

578. *Mr. McKenzie*: Nearly the whole of that country is taken up by absentees?—Yes, the principals are not in the country.

579. *Mr. W. C. Smith.*] These principals are pretty well off, are they not?—That is another thing. I cannot say.

*Mr. McKenzie*: They are companies; there are widows and children who have interests.

580. *Mr. Lake.*] Do you not think, looking at the possibility of some of these runs being thrown up, and also to the fact that a good many of them are still in the hands of the Crown, would it not be a relief if the Crown were to pay some of the cost of the rabbiting?—The Government already spend a very large amount in clearing the Crown lands of the pest.

581. And if any of these were put up and let, would the Government continue to pay the cost of rabbiting on their own lands?—Yes.

582. *Mr McKenzie.*] As a matter of fact, with the exception of a few runs near the West Coast, and far off in the interior, any runs that are abandoned are immediately taken up?—Not only taken up, but runs have been let within the last few months, the rents given being double, and, in one case, treble, the upset prices fixed by the Land Board.