

LIVE STOCK AND RABBITS COMMITTEE.

TUESDAY, 18TH AUGUST, 1891. (Mr. LAWRY, Chairman.)

Mr. McRAE examined.

Witness : At the last meeting of the Rabbit Board, I may state, we considered the matter of a fence being required to be carried on, and came to the conclusion that it would be better for some members of the Board to come up here and interview the Government upon it, and try to explain matters, because the speech of the Hon. Mr. McKenzie, which we saw in *Hansard*, looked as if they were not going to take any notice of it. But Mr. Lance would not go. He said he would do the best he could for us by writing to Mr. Perceval. And we have come up to urge upon the Government the necessity of having this fence continued to the junction of the original fence at the upper end of the Clarence fence. Well, gentlemen, what I would particularly urge upon the Committee and members of the Government is that, seeing the necessity of it, by the way the rabbits are getting in over Hammer Plains, a fence should be erected from the bridge to Gorge Creek, for the rabbits on that part are getting most serious. And we find it will be necessary to carry that fence on to protect the rest of Canterbury. Mr. Rutherford put down £1,000, and paid it into the Board at once, and then they were accused of favouring Mr. Rutherford by putting a fence on his land. But it only goes through three miles of his freehold, the balance of thirteen miles being leasehold, and through Mr. Jones's property, and does not benefit him alone, but the whole country south. But he deserves to be given great credit for what he has done in trying to stop the wave of rabbits. If we were to get about £2,000 for this piece of fence I think the rest of Canterbury would be well protected for some time.

1. *Mr. Duncan.*] Would £4,000 finish the fence from the distance you have got now?—I think £4,000 would complete it altogether. I am not quite sure whether it would take so much, but it is better to be outside than inside the mark. We do not want to go on spending more money than we are entitled to get.

2. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Can you give the Committee an idea of what would be the cost of the best rabbit-fence, such as you want here, per mile?—The best fence that has been put up there—I believe it was put up by Mr. Rutherford—cost him £180 per mile. Of course, that is the best. There is strong material in it, which ran into a lot of money. The present fence will be much cheaper, being about £120 a mile, and it will be lighter wire.

3. Has the deputation gone into any estimate as to the relative area of Crown lands and private lands, say, within a reasonable distance south of the line gone into by this fence?—No; we have not gone into that.

Mr. Duncan : You can get that information from the department, so it is not necessary to put that question now.

4. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Then, as I understood yesterday, the pound for pound that the deputation offers to provide for the erection of this fence would come not from the Rabbit Board, but from private individuals?—Yes; it would come from private individuals; and the Board would have nothing to do beyond seeing that the fence was erected.

5. Is it correct that the Chairman of the Board says that the Rabbit Board District is rated to the highest point it can be at present, and that no additional rate can be struck?—Yes; the district is rated up to the very highest point it can be rated at.

6. *Mr. Rhodes.*] Can you give us the amount of the money you spent on the erection of the Clarence line?—It would take some time to go into the matter and give a list of what has been done.

7. *Mr. Duncan.*] Is the Board prepared to complete this fence if the Government give a subsidy of £2,000, and to maintain it afterwards?—Yes. What we wish is to have the answer as soon as possible, so that we may lose no time in getting material to go on with the fence. We will have the skeleton pushed on so that we can go on erecting the other part after. We consider that not a day should be wasted; the sooner it is done the better. I would beg to refer you to the report of the Rabbit Commissioners on the Clarence fence.

Mr. RUTHERFORD examined.

Witness : I am not a member of the Board in any shape or form. My property is leasehold, and the bulk of the leases are up in about eighteen months, so it is hardly fair to ask me to give the Government pound-for-pound subsidy to protect their property. But I am prepared, myself, to give the Government pound-for-pound subsidy so far as my boundary goes to Steyning Creek if the pound for pound which I pay is made a charge on the leasehold provided I do not get a renewal of the lease. And should we decide on erecting this fence I am prepared to maintain the fence on my own ground at my own cost; and, not only that, but I am prepared, with my neighbour, Mr. McArthur, to keep two men continually with dogs and guns to keep the rabbits down inside, for it is simply impossible to stop rabbits unless you keep continually at them inside.

8. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Unless you keep them away from the fence, I suppose?—Yes; and thus I consider this fence up the Waiiau would be the best line we could possibly get. On account of having the Waiiau River close to the fence on the north side, the caretakers would keep the rabbits away from the fence. It would only be a chain or two from the river to the fence at most parts. Of course, gentlemen, you must understand that my offer to give pound-for-pound subsidy with the Government is if I get a renewal of my lease.