

629. But you cannot make them all purchase?—No; when I see the poison is badly mixed I endeavour to have it properly done; bad grain does considerable harm: I mean when the grain is only half poisoned it only sickens the rabbits, and they will not take it again.

630. It must be bad for the next neighbour?—Yes; it is very hard on him.

631. *Mr. Duncan.*] Where do the settlers get their phosphorus from?—I really cannot say where they get it.

632. Do the Government keep it?—Yes; there is a large quantity kept at Dunedin office, and I can get it up for those who require it.

633. *Mr. Anderson.*] In clause 8 of the petition it says you did not communicate with Ross between the 2nd and the 23rd April?—I saw Ross on 2nd April, but I do not think I saw him between the 2nd and 22nd April. There is another man named Lindsay mentioned in the petition; I saw him, but, as I said before, I did not wish to do anything until the poisoning commenced.

634. *Mr. Duncan.*] When were these two men put on Ross's ground?—On the 24th April.

635. *Mr. Anderson.*] Did you see either Ross or Lindsay after this petition was sent away?—Yes; I saw Lindsay.

636. Did he say why it was sent?—He said Ross was pig-headed and determined, and that he (Lindsay) regretted having been mixed up in it. He told me there was another petition going round the district, but he would have nothing to do with it.

637. *Mr. Duncan.*] What state was this man's crops in on 24th April?—The oats had been partially destroyed before being reaped.

638. To what extent: were they still standing on the land?—The turnips were being damaged on this date.

639. *Mr. McKenzie.*] Have you given notices to all the settlers in the district now?—I have sent out about two hundred. I have included all where there is likely to be any trouble.

640. Will you leave your maps and papers, so that we can look over them?—Yes, certainly until my return from Blenheim.

MONDAY, 26th AUGUST, 1889. [In absence of the Hon. Mr. Acland the Hon. Mr. PHARAZYN in chair.]

ALFRED DOUGLASS examined.

641. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What is your name?—Alfred Douglass.

642. And you are a Chief Inspector?—Yes.

643. You are aware, Mr. Douglass, I suppose, that your attendance before this Committee has been requested in connection with a petition signed by two farmers named Lindsay and Ross?—Yes.

644. Are you acquainted with the contents of the petition?—I have heard of it, but have not seen it. [Petition was here read.] Of course, I can only speak in a general way about the matter.

645. Probably the better way would be for you to state what you know about it, and then questions can be asked you afterwards. Will you please tell the Committee what you know?—All I can say is that Mr. Hull, the Sub-Inspector, has come down to Dunedin on several occasions to see me on matters connected with this district of Dunback, which was certainly in a backward state as regards rabbits in the autumn. I advised him not to do much at present, but to get along as quietly as possible until the poisoning season commenced. In this particular district one of the settlers, named Duncan, made several complaints about his crops being eaten by rabbits coming from Ross's boundary. Of course, under those conditions, Inspector Hull was bound to take notice of it. Inspector Hull told me he had called at Ross's, and asked him to put a man on to protect Duncan's crop of turnips. Bell put on two men the day after he was asked, but that Ross had not. I thoroughly upheld the action of my officers throughout. Of course, all the statements in this petition are not quite correct. For instance, I was in Court the whole of the time, and, so far as my memory goes, all the Resident Magistrate asked Mr. Hull was if he had visited the place after or just previously to the men being discharged, and the Inspector said that he had not, as Ross had promised to continue the work himself. The Magistrate then made some remarks to the effect that it would have been wiser for him to have seen for himself instead of trusting to his agent. As a matter of fact, at this time Mr. Hull had to go to Naseby, at which place he had to attend to seventeen cases, so that it was impossible for him to have looked after this particular work at that time. It was impossible to kill all the rabbits, and my desire was that things should be left as quietly as possible until poisoning season.

646. Did the petitioners complain to you with regard to the Sub-Inspector's conduct?—I will first read a letter from Mr. Ross on the subject, addressed to Mr. John McKenzie, dated the 19th July, 1889, presented to the Minister of Lands, and forwarded to me for remarks: "I regret having to bring under your notice a recent rabbit case in which I consider I have been very hard dealt with. It is as follows: On the 2nd April the Inspector advised me to put a man on on the boundary between Mr. John Duncan and myself. I said I had already done so, and in the course of three or four days I intended to begin poisoning. He objected to this, and said he did not want any one to begin poisoning till the 1st June. In the meantime I kept the man on the boundary; that would be quite sufficient then. We agreed to this. Without any further notice he (the Inspector) put a man on on the 24th April for two weeks. I refused to pay for this man, as I considered I was badly used, and would test the case, with the result that I was summoned on the 10th July, and lost the case, the Magistrate remarking that the Act gave the Inspector such absolute power that he had no alternative but give judgment against me. The case was of such a glaring nature that the Magistrate felt it his duty to severely overhaul the Inspector. The Farmers' Club also took such notice of the case as to appoint a deputation to wait on the County Council with a view of