

Zealand. We cannot drive the rabbits into the interior?—That part of Australia, you must remember, where the rabbits can prosper, is not so large. Western Victoria is not so large as New Zealand, and, moreover, we have facilities for the growth and spread of rubbish which do not exist in Victoria. We have, for instance, numerous streams in every part of the country.

196. *Mr. Larnach.*] You are aware that the rabbit does not require water, even in a climate so warm as that of Australia?—I am very much inclined to think that in the northern part of Australia no animals could live without water.

197. *Mr. Larnach.*] In Australia I have seen rabbits to the extent of 1,000 kept in hutches for over a year, and they never had water. They were generally fed on bread and thistles, and for a greater part of the year they had bran?—No animal can live entirely without moisture, either in the shape of food or water; and the rabbit is capable of getting at the roots of plants and extracting moisture from them.

198. Do you think the people in your district would object to rabbit districts being constituted, and rates levied for those districts? Would it meet with the approval of the people?—I do not think it would.

199. *The Chairman.*] Have you a Road Board in your district?—Yes.

200. Do you think there would be any objection to giving these Road Boards power to levy rates for the destruction of rabbits?—I do not think the Road Board would be the proper body to entrust with such a power. A Road Board is a body appointed for a special purpose, and the members are supposed to have a special knowledge of a particular subject. In dealing with rabbits, if there were to be any legislation whatever, it should be a special Board framed to meet the requirements of the districts.

201. *Mr. Wason.*] But you do not think even that would be satisfactory?—I do not think anything would come of it. I trust to the efforts of the people themselves, aided by wild cats and hawks.

202. *Mr. Larnach.*] Supposing you employed a man to kill rabbits on your property, and your neighbours did nothing, what would you do in such a case?—I know there is a deal of hardship in that matter, and I sometimes growl very much myself because my neighbours will do nothing in the way of destroying the rabbits; but I must do the best I can myself to get rid of them.

203. *Mr. Seymour.*] Have you tried wire netting to any extent?—No.

204. *Mr. Larnach.*] I understand that you regard this question from a local point of view?—Not entirely; because there is a great similarity in the country in different parts of New Zealand. Where there is hard soil and open country rabbits will never be a nuisance; but the hardness of the soil will not prevent them being a nuisance if there be much scrub or fern in the neighbourhood, as there is invariably in the Northern Island of New Zealand.

205. You know, I suppose, that rabbits will thrive in the snow?—Yes, rabbits will breed freely in the snow, under which they are kept warm; but here they get starved to death by the cold rain. I noticed that something was said about the desirability of offering facilities for more rapidly obtaining ammunition for shooting the rabbits. I think there is something in that. At the present time, owing to the special legislation regarding the sale of powder, there are difficulties in the way of obtaining sufficient quantities of ammunition; and I think it would be well if that law was relaxed.

206. *Mr. Seymour.*] In buying small quantities the license fees form a considerable proportion of the cost?—In buying a box of caps you have to pay one shilling for a license, and a considerable delay is experienced in obtaining it; and I think greater facilities should be given for sale of ammunition to persons well known. A register might be kept, for instance, of persons buying powder, of which a copy might periodically be forwarded to the authorities.

207. *Mr. Wason.*] And you think the powder dues should be reduced?—Yes; as well as the difficulties in the way of obtaining it.

208. Have you a dog tax in Wellington?—In Wellington, yes; but in the country it is not in force.

209. Would you suggest the withdrawal of the dog tax, in order to allow people to keep as many dogs as they should think proper?—I do not know that. Certain classes of dogs would not be much good for destroying rabbits. The trouble we have to contend with is a very serious one, and I do not see my way out of it.

210. But about the dog tax, I did not quite understand you. Are you favourable to the withdrawal of the tax?—I have said that there is practically no dog tax in the country, because it is not put in force there.

211. *Mr. Larnach.*] Down South there are places where it is found necessary to keep as many as 150 dogs to keep down the rabbit nuisance?—Well, where dogs are required for a purpose of that sort, a dog tax should not be in force.

212. *The Chairman.*] There is one question I should like your opinion upon. You know the circumstances of Southland, and that the leases there will expire in a few years. Now, do you consider it desirable that the Government, who anticipate a large revenue from these lands, by letting them again when the leases run out—do you think it desirable, I say, that the Government should go to some expense in keeping down these rabbits? Would it be good policy?—I think, undoubtedly, that if you form rabbit districts, the Government should contribute a certain amount.

213. Do you mean in the case of lands leased to squatters, or Government reserves?—In the case of land leased to a squatter. I think whatever exemption is made in favour of the squatter should be made up by the Government. If a squatter was charged, say, one-half the rabbit tax, in consideration of a lease which would shortly expire, then the Government should contribute the other half. I may state, however, that I have little hope in the result of legislation on this matter. I have no objection whatever to seeing legislation tried, but I very much question that it would be successful. I have recently met with three illustrations of the feats which the rabbit is capable of accomplishing. The island of Madeira, when first inhabited, had turned out upon it a pair of rabbits; and these rabbits so increased in numbers, that in a few years the entire population was driven from the island. It was subsequently re-occupied, and the rabbits got under; but the fact remains that the people were driven