

813. His duty should simply be to see that the Boards were working efficiently?—Yes. There are so many different kinds of country to deal with in New Zealand that I do not see how, in a comprehensive system of wire-netting fencing, it could be properly controlled by one or two men. The local people should be the best judges of where the fences should be.

814. Have you had any experience of wire-netting?—Very little. I have only seen it at Starborough; and it seemed there to be effectual. They were successful in fencing in a paddock and eating down the country with sheep, and then poisoning it.

815. How is the fence formed?—I think they use 3ft. 6in. netting, sunk 6in. in the ground.

816. Is that the only description you have seen?—Yes.

817. Have you ever heard of rabbits going over it?—I cannot say that I have. I have heard of them going over a fence of 2ft. by jumping.

818. Is there a large portion of unoccupied Crown lands and reserves in your district?—The only unoccupied part is at the summit of the range—36,000 acres—and there is practically no grass on it, and there are no rabbits there. We have a number of small reserves about the township, and they are poisoned regularly.

819. Then there are no unoccupied lands in your district about which you have any difficulty in keeping down the pest?—No.

820. Have you to report any cases in the district where you have called upon the owners of land to kill the rabbits, and in which no attention has been paid to the order?—None, further than those I have regularly reported. The Magistrate's Court sits every three months, and for the last two or three Courts I have had about five or six cases; and in almost all cases the defendants have been fined £1 or £2.

821. You have no difficulty in obtaining proof of breaches of the Act?—Not as a rule. We have two or three cases pending now that were adjourned for different reasons.

822. *Hon. Mr. Holmes.*] Have you any rabbit in your district similar to the rabbit of Southland?—I think not.

823. Was the Act suspended in the case of the run held by the Bank of New Zealand for some time?—That would be the Clarence runs we have possession of now. There was an order to destroy rabbits, the same as in regard to other runs, and it is only recently we found we had to proceed further. In that instance the owners of the run during the last two or three years have turned out seven or eight hundred ferrets each year, and we considered it sufficient, as there was a marked diminution of rabbits until last season.

824. We had it in evidence that when the Bank of New Zealand held that run the Act was suspended?—It has never been suspended at all. In the case of that particular run the manager had an order to destroy rabbits, and an information was pending when the runs were abandoned.

825. Do you think the minimum fine for breaches of the Act should be increased?—£1 or £2 is quite sufficient for the small farmer to pay; whereas in the case of the Clarence Run, for instance, £50 would not, perhaps, be too much to pay.

826. Would you recommend that there should be a change in the Act, to regulate the amount of the fine in proportion to the size of the property?—I think that might be done; also according to the evidence brought forward.

827. Would you recommend the importation and breeding of stoats and weasels by the Government?—I would, certainly. I have a strong opinion that they are by far the best to be turned out.

828. Being natives of a very cold climate they would suit the colder districts of this country better than any enemies of the rabbits we could introduce?—I think so. But I do not think they would breed in confinement.

829. They could be placed on an island at liberty?—Possibly in that case they might.

830. *Hon. Mr. Menzies.*] You do not know of any instance where they have been bred in the colony?—No.

831. Are the rabbits in the Awatere of a different breed from those in the South?—I think they are the same.

832. Do you look forward to rabbits being exterminated in the colony?—That is a very large question; but I think it is to be done only by natural enemies and wire-fencing, and poisoning where it can be carried out.

833. You would rely principally on poisoning on accessible ground, and natural enemies where it is difficult of access?—Yes.

834. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Would you recommend the use of wire-netting only as a stop to rabbits spreading on to country not now infested by them?—I should cut up every infested district with wire-netting fences; but I look upon the wire-netting more as an aid to the natural enemy.

835. So as to confine the rabbits, and prevent the necessity of the natural enemy travelling over so much country?—Yes; and preventing their spreading backwards and forwards.

836. What would you do in regard to streams, some of which may be crossed by a dry shingle-bed, and others may be roaring torrents?—That would be the greatest difficulty to contend with. I should keep a man to watch, and also put the fence on the side where there were the fewest rabbits.

837. While it would be possible to do that where large objects are to be gained, do you not think this enormous expense would be an insuperable difficulty in attempting to divide the districts so minutely as you seem to think would be prudent?—I have little knowledge of the Otago District; but it appears to me that if you do not do this you are giving the country to the rabbits. Something must be done.

838. In the Wairarapa, where the rabbits are spreading all over the country, it is found that poisoning, followed up by the natural enemy, has thoroughly settled the question. Notwithstanding that, would you still advocate the enormous expense in subdividing such a country as that?—I would, because where they have been successful in clearing one district you will find that there is