

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

ALFRED KIDD, M.H.R., examined. (No. 1.)

Witness: The petition I have presented speaks well for itself. The acclimatisation society has done a very large amount of work, and has been for many years in existence. Its revenues have been spent, as the petition indicates, for the development of trout-fisheries in the Rotorua district especially, but generally all over where streams are available. It is only within the last eight or ten days that any knowledge of this change has come to the knowledge of the society, and it is only within the last year or two that the revenues they have received have been reproductive. Up to that date the moneys that the society had received had been spent without any return at all; and they have now a large staff under their control paid for out of the revenues, and a hatchery which has cost over a £1,000, and which I understand the Government do not even propose to take over—the area on which it stands being excluded from the boundaries that they have marked as within the new district. Practically, it means that after a lifetime's work, and having arrived at a successful career, they are to be blotted out; because it means a loss of over £500 a year out of a revenue of £660, leaving as the balance of working-capital available only some £160, with which it will be utterly impossible to carry on the work. While it may be admitted that the Government will do as well, they cannot do it better; and it must seem to you, as it does to myself, and the public of Auckland and its surroundings, that this has not been done in a way pleasant to all parties. There has been no notice given that such action would be taken until the last few days, and it was only then that the society realised the possibility of being wiped out of existence. They have sent down Mr. Payton to explain the nature of what is going to be done and the enormous disaster that will ensue to the society, and he will give you the reasons why this should not be carried out. I will not take up your time at any greater length, because Mr. Payton is possibly more conversant with the subject, being a member of the council of the society. I know there are few bodies associated together in any place that have worked so industriously and so wholeheartedly, without fee or reward, for the general good as the Auckland Acclimatisation Society. The money derived has not been considered as private revenue, because when money was not available the members of the society would willingly put their hands in their pockets; and, furthermore, the whole of the money received by them has been spent in the betterment of sport in the province.

1. *Mr. Symes.*] I would like to ask Mr. Kidd in regard to a statement that has been made that the society neglected to stock very important streams emptying into the Bay of Plenty. Is there anything in that?—No. These streams have not been neglected, but their stocking with trout was delayed. The efforts of the society have been directed towards distributing the ova into the larger streams of the district. You all know that the trout-fisheries of Rotorua are the best in the world, and have drawn fishermen from all parts of the world. The subsidiary streams will now receive every attention, because the hatcheries are able to supply them. Owing to the large amount required for stocking the streams and lakes of Rotorua, the hatcheries were not in a position to do this in the past. There is a very large staff employed, who will have to be discharged immediately if the decision of the Government is carried into effect, and the hatchery, which has cost over £1,000, will be practically useless to the society. It is true that some streams have not received the attention which might have been desirable, because the larger streams required greater consideration; but nothing has been left undone that could be done, nor has there been at any time any allegation that there has been any neglect on the part of the society. The larger streams have, of course, received the attention they deserved, and now the Rotorua district is known to possess the finest fishery-streams in the world. The smaller streams, neglect of which is all that the Government can allege against the society, will receive attention, and the ova will be distributed amongst them; but if this proposal is given effect to the whole work will be practically ruined.

2. *Mr. Gray.*] Has the Government ever contributed any money towards the funds of the acclimatisation society?—None. The work has been carried on by the subscriptions of the members for a great number of years, assisted by the license fees.

3. It is a purely voluntary society?—Yes; and out of nothing it has grown to be one of the largest acclimatisation societies in the colony.

4. How are the Government proposing to take over Rotorua and other districts?—By simply drawing a boundary-line and taking the district over.

5. Can they do that without any Act of Parliament?—Yes, by an Order in Council.

6. Have they indicated that they are willing to compensate the society?—No; they have given no indication at all.

7. Would the society, if compensation were offered for the stock-in-trade, be willing to part with this portion of their district?—I see no way out of it. They would be very reluctant to do so, as the hatcheries which cost over £1,000 would be absolutely worthless to them. To stock these smaller streams would not require the plant which they have at present. They would be forced to make the best terms they could.

8. Have you made any calculation as to what was the income from this source in the districts the Government propose to acquire? Have you formed any idea as to what its capitalised value is?—Yes. The total fees from the fisheries are £649 11s. The amount issued in the districts taken by the Government is £510 16s. 10d., leaving a balance of only £138. Therefore, out of the total revenue of £650 the Government take £510 under this proposal.

9. Then, it would practically cripple your association—even ruin it?—It would ruin it. There is nothing left to work on out of that balance. We could not keep the staff and the hatcheries going, and we have no indication that they would even be taken over by the Government. The whole thing would be lost.