

We should be better without them, as they only mislead people. They tell people at one time that there is nothing to be afraid of in regard to the rabbit nuisance, and soon afterwards they say the position is most serious, and that the country is swarming with rabbits. If they would go about and inspect the country they would be of some use.

226. Are you in favour of placing the administration of this Act in the hands of local bodies?—I am not prepared to say, because I do not know how that would work. I should say, however, that no change could be for the worse.

227. You have not thought the matter out?—No.

228. And you have no suggestion to make?—No.

229. Would you refer the administration to County Councils and so on, or to trustees specially appointed?—I think it would work if Boards were specially appointed for the purpose. A proposal was made at a meeting the other day that the sheep-farmers should elect members to constitute such a body; and I believe there is a proposal on foot now to ask Parliament to pass a Bill to create such Boards, with powers to rate the persons interested. The idea is also, if possible, to borrow £10,000 from the Government to put up this fence. It will require about sixty miles of wire-netting.

230. Are there any unoccupied Crown lands in the district?—Yes; there is a considerable quantity on the back of the Kaikoura Ranges.

231. Are those the lands you were just now speaking of?—No. There is a considerable portion not held by anybody. They are now killing wild sheep on it.

232. Are they taking steps to kill the rabbits as well?—No.

233. Perhaps there are no rabbits?—I do not know. I think most likely there are. The Inspector's idea in suspending the Act was that they said the Bank of New Zealand were endeavouring to clean the sheep, and it was a pity to harass them by putting the Rabbit Act into force.

234. Do you think that the duties entailed by the two Acts are too much for the same set of men to perform?—I do not think so. They have brought all this trouble upon themselves. If they had taken steps a little while ago the people would have done their best to keep the rabbits under. Now it will be a much more serious thing to get them under than it was two years ago.

235. *Mr. Fulton.*] Does poisoning cause distribution in the same way as ferrets do?—I think it causes the rabbits to clear out. They go away in a body. They get disgusted with the smell from the dead rabbits.

236. And do you think it would have that effect as much as ferrets?—No, I do not think so.

237. Do you breed cats for the purpose of destroying rabbits?—No; we pick them up wherever we can get them.

238. Is there anything which would prevent the administration of the Rabbit and Sheep Act at the same time?—I do not think so.

239. Then the action of the Inspectors was simply for the purpose of not putting too much pressure on the owners of the property referred to at the same time?—Yes.

240. *Hon. Mr. Menzies.*] I think I gather, Sir Norman, from your evidence you consider that the great difficulty in exterminating the rabbits arises from the Crown lands not being properly dealt with by the Inspectors?—I do not think it is so much the Crown lands, because there is very little in our neighbourhood: the lands I speak of are all lands held by runholders.

241. High lands?—Some of it; but none of it is so high or rough that you could not get rid of the rabbits if you liked. Ours is high country.

242. What elevation?—The range is about 5,000ft. high.

243. But in that kind of country there is a greater difficulty in exterminating the rabbits than there would be in the low country?—There would be, but the difficulty is not very serious. A lot of the land you could ride over.

244. But in such country as you have in the line of hills running to Mount Cook there would be a difficulty?—I should say there would be; but that is country that I know nothing about. I am speaking of the country in our neighbourhood.

245. Is there much forest in that neighbourhood?—Very little.

246. Have you had any experience in dealing with rabbits in forest?—No; but, to the best of my belief, as a rule they will not go into birch-bush.

247. The Committee have gathered that one of the serious difficulties will be to exterminate rabbits on high rough country, precipitous and broken, and subject to heavy snows during the winter. Now, what mode could you suggest which would be likely to be successful in such country as that?—I think the only thing there is poison and ferrets. You will find that when the snow is about that is the time when you can poison rabbits: there is nothing to eat, and they take poison greedily.

248. You think the snow would drive them from the hills?—There is no doubt about it.

249. Do you think that the ferret is the best natural enemy to let loose upon them?—I think the ferrets have done very good work. Mr. Bullen, in our neighbourhood, has cleared his run with ferrets only. I frequently ride through about nine miles of his run, and I have not seen a rabbit for the last six months, whereas you used to see swarms of rabbits.

250. And to what elevation would the ferrets thrive?—They will go wherever the rabbits will go, I think.

251. Have you any experience of the work of other natural enemies, such as weasels, polecats, and martens?—No; the only other natural enemy we tried were cats.

252. You may have some experience of the Grampians in the way of preventing the multiplication of rabbits and mountain-hares?—No; but I know the way in which they do increase, and hares too.

253. But you have not been familiar with any of the ranges of the Grampians?—No, I do not know the Grampian country.