

furnishing means wherewith to destroy the rabbits, what amount per acre would be required?—It would cost about 4d. per acre per annum to keep down rabbits in my country, supposing the skins were made use of, and if they realized present prices in other localities it might be more.

323. But in four or five years a smaller sum would be necessary?—I think so; still a rate would be required for years in order to keep them down. As to such a rate being levied for the purpose of providing the means for killing the rabbits, I may say we came to the conclusion such a plan would not be so effectual as would the plan of compelling individuals to kill them on their own properties. I doubt if it could be done for 4d. per acre, if the State were to kill. Such work done by the State is always more expensive than if done by private individuals. The machinery we ask for is to be put in motion in cases where the occupiers of the land will not do their duty; and is intended to have the same operation as the thistle law in Victoria. It is provided that if a man does not cut the thistles on his estate, the local body should have power to go on his estate and cut them for him. The penalty might be exercised once, but not oftener, for the cost would be so much greater that the owner would do it himself another time. In this case, if the Road Board sent its officers on to a man's land once to kill rabbits, that would be quite sufficient to convert him to the prudence of seeing to the matter for the future himself.

324. *Mr. Andrew.*] You were present when Mr. Cowan gave his evidence?—Yes.

325. Has your experience been such that you can indorse all that he has said?—Yes; but I may state that my land is not quite of the same character as Mr. Cowan's. Part of it is low undulating downs.

326. Have you much under plough?—5,000 acres has been ploughed and laid down in grass; and we have great difficulty in keeping the rabbits out of the English-grass paddocks.

327. Do you know if the rabbits destroy young trees?—Yes; they have commenced on pine trees and young fruit trees. I may mention that I have had some experience in Victoria of the rabbit nuisance.

328. Did you hold much land there?—About 20,000 acres.

329. Were you troubled with rabbits?—Yes; they commenced to come in my time.

330. How long did you suffer from the rabbit nuisance in Victoria?—About eighteen months.

331. And what was your experience?—Much the same as it has been here. The rabbits were made very light of at first, but within two years in some places the stock was completely driven off the land. I have seen in Victoria over 20,000 acres without a hoof of stock upon it, and this owing entirely to the rabbits. The land had been stocked before, and formed some of the richest and most fertile land in the colony, and moreover was interspersed with free selectors, small holdings of, say, 50 or 60 acres; and in a short time it was perfectly bare of animal life except the rabbits. I may mention the runs of Messrs. Andrew, Murray, and Calvert, of Colac, particularly.

332. Has any attempt been made to clear the runs?—Yes; the whole of the rabbits are now cleared off.

333. At what expense?—At a cost of 15s. per acre. Mr. Murray's land was for two years without any stock, and selectors' land adjoining was equally bare; and I may say the rabbits were cleared off their land not by the selectors themselves, but by the large holders, for their own protection.

334. When you say 15s. per acre, that does not include the loss of feed and so forth?—No; that was the actual expense of destroying the rabbits.

335. Have you ever taken steps to introduce into Southland natural enemies of the rabbit?—No; we have tried ferrets though, but found the place too cold and wet for them. Cats are the only things which do any good. I should like to suggest that the dog tax should be levied at per pack and not per head. We should considerably increase the number of dogs if this were done.

336. How many dogs do you keep to a pack?—About twenty and upwards, but if the tax were reduced we should increase the number.

337. Do you think a dog tax should be removed altogether?—It should be made a nominal sum for dogs used for the destruction of rabbits.

338. *The Chairman.*] Do you think anything could be done with regard to poisoning rabbits?—No; but I may mention we have lately had a proposal submitted to us for destroying rabbits, but it was submitted to us under a pledge of secrecy, as the inventor thinks he may get a bonus from the Government if it is successful. From what we saw of the plan, we did not think it likely to prove a great success, owing to the expense of working it.

339. *Mr. Andrew.*] Have you ever heard of rabbits being destroyed by syphilis?—It was said to have been tried in Victoria, and many people would not eat rabbits on that account; but I have the best authority for saying it was never attempted.

340. Can you suggest any other method of killing rabbits except by means of dogs and nets?—Traps would be very useful, and would be perhaps the most effectual mode, if we could get men accustomed to the work. Hitherto we have never succeeded in getting good trappers. They had some in Victoria, and the traps consequently were most successful.

341. Is there anything else you would like to say to the Committee?—In reference to the rate for providing machinery under the proposed Act, I may say the objection to it in Southland was solely upon the ground that it was thought the rate was being raised for the purpose of forming a fund out of which to kill the rabbits on large properties, and people thought it unfair that the inhabitants generally should be called upon to pay for this. We believe that the machinery we propose will be quite sufficient, especially if power be given to one or two persons to call the machinery of the Act into operation. Landowners would hail with pleasure any attempt to relieve them of the pest. Under this Act each owner would be glad to give information, if his neighbour were a nuisance. I do not think a rate to form a fund for killing rabbits would be generally acceptable. I would suggest that compensation should be given to the pastoral tenant who may be compelled to kill rabbits on Crown lands.