

449. If any one neglects to kill rabbits, who takes proceedings against him?—The Inspector.

450. Is the right to take proceedings confined to the Inspector?—Yes.

451. Supposing the Inspector is careless and neglects to do his duty, a private individual who feels aggrieved by the neglect of his neighbour cannot take proceedings?—No; but he can, I believe, demand that the Inspector should visit certain grounds to see if there are rabbits upon them.

452. And you are satisfied that your Inspectors are doing their work properly?—I have had no complaints lodged against them.

453. *Hon. Mr. Holmes.*] What steps have you taken towards cleaning the unoccupied lands in the Wakatipu District?—With the exception of one or two contracts let for some of those grounds, I know of nothing that has been done, beyond turning out the natural enemy.

454. And the Government have allowed the rabbits to increase there just as they please?—Most of the land that could have been poisoned would be found, I think, to be occupied. The rest of that land I think it would be impossible to get at. Nearly all the lands are in the occupation of owners. Those that are not are simply impracticable.

455. But a great mass of that land was unoccupied until recently? I suppose there was a million acres?—I do not think so. I was up there about two years ago; I know it was occupied then.

456. Similar land, surrounding the Wanaka and the Mount Beza, for example, has been dealt with. How was it that the Government failed to deal with the land in the Wakatipu District?—I know of no land there unoccupied, where rabbits were numerous at all, that has not been dealt with. I think all the available land is in the hands of owners.

457. But during the last twelve months rabbits have increased from the Wakatipu downwards towards Invercargill?—They have not been reduced, as I said before, in the same sense as in former years; but I do not think the numbers have increased. Down in Southland there are less this year than ever, notably in Wallace County, with the exception, perhaps, of the Waionui River.

458. Are you aware that rabbits are spreading very rapidly towards Lake Wakatipu?—I am not aware of that. I am aware that a few have been seen in that part.

459. Are they in the Hakateramea Valley yet?—There were more there years ago than there are now.

460. Are they spreading in the McKenzie country?—I was up there about six weeks ago and I think I saw four rabbits between Benbow station and the Hopkins, and the proprietor informed me that there had not been any rabbits seen for a long time before that.

461. Suppose you were told by a party who went over the country recently that he had found rabbits almost continuously from Malvern Hills towards Mount Cook as far as Tekapo, would you believe him?—I should certainly believe him as far as the head of the Ohao, keeping on the west side of it, as that has been an infested country for years; but not on the eastern side.

462. Are there many rabbits at Malvern Hills station?—There are.

463. And at Benmore?—Comparatively few, except on the western side of the lake.

464. And at Moa Flat?—I heard they are very much reduced there compared to what they were.

465. Then there is country that seems to be lost sight of—Mareroa and Te Auea?—I have reports of that country.

466. And have the owners been using diligence to keep the nuisance under?—I know of nothing to the contrary.

467. Are you of opinion that we should continue the importation of stoats and weasels?—I am, for the back-country.

468. Have you ever turned out any ferrets bought by the Government on lands occupied by private persons?—I have turned them out at the head of Lake Wanaka, and leased lands of the Crown—ferrets, stoats, and weasels.

469. What price do the Government pay for phosphorus?—I could not say from memory. About two years ago we were short of phosphorus, and there was none to be had in the colony; and there was a large shipment on board, so that the people could get it.

470. And what price did they pay for it?—4s. 6d.

471. [I may say, for the information of the Committee, that the place to import phosphorus from is Burgoyne, Burbridge, and Cyriax, 19, Coleman Street, London.] You have not given the Committee any idea of the amount of unoccupied Crown lands in the South Island—that is, land fit for agriculture or occupation as grazing land?—I certainly could not give you any idea. The Land Department could do that.

472. Are you in favour of a bonus on the exportation of skins?—No.

473. Are you in favour of Government purchasing skins at a fixed price?—No.

474. Why?—Because it would be an inducement to rabbit-farming. It would induce people to breed rabbits where now they destroy them.

475. Would it be an inducement to kill rabbits if a bonus were given for the skins of young ones?—In summer time a bonus might be given for skins not beyond a certain length.

476. Suppose a bonus of 2d. were given for rabbit-skins, would not this help to solve the unemployed difficulty?—I do not think so.

477. Many men could earn good wages at that?—It would have the effect of unsteady-ing a lot of men who have now settled down to other occupations.

478. Would it not be also desirable to give this bonus as a sort of compensation to settlers who are desirous of clearing their runs, the Government paying 2d. and the settler contributing another 2d.—Then, in the back, unoccupied Crown lands, which are being taken for sheep-grazing, an inducement would be offered to make more out of rabbits than anything else.