

many of the Inspectors themselves are insufficient supervision to see that they are doing their duty. It appears to me that many of them, as soon as they are appointed Inspectors, think that nobody whatever has anything to do with them, and they can do just as they like, and work or not just as it pleases them. I observe that in many cases the men do very little indeed for the money they get, and I consider they require more supervision. I understand that these Inspectors are appointed in Wellington, and they consider themselves to be responsible in a great measure to the Government here. It would be better, I think, if there was a head Inspector in each district, who should have the power to employ those whom he considered to be efficient men, and discharge them without reference to the Government at all. It would put the men much more under his control, and they would be much more likely to do their work properly.

1355. You would establish a central office in Dunedin for Otago, for instance?—Yes—have a head man there to go round the district and see that the Inspectors were doing their duty. Either that, or the supervision of rabbits should be under some local authority, such as County Councils.

1356. You think some form of local Board should be adopted?—Yes.

1357. Do you mean to place the whole administration of the Act in the hands of a Board?—Yes—take it entirely out of the hands of the General Government.

1358. Do you think, by that means you would be able to secure sufficient unanimity of action?—The Boards would require to be pretty extensive, and take in a large tract of country.

1359. Do you think they would work so that settlers would be induced to poison simultaneously?—I think so. The settlers now see that it is to their interest to kill down the rabbits, and, as a rule, they endeavour to work into one another's hands, so as to gain the desired object, much better now than years ago.

1360. Have you thought out sufficiently what form of local Board you would recommend?—I have given it a great deal of consideration, but it is a difficult matter to come to a decision about. I have come to the conclusion that it is highly necessary to make some alteration in the present system, because it seems to be very expensive, and not at all sufficient, to my mind. I have been accustomed for a great many years to have management of properties, and I have had a good deal of experience of what men are.

1361. It has been suggested that trustees should be elected, with power to levy a rate. Would you recommend that form?—I would not like to give a definite opinion on that point.

1362. The opinion seems to be that County Councils and Road Boards would not administer the Act sufficiently stringently—that some of the members might be inclined to show favouritism?—Such might be the case, but I do not think there would be much of that so far as my experience goes of County Councils. I have been a member of a County Council ever since the system was adopted, and I always found Councillors very fair in matters of that kind.

1363. Have you treated your freehold and leasehold lands alike?—Pretty nearly.

1364. What term have the leaseholds to run?—The large leasehold that has been referred to just now—a part of it has got seventeen or eighteen years to run.

1365. On that would you carry on rabbit-killing just as on a freehold?—We make no difference even if our lease expired next year. I may tell you that when the rabbits first showed themselves on our place, and I saw they required to be stringently treated, I told our managers that, if they did not keep them sufficiently under control and got fined by the Inspectors, they would there and then lose their billets. And ever since the rabbits have come we have never been summoned.

1366. Have your sheep diminished on account of the pest?—Slightly, but not to any great extent. Of course our increase has diminished very considerably. From an average increase of about 70 per cent. on the Kawarau Run we now average about 45.

1366A. And in regard to wool?—We clip about $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. less wool per sheep than we did formerly, and it is not of as good quality.

1367. *Mr. Fulton.*] And how about deaths?—The death-rate formerly averaged $3\frac{1}{2}$, and since the rabbits came it has become $10\frac{1}{2}$. There is another run we have—Deepdell—where the death-rate formerly was 6 per cent., and for the last few years it has averaged $13\frac{1}{2}$; while the increase was formerly 67, and is now 45.

1368. *Hon. the Chairman.*] And you attribute that to the rabbits?—Not exactly, at Deepdell, entirely. There we have lost a great deal of winter country, and that has had the effect of reducing the increase.

1369. Have you unoccupied Crown lands adjoining your lands?—Not adjoining our Crown lands, but we have adjoining our freehold lands.

1370. And what has been done upon them?—Last year the Inspector of the district neglected to poison a block which was pretty badly infested with rabbits, which did us a great deal of harm.

1371. How did that neglect come about?—I do not know, I am sure. It was the fault of the Inspector, I suppose. I think he called for tenders for poisoning it, and thought the tenders were too high, or something of that sort. Anyhow, there was no tender accepted, and no proper poisoning done.

1372. Has inquiry ever been made of you as to whether you would undertake the poisoning?—We offered to poison it. We had poisoned it for two years previously.

1373. But they thought you asked too much for it?—I suppose so. Last year it was less money than we got for it before. The work was put up for tender, and we tendered along with others.

1374. What is the usual amount for poisoning in that way?—They generally offer a certain block of ten or twelve thousand acres, and take a lump sum.

1375. Would it differ very much as to the country?—Yes.

1376. What would be the price for ten thousand acres?—I think it was about £100 or £120.

1377. Would that include poisoning in winter and killing in summer?—Only poisoning in winter to the satisfaction of the Inspector.