

254. *Mr. McMillan.*] You have stated to the Committee that in the Kalkoura district the Act was practically suspended by the Inspectors. I suppose you are aware that the Inspectors have no power to suspend the Act?—I understood so; also that the Committee which sat in 1884 recommended that the Rabbit and Sheep Act should be strictly carried out.

255. Was it not a fact that the difficulty the Inspectors had to contend with in regard to the land you have alluded to was more due to a question of ownership than anything else?—That arose when the country was thrown up in January last; but for some time previous to that the Bank of New Zealand were working the country, so that there could not then have been any such difficulty.

256. Then, while it was in possession of the Bank of New Zealand sufficient means were not taken to keep the rabbits down?—The only means taken were three men employed in poisoning this large tract of country.

257. When the bank threw it up, how long was it before any further steps were taken?—It was abandoned for a month—from the 24th of January till the 23rd of February—and when the Sheep Department took it over, we urged Inspector Forster to eradicate the rabbits. He did all he could to evade the responsibility, and said the department were responsible for the sheep, but not for rabbits.

258. How long have the rabbits been on your country?—There have been a few there, I suppose, for nine years.

259. Did they ever get very thick on it?—No.

260. What is the extent of your country?—It is about seventy-five thousand acres.

261. And how many sheep does it carry?—About fifty thousand sheep.

262. Can you tell the Committee the annual cost you are put to in keeping down the rabbits on that country?—Our ferrets cost us about £1 apiece to breed. I suppose it costs us about £300 a year.

263. I am speaking of the bonuses you give for the skins as well?—We had a man shooting in the winter of 1883, and paid him about £40; but we have not been doing anything since, except turning out ferrets and cats for the last two years.

264. So that you think £300 would be an outside expenditure?—About £300, I think, it costs us.

265. *Mr. Lance.*] You have a fence running over the Cloudy Range?—Two fences.

266. Would it be of any use to keep the rabbits from coming from the southwards to put wire-netting on that?—Yes, I think it would do good.

267. Have you men hunting rabbits on the Cloudy Range now?—Yes.

268. Is it not a fact that the rabbits have increased lately?—No; they have decreased. There are not so many there now as there were this time last year.

269. You say that if they are poisoned in the Clarence Valley it will drive them up on to the Cloudy Range?—I do not say, however, on that account that we wish them to stop poisoning there, so as not to drive them up.

270. The best thing to do in that case would be to do it simultaneously?—Yes.

271. When the Government begin poisoning in that valley, therefore, you will have to poison simultaneously?—Well, we have got so very few rabbits that it would be hardly worth while poisoning. We have a man there to keep a look-out for rabbits, and if a sufficient number turn up we will poison them at once.

272. In regard to these two fences they talk of putting up, if they were erected would that, in your opinion, make the country south of that fairly safe from rabbits?—I think they would be a very great protection. I really do not know, however, whether they have decided to erect those two fences or not.

273. I have a report from the gentlemen who have been out; and they have surveyed three lines. You think this country would be a good basis to commence operations?—There is no doubt it would be a great protection.

274. They propose to carry this from Lake Tennyson, and thence into a black-birch bush?—I have never been up Lake Tennyson, and I do not know that country. The people who do know it all seem to agree, however, that the rabbits cannot get round the head of Lake Tennyson.

275. Would it form a complete barrier if extended into that black-birch forest?—I do not know the country there, so I cannot say; but I do not think rabbits are likely to go into black-birch forest. There is nothing for them to eat there, and it is too wet and cold for them.

276. If they could get round this fence, and round the backbone of the Island, there would be no use of it?—Exactly. If they are not stopped there you might as well throw up the sponge.

277. *Captain Russell.*] Do I understand you to say that the rabbits had materially increased around you since placing ferrets upon your country?—Yes.

278. You say you have nearly exterminated all the rabbits in your own country?—Yes.

279. Did you use the word "exterminated" advisedly, or do you mean you dispersed the rabbits?—It is more extermination; because we have not spread them on to our neighbours' country, to the best of my belief. I know places where there have been several colonies of rabbits; and, what with poisoning, and ferrets, and cats, there are no rabbits there now. I do not mean to say that we have exterminated them altogether; but we have reduced their number.

280. You think they have been actually destroyed, and not driven off?—I am sure of it. The neighbour above us has got no rabbits at all.

281. You seem to dread the migration of rabbits, owing to poisoning?—Yes. As I have already said, however, I do not wish it to be inferred that for this reason we wish our neighbours to stop poisoning.

282. I suppose you think that any complete grappling with the rabbits can only be performed by erecting fences, as well as poisoning and natural enemies?—Fences will be a very great protection; but I think it is questionable whether the same amount of money spent in poisoning and