

the committee afterwards found it necessary to disband. The committee was persecuted by the department in every way. When they made any complaint to the department in Wellington—and there were complaints made by the score by myself on their behalf—no notice was taken of them. I had many complaints to prefer myself as a settler, but I could get nothing done in regard to them until Mr. Dick happened to come to Dunedin at the time he was in charge of the department. A deputation of settlers waited on him in Dunedin and asked him to do something in the matter; and the result of that was that Mr. Dick, after making inquiry, sent Mr. Miller and Mr. Dorris to do duty there. Mr. Miller was appointed as Inspector; and Mr. Dick made application to Superintendent Weldon, of Dunedin, to get him the best man he could find to act as agent; and Mr. Dorris was selected for that purpose. Both these men were giving great satisfaction to the bulk of the small settlers in the execution of their duty; but in carrying out their work they gave offence to some of the large owners, who never gave them a moment's peace until they were successful in getting them removed. Mr. Bayly came to the district in 1835, and immediately afterwards recommended that Miller should be removed to Queenstown; and on Miller leaving the district Dorris was dismissed. Some time afterwards, however, he was reinstated, but not in that district. This gave great offence to the settlers in the district, because they looked upon it that it was done by the department to please one or two of the large owners. The settlers waited on me, as the member for the district, to request that an inquiry should be made into the circumstances. I sent the requisition up to Wellington. The settlers felt it very much that just at the poisoning season two new men who were ignorant of the boundaries should be sent to the district. Whether rightly or wrongly, they certainly blamed the Superintending Inspector for the change that had taken place. Complaints were made against Mr. Bayly himself of such a nature that I thought it advisable to send them up to Wellington, to the Government. I made a direct charge against Mr. Bayly for neglecting his duty in the district when he was sent up there to inspect it. The nature of that complaint was that he passed through the district without looking either to the right or the left, riding along the main road; and, notwithstanding he did not see for himself the state of the country, he took upon himself the responsibility of removing one officer and dismissing another, giving great dissatisfaction to the settlers. To that communication I could never get an answer from the department. In October last two settlers were summoned before the Magistrates in Palmerston for having rabbits on their lands; and these cases failed through the Inspector not having served proper notice. They were of a similar description to the notices I have shown the Committee to-day. Some time after the Premier came down to Dunedin, and a deputation of settlers waited on him and asked that some change should be made in respect to the matter. The Premier promised that an inspection of the district should be made, and he sent down to the district a Mr. Sutton, to make inquiries and report. Mr. Sutton, I understand, was then a dismissed officer from the Wairarapa, and certainly showed from the way he went about his business that he was not a competent person for the duties he had been asked to perform. He came there more to protect the department than to give relief to the settlers. I say this from the way he set about his business. I brought the matter before the Premier again, and the result was that he sent down to the district the chief of the department, Mr. Cooper, who was to override Mr. Sutton in the inquiry to be held. A large amount of evidence was taken before Mr. Cooper, and you will find that the report which he made bears out all the complaints of the settlers. The report states:—

“I found the complaints to come mainly from the holders of comparatively small properties, who allege that, do what they will to reduce the pest on their respective holdings, the rabbits come down in swarms from the large runs and overrun them, devouring their grass and growing crops. This is undoubtedly the fact and, in the nature of things, must remain so in spite of every effort that can be made to check it by the officers of the department, by the smaller property-holders, and by the runholders and other large proprietors themselves. The small holdings are composed of the best soil and the least broken country; whilst the runs comprise the poorer and more rugged hill-tops—difficult and often impossible of access; and among whose rocky summits and precipitous gullies the rabbits breed, almost undisturbed, in tens of thousands; whence they issue in hordes in search of food, and descend upon the cultivated grounds below.”

Therefore, after hearing all the evidence on the subject, he confirmed the general complaint of the settlers that the pest was not being kept down in the district. At this inquiry it was quite plain to any unbiassed person who was present that the large owners in the district had constituted themselves at the inquiry the protectors of the officers of the department; and their attitude certainly made a very bad impression on the minds of the settlers. But up to the present we have had no remedy whatsoever to our grievances; and I may say that the settlers in my district have been so much annoyed with rabbits for years past that they have lost all faith in the department. They have no hope whatever of getting anything done by the department managed from Wellington. I believe, if one-half of the money spent by the Government through the department in the County of Waihemo had been handed to the local body there, there would have been far more work done for the money and far more satisfaction given to the settlers, who would have thus had better control in keeping down the pest than could possibly be the case with a department managed from Wellington.

1820. *Hon. the Chairman.*] No doubt Mr. Cooper says in his report that the rabbits are swarming off the hills. I gather from his report that efforts are not made to kill the rabbits on the high country?—That is all that the settlers have been complaining of.

Mr. BAYLY further examined.

1821. *Mr. McKenzie.*] It is part of your duty to make an inspection of various districts in the colony in regard to the rabbit pest?—It is.

1822. You paid a visit to Shag Valley, in the County of Waihemo, in 1884?—In each year.