

1243. Do you find that the Act works well in your district?—It does; it has given great relief in the district.
1244. Have you had any occasion to summon?—Two years ago we had to summon, and the Magistrates fined pretty heavily; but during last year we did not lay many informations.
1245. Then, you have had no difficulty in any cases you may have had to take before the Courts?—None whatever.
1246. Have you had complaints as to the manner in which the Act has been put into force?—Never.
1247. Perhaps you would not hear that if there were?—I should be sure to hear, if not directly, then indirectly.
1248. Do you think it would be a good thing to offer a bonus for skins?—It would be an assistance to the Crown tenants—a bonus in the summer time. My objection to a bonus, if it were a high bonus, is, that I am persuaded, from my previous experience, that it would lead to rabbit-farming. A small bonus for summer skins would be an assistance.
1249. Would you not advocate a bonus all the year round?—No; I would give it from the 1st November to the 31st March.
1250. Do you not think the skins would be held over?—The bonus would be so small that nothing worth more than 1d. would be tendered; and I would advocate that it be given only for skins that are unsaleable. The great thing is to guard against fraud, and that is the only way it could be done.
1251. Would you limit the bonus to skins of full size or extend it to all skins?—To all skins during the months I have mentioned. Any skin that was worth more than 1d. would not, of course, become subject to the bonus at all, because they would sell in the open market.
1252. Then you think the Government should give 1d. per skin for all skins?—Yes; and destroy them on the spot.
1253. That would hardly be a bonus?—It would not be a bonus; it would be a relief.
1254. Do you think the Act would be carried out more effectually if placed in the hands of local Boards?—No. We had local Boards in my district many years ago, and they were a great failure. I wound some of them up, and I found they had existed in a very unsatisfactory state. They did no good at all. It is my opinion that if we had been three years longer under the operation of those Boards our country would not be now worth occupying.
1255. Have you any amendments to propose in the Act?—I have not. I am of opinion that the Act, in the hands of people of discretion, is a good Act. It does not work any hardship that I know of, and it has given great relief. I cannot see any particular in which the Act, if rationally put in force, can become a nuisance or intolerance to anybody.
1256. Have you in your district any country that you find it impossible to deal effectually with?—No; I am exempt from all that class of country to a very great extent. We have no country that we cannot enter upon with poison at some time of the year.
1257. And deal with effectually?—Yes.
1258. Do you think we may look forward to the rabbit nuisance being virtually exterminated?—I do not look for extermination. I think extermination is next to impossible. Like the sandflies, they appear sometimes where you least expect them.
1259. *Hon. Mr. Williamson.*] Rabbits that have taken poison, but not sufficient to kill them, become accustomed to it?—They are very chary of taking it again. You would not catch them that year with poison.
1260. Do you not think that, in contracting to kill the rabbits in a certain district, the wisest plan is to pay so much per skin?—No, I do not agree with that, because you might be paying for more than your own skins. That opens the door to fraud. Your estate may not be much infested with rabbits and you may have a neighbour whose estate is. You may give a greater inducement to get rid of the rabbits than your neighbours, and consequently their rabbiters will sell their skins to your rabbiters, and they will divide the profits.
1261. *Hon. Mr. Acland.*] What are the conditions of the contract for killing?—It is a matter of agreement. There are so many thousand acres to clear, and we say to those who undertake the contract, “We will give you so much in addition to all the skins you may get.”
1262. And what do they contract to do?—To clear these lands as far as practicable.
1263. Within a time?—Yes.
1264. Do you go to see they are laying poison?—Yes, or trapping—and that there is a sensible diminution of the rabbit plague when the time expires.
1265. What is the value of winter skins for export?—The very outside price this year will be about 1s. per pound—2d. per skin for the very best, and down to 4d. per pound.
1266. *Hon. Mr. Robinson.*] Did you ever see fencing resorted to in order to prevent rabbits spreading?—I have.
1267. Will a fence stop them?—Yes, if well looked after. But it has not been a success.
1268. Could you put up a fence to stop them for a day?—Yes.
1269. If kept in that order would it always stop them?—Yes.
1270. Positively?—Yes.
1271. In selecting your agents, do you previously ascertain whether they have had any experience in dealing with rabbits?—Yes.
1272. *Mr. Cowan.*] You think that you can deal effectually with all the country in your district?—Yes.
1273. By “effectually” do you mean this will be an annually-recurring operation?—It will always be so, in my opinion.
1274. You have been a long time in Southland?—Twenty-five years.