

palatability, and therefore it acts as a draw to stock. If stock can be drawn on to secondary growth in increasing numbers by top-dressing, then top-dressing becomes a most important factor for the control of secondary growth. On certain of the steep country where the pasture has virtually gone, several applications of manures will have to be made before a marked improvement of the country is shown. This will involve a heavy expenditure, which the settler in his present condition can hardly stand. Manual labour is necessary to deal with manuka, wineberry, &c., that cannot be kept down by stock.

(6.) COSTS OF GETTING REVERTED COUNTRY BACK.

Costs of getting the reverted country back into profit are extremely difficult to arrive at, as so few settlers have tackled and successfully grassed large areas that had reverted. The costs of regrassing also depend very largely on the seasons experienced and on the class and density of the growth to be dealt with. There is no doubt that if the country were swept over by a Raetihi fire the costs of getting the country back into grass would be considerably reduced. As the seasons are at present, a good deal will have to be spent actually in the cutting of secondary growth.

| | £ | s. | d. | | £ | s. | d. |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Felling manuka, wineberry, &c. (£1 5s. to £1 15s. per acre) | 0 | 2 | 6 | to | 0 | 3 | 6 |
| Seeding | 1 | 5 | 0 | | 1 | 5 | 0 |
| Fencing | 0 | 7 | 6 | to | 0 | 15 | 0 |
| Average cost per acre | £1 | 15 | 0 | to | £2 | 3 | 6 |

Given a really dry burning season, a great portion of the reverted country could be brought back to profitable condition for little more than the cost of grass seeding and repairs to fencing.

Each succeeding year up to about the sixth year there will be a small recurring cost for the felling of reappearing manuka, &c. Every four to six years hard-fern patches will in all probability need burning and a further sowing of seed. With danthonia, lotus major, and brown-top spreading into the patches, these costs will probably be greatly reduced as time goes on.

Certain of the bracken-fern areas are being brought in by crushing with cattle, but the expenditure in connection with cattle losses is almost impossible to estimate on the data secured. Top-dressing as a factor in control, with manures and cartage at their present figures, will mean a high annual expenditure on the land. For the first application only little extra stock might be carried on the poorer, steeper, run-out portions. Two hundredweight to 2½ cwt. manure per acre applied to the land annually would cost about £1 per acre. The first two to three years of top-dressing the poorer run-out lands must be regarded as a necessary expenditure to get the land back to form. Once the sward is well established again, top-dressing, to be an economic practice, should then pay for itself and show a profit in the increased stock carried. On the better papa slopes and on any fairly well grassed country top-dressing undoubtedly would pay for itself right from the offset.

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. *Extension of Time to Freehold O.R.P. Holdings.*—The time allowed under the Act to freehold a number of these holdings will shortly expire, and some settlers stated that under their present financial circumstances they are unable to exercise the right of purchase. We recommend that consideration be given to extending this right for a period of, say, ten years.

2. In addition to remissions of rent for specified periods, other financial assistance is necessary. In a great many cases many settlers have not been able to meet their obligations as far as their rent and interest is concerned. We recommend that a special fund should be provided to assist settlers in the purchase of commodities such as fencing-wire, grass-seed, manures—all of which are essentials in the bringing-back of these lands.

3. *Royalty for Destruction of Pigs.*—There were in some districts numerous complaints about the depredations of wild pigs in destroying lambs and rooting up good pastures, and we recommend that the payment of 1s. per snout, already paid in some districts, should be made general throughout the whole district under consideration, and for the whole year round.

4. *Free Railage on Manures.*—Much could be done to help settlement on these lands if settlers were enabled to manure. The cheaper the landed costs of manures the more will be used; and to encourage their greater use we recommend that manures be carried free of charge on the railways for *bona fide* settlers in the areas under consideration.

5. *Fencing Boundaries adjoining Crown Reserves.*—We recommend that some consideration be given to settlers whose lands adjoin Crown reserves in the matter of boundary-fences. This consideration could be given by an allowance in the rental, or by actual financial assistance in the erection.

6. *Research Work.*—We recommend that the Government assist generally by carrying out research as outlined below; and by lectures, field demonstrations, pamphlets, &c., do all in its power to gain and disseminate knowledge on the best and most profitable ways of farming these lands.

It was patent at the meetings and on the settlers' farms that the settlers themselves were seeking to gain information as well as to give. This problem of grassing steep forested country is comparatively new to the pastoral world, and the wonder of it is that so much of our hill country has been