

*Hon. Mr. Holmes:* Oh, no.

27. *Hon. Mr. Menzies.*] I gather from what you have stated that you think, upon the whole, so far as your observation extends, that the Act has worked satisfactorily, in so far as that it has diminished the number of rabbits in the area in which they were most numerous a year ago?—Yes. I do not know whether it is due to the administration of the Act or the action of the settlers; but, so far as I know, the evil is lessened.

28. But the area of infested country is extending?—Yes.

29. You referred to the back of Canterbury: is it extending elsewhere?—I am afraid it is extending in the North Island as well, up the East Coast, although there is a great effort to confine it to the Wellington Province. At the present moment the Hawke's Bay runholders are erecting a fence twenty-one miles in length. I was there the other day, and I am sorry to say I saw rabbits on the wrong side of the fence, so I take it that the settlers have been a little too late.

30. But your remarks as to the administration apply here as well as to the South Island?—Yes.

31. Does anything suggest itself to you for reducing the rabbits in the high country in which hitherto no effectual measures have been applied?—No. I have already stated what the Land Department did so far as it could to assist the Rabbit Department; but regarding the actual mode of killing I have no suggestion to make.

32. *Mr. McMillan.*] Can you give the Committee any information with regard to the Marlborough and Amuri Districts?—I saw Mr. Bullen the other day, and asked him about the matter; and he tells me that the ferrets keep the rabbits within a safe limit: in other words, he has succeeded in abating the evil so far as he is concerned.

33. Yes, I understand that he has got over that difficulty; but is it not a fact that the rabbits are spreading away from that district?—I learn so from the newspapers; and that the settlers in the Amuri District have taken the matter into very serious consideration.

34. In regard to the runs abandoned in Otago, I think you stated that the Government made arrangements with the adjoining owners to keep the rabbits down?—Not on the abandoned country, but on the country that was withheld from settlement from the original runs.

35. *Mr. McKenzie.*] You mean land that has not been disposed of?—Yes, such as in the Ida Valley and in the Upper Clutha Valley. The department has been unable to arrange for the great back-country away up the mountains.

36. *Mr. McMillan.*] You also stated that a number of small runs were abandoned and you made larger runs of them. Would that in any way tend to reduce the rabbits?—It would be better if small runs could be maintained; but the fact is that the thing did not work. The country referred to is very mountainous, and the people who took up these runs had not sufficient resources. There was a continual throwing-up of the runs. The department, taught by experience that this sort of thing was likely to go on, favoured the letting of the country in larger areas.

37. Then the country was not suitable for small runs?—Yes, it was suitable for runs of twelve and fifteen thousand acres. There were little valleys in between and slopes on the sides of the hills. These areas might carry from two to four thousand sheep.

38. You say the Land Department has been working in concert with the Rabbit Department for the extermination of the rabbits. Would it not be better if the Rabbit Department was under the control of the Land Department altogether?—I do not see that it would make any difference. Assistance is already given by one department to the other, just as if they were under one control. The Commissioners of Crown Lands assist in every way they possibly can.

39. I have no doubt that that is so; but is it not just possible that the reverse might be the case?—It never has been. Such is conceivable, no doubt.

40. *Hon. Mr. Walker.*] You state that you anticipate in a few years there will be myriads of the rabbits coming down on the Canterbury Plains. Can you form an idea of the direction whence they will come?—From the mountains.

41. From the McKenzie country mountains?—Yes. At present, I am informed, they are extending very much there, especially in that part called Mesopotamia.

42. *Mr. Cowan.*] Are you aware that the Government has been spending money in the destruction of rabbits on the abandoned country?—Yes.

43. In Southland that has been done to a considerable extent?—Yes.

44. You stated also that you did not feel in a position to give an opinion as to the best means of eradicating the rabbits?—No, I do not.

45. My own view is this: that, while poisoned oats are a capital remedy in winter, yet in summer some incentive should be given to the destruction of rabbits. Do you think a bonus given by the Government for rabbits killed in summer would have a very beneficial effect in reducing the pest?—I think it is worth trying. Mr. Bailey thinks that the Government should communicate with the eminent French chemist, M. Pasteur, to ascertain whether he could not, within his great knowledge, devise some fatal epidemic disease with which to inoculate the rabbits.

46. *Hon. Mr. Walker.*] The remedy he discovered was for hydrophobia?—Yes. He has also made a valuable discovery in reference to the treatment of disease in silkworms, which is said to be worth millions to France.

47. *Mr. Cowan.*] Looking at the question from a general point of view, is it not a fact that the interests of the Government are extending every year in regard to this question?—Yes, because the evil is diminishing the carrying-capacity of the lands, and, by an indirect process, the rents.

48. Is it not in your knowledge that there are applications for reductions in Otago?—Yes; but more on account of the low price of wool and tallow.

49. But is it not within your knowledge that, in addition to the low value of wool, the small carrying-power of the country is assigned?—Yes, that tells as well; but the principal reason assigned by the runholders at the present time is the depression in prices.