberated (owing to the value of their skins), and not the grey variety; and, further, that the Board do not recommend their introduction into any district in which they might become a menace to the fruitgrowing industry.”

TRAINING OF SOLDIERS IN ENGLAND TO FIT THEM FOR TAKING UP POSITIONS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

Attention was drawn to the fact that a school had been established in England for the purpose of training maimed soldiers for various occupations, amongst which wool-classing was mentioned. This would be a very good opportunity for New-Zealanders in England to acquire training of this kind, and the following resolution was sent on to you:—

“That the Hon. Minister of Agriculture be recommended to make arrangements to enable some of the New Zealand soldiers in Europe to obtain such a training in agricultural science and practice as will fit them for taking up positions in the Department of Agriculture on their return to New Zealand.”

TREE-PLANTING BY FARMERS.

The question of tree-planting by farmers was discussed, and it was decided to advise all landowners, through the medium of the Press, throughout the Dominion to immediately plant more quick-growing timber-trees. It was pointed out that in three years these trees would provide shelter for stock, in ten years good firewood, and in less than twenty years useful fencing-material; and, further, that where bramble or other weeds occupied rough and inferior areas trees planted close together would be found to be the best growth to smother them. It was also decided to remind the public that a leaflet giving full particulars as to the best trees to plant, and a list of trees and seeds for sale, from the Whakarewarewa and Tapanui nurseries, could be procured on application.

SCIENTIFIC FORESTRY.

We received a letter from Sir James Allen, Acting Prime Minister, stating that the Board's letter urging the setting-up of a Forestry Department under the control of a scientifically trained forester had been referred to the Hon. Sir Francis Bell, who would act as Commissioner of State Forests, and who has under his consideration the organization of scientific forestry in the Dominion. Sir James Allen further stated that it was probable that no effectual steps could be taken in the direction advised by the Board until Parliament had granted further authorities for payment and expenditure.

The setting-up of a Department under a trained forester is urgently wanted, and the Board hopes that such an appointment will no longer be delayed.

A few of the more important minor matters dealt with by the Board, but which are not specially mentioned in this report, might also be named. They are—

- Extension and improvement of our education system, with particular reference to rural education;
- Establishment of a State hydro-electric scheme for the Dominion, and the passing by the Government of the Electric Power Board Bill;
- Institution of a vigorous scheme of afforestation on waste areas, in view of the depletion of native timbers;
- Training of New Zealand soldiers in England in agri-motor work;
- Settlement of returned soldiers on the land;
- The export of white-pine;
- Planting of suitable timber for making cheese-crates and butter-boxes;
- Treatment of foot-rot in sheep;
- Investigation into dry-rot in turnips;
- Registration of sheep-dipping mixtures offered for sale in the Dominion;
- Granting of assistance by the Government in connection with agricultural and pastoral shows;
- Introduction of new features in connection with agricultural and pastoral shows with a view of increasing their usefulness in educational matters;
- Price of butter for the local market; and
- Importation of rabbit-netting.

I have, &c.,
J. G. WILSON, President.