

666. You did not make an examination?—No. Last May I went more carefully through the district, and then the rabbits were bad.

667. When did Inspector Hull come to the district?—In October.

668. He came in October, and the first action he took was against Ross and Lindsay; but there was no action tried to put the rabbits down in a general manner?—Inspector Hull was bringing all pressure to bear without taking actual proceedings. He sent out a lot of notices, and extra means were employed.

669. The whole gist of the thing is this: Section 11 of the Rabbit Act has been put into operation or force against these two men, but against no one else in the district, though the rabbits were bad all over. Hull said he was obliged to take the action he did because he had received complaints from Duncan; and Ross and Lindsay complain they have been harshly treated in the matter. Hull acknowledges that if it had not been for the complaints he would have waited till the poisoning season commenced, and that met with your approval?—I told him to let the things go on as quietly as possible.

670. Were you aware that there was a very strong personal feeling between Duncan and Ross?—No; I never heard that there had been the slightest ill-feeling between them. I did not know but what they were the best of friends.

671. Do you not think, in taking action, that every one should be treated alike?—I should certainly say so, after the simultaneous poison had taken place. Every one should be made to follow it up, and go on killing.

672. Then, suppose the Minister during the year removed the Inspector and put another man on, what would be the result?—It would be in the same position as it was before Inspector Hull came there.

673. There would be twelve months' loss?—Yes.

674. Is the district bad now?—Only in small patches.

675. Was there any complaint against Quartley? Was his removal occasioned through the settlers or was it done solely by the department itself?—I have no papers in reference to Quartley's removal, but I believe he asked to be removed, as he thought it was getting too hot for him.

676. Do you not think it was strange for Hull, coming a stranger to the district, dismissing an old agent and taking on a new man?—Doris was dismissed or retrenched before he (Hull) came there.

677. *Mr. Lance.*] By whom?—Quartley, before Hull took charge. Doris's name was mentioned, and he asked me to reinstate him, but I told him I had left the matter with Mr. Hull to select his own agent.

678. *Hon. Mr. Miller.*] Did it come out formerly in Court that Ross had not put on this man?—Ross's own son was examined, and said they were not constantly employed.

679. And Ross wished to tender more evidence, but the Magistrate would not allow him?—Yes.

680. Did the evidence given in Court satisfy you that Ross had not complied with his instructions?—Yes, most certainly; and I do not see how Inspector Hull could help putting a man on when he knew what had taken place. He could not possibly avoid it.

681. Was there anything in the proceedings to lead you to suppose or to conclude that this action was the result of bad feeling between the farmers?—I heard afterwards that there had been unpleasantness between them. I am not quite sure, but I believe you (Mr. McKenzie) were the first person to tell me.

*Mr. McKenzie:* I told you, I think, that I was the former occupier of the land; that Duncan has 400 acres there; and that he expects his neighbours to do all his rabbiting for him.

682. *Hon. Mr. Miller.*] These men, I understand, were put on to protect Duncan's crop?—Yes; Duncan made a written complaint, and, of course, Hull had to take notice of it. He told Ross he wished the work to be done on Duncan's boundary to protect his crops. Had he wanted Ross to put men over all his land it would have needed seven or eight. It was only this particular corner.

683. And it cost him £2?—Yes.

684. *Mr. Kerr.*] Are you satisfied that he did not put on the men?—He did not do what he promised to do.

685. *Captain Russell.*] When Ross was ordered to put on this man, were the rabbits on other properties, or was this a remote place?—Rabbits were all about.

686. Why were not the other owners compelled to put on rabbiters as well?—As far as that is there were no complaints. The matter was left in abeyance until the poisoning season.

687. What I want particularly to know is this: were the rabbits more numerous on Mr. Ross's land than the adjoining properties?—No.

688. Then, do you not think it is reasonable to suppose that Mr. Ross should have been grieved, being singled out and so treated?—When Duncan first complained Inspector Hull specially told him (Ross) his reasons—that a complaint had been made. Therefore, Hull was bound to take action.

689. You have not been able to ascertain, I suppose, why Mr. Hull did not take a more general view of the question, and go through the whole district: why he did not examine his district?—I do not see that there would have been any benefit in his compelling every one to put on men at that time.

690. Is it not likely to lead to great dissatisfaction if the operation of the Act is not made general?—This was a particular case.

691. I ask you, is it not likely to lead to dissatisfaction?—If you just picked out one or two, of course, it would. This was a special case. There was no idea to exterminate the rabbits; it was simply to keep a couple of men on his boundary to prevent the rabbits from destroying this man Duncan's turnips. Had Hull known the district he would not have waited for any complaint.