

1925.
NEW ZEALAND.

DETERIORATION OF CROWN LANDS.

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE APPOINTED TO INVESTIGATE THE DETERIORATION OF CROWN LANDS IN THE WHANGAMOMONA, OHURA, WAITOMO, OTOROHANGA, KAWHIA, RAGLAN, KAITIEKE, WAITOTARA, WAIMARINO, AND OTHER COUNTIES.

Laid on the Table of both Houses of the General Assembly by Leave.

To the Hon. the MINISTER OF LANDS, Wellington.

SIR,—

As members of the committee appointed by you to conduct inquiries regarding deteriorated lands in the above counties, we have the honour to state that we have completed our investigations, and now beg to report as under :—

We covered the greater part of the area under review, and for the purpose of obtaining further information and evidence held meetings of settlers at sixteen different centres, and also took evidence from individual farmers *en route*, and from other persons interested or having knowledge of the various questions involved. The meetings were on the whole well attended, and much valuable information was derived therefrom.

(1.) NATURE OF THE COUNTRY.

The country under consideration may be divided into three classes :—

- (a.) Hilly forest country too steep for ploughing, and comprising the greater portion of the area :
- (b.) Forest country containing a large proportion of ploughable land :
- (c.) Open fern and scrub country, most of which is ploughable.

The altitudes vary from sea-level up to about 2,000 ft., and the heights of the hills above the valleys vary up to 800 ft., an average being about 600 ft.

The soils are of the following types : Papa, sandstone, friable volcanic loams, and in places pure pumice, or mixtures of the above. In the Waitomo County there are large outcrops of limestone and rhyolite. The papa soils are the most fertile, but papa country where steep slips badly. The volcanic loams generally, with reasonable treatment, become profitable soils. Sandstone country is generally very steep and does not lend itself so well to treatment. Pumice soils are perhaps the poorest, and are difficult to grass except with special manurial treatment.

The forest cover varied according to quality of soil :—

- (a.) On the richer portions of the land tawa was dominant, associated with pukatea, white-pine, maire, matai, and mahoe :
- (b.) On the easy average-quality slopes tawa was dominant, associated with rimu, matai, miro, rata, and totara :
- (c.) On the poorer, steeper, and harder country were tawhero, rewarewa, and hinau :
- (d.) On the topmost sandstone ridges were black-birch and tawhero, mainly :
- (e.) On the open scrub country the natural vegetation consisted mostly of bracken-fern, associated with tutu and, in places, manuka.

Much of the country was covered by a spongy, peaty substance known as pukahu, most evident in wet tawhero country.

The forests on the whole contained little milling-timber, although here and there some timber has been milled where the access is good.