

37. You do not think a renewal of the leases would increase activity, then?—Yes; money would then be expended in wire-netting, and other things which people are not justified in undertaking at present.

38. Then you think the subdivision of the country would not tend to diminish the danger?—The subdivision of a property by wire-netting would be a most effectual mode of destroying the rabbits therein, as each subdivision could be dealt with in detail; but the subdivision of the country into small holdings would not have the same immediate effect, owing to the difficulty of securing united and simultaneous action. Of course ultimately the result would be the same, if the Act is administered strictly.

39. *Hon. Mr. G. R. Johnson.*] Do you think a renewal of the bonus would be any permanent benefit unless the Government lands were cleared of the rabbits?—No; I do not think so.

40. Just for the time being it assists people?—It means a higher price for skins; but, as far as helping to diminish the number, unless it was an inducement to people to occupy Crown lands, it would not be effective.

41. *Captain Russell.*] It should be compulsory to clear the land?—Yes; but the Government must accept their responsibility as well as other owners of property, otherwise they will very soon be still larger owners of property.

42. *The Chairman.*] What, in your opinion, would be the effect of introducing natural enemies?—I think a most excellent effect. I understand that ferrets do very well in most parts of New Zealand, but they must be turned out regularly in large numbers to be of any service.

43. Should an effort be made to introduce the weasel into the colony?—I think so; if you can do it.

44. Have you ever seen the native fox of India?—No. You must be careful not to introduce enemies to stock as well as enemies to rabbits.

45. Are there any other natural enemies that you can suggest?—I do not know of any. I feel satisfied that the ferret will do the work, and I think it would be a good thing for the Government to bring a number of ferrets out from England: they are very scarce here.

46. *Hon. Captain Fraser.*] Are you aware that the hawk destroys young rabbits?—I suppose it does.

47. Are you aware that the Acclimatisation Society offers a reward for the head of every hawk brought in?—I believe it is the case, but I am not sure. I have heard something about it.

48. *Mr. Thomson.*] Do you think it desirable to introduce ferrets and weasels? Would not poison be sufficient?—I am afraid not. You should turn out lots of ferrets. There are tracts of country where it would hardly pay to poison.

49. I think it is a very important point whether we should introduce natural enemies; they might become a nuisance?—I think they would be easier to get rid of than rabbits.

50. *Mr. Bastings.*] You mean that, after you check the rabbits, it would be necessary to have natural enemies?—Yes; you reduce the rabbits down to a certain point, and then put in ferrets. You will very often come across rabbits at certain seasons that will not take the poison. Whenever a lot like that was come upon, if you turned out thirty or forty ferrets you would destroy the colony of rabbits.

51. *The Chairman.*] You have already referred to phosphorus. Do you think that the best remedy?—I think it is the only effectual remedy that has been adopted. You may occasionally have to use guns and dogs, but I do think, where you have stock, dogs are a greater nuisance than rabbits. There is a danger to be apprehended from rabbiters' dogs going wild. I have known as many as six or seven dogs killed at one time by shepherds: the rabbiters had abandoned them. A man can poison a piece of country where stock are running, without disturbing them at all, but it is impossible not to disturb them when dogs and guns are used.

52. *Mr. Bain.*] Do not the wild dogs attack rabbits?—I have no doubt they do, but they will never put them down; the dogs are much more likely to tackle sheep.

53. *The Chairman.*] From your knowledge, how many sheep have been lost by the use of poison?—I have heard of cases where sheep have been destroyed, but merely through people not knowing exactly how to lay it.

54. Can you give an estimate of the cost of poisoning per 1,000 acres?—Well, I cannot do so exactly, because it would depend upon the number of rabbits upon the 1,000 acres.

55. Have you tried ferrets?—Not by turning them out in the way that I have suggested.

56. On whom should the onus rest of proving that efficient steps have been taken to remedy the evil?—On the owner of the property, or the occupier.

57. Do you think Inspectors should have power to enter upon private property and destroy rabbits, as indicated by clause 17 of the Act?—Yes, I do think so. As a rule this power will not require to be exercised on the large properties, but on the small properties where action to be of any effect must be united and simultaneous. There is little to be gained by fining small holders heavily, and it might happen that five or six men holding small properties might prefer men being put on by the Inspector, while one or two in their midst might object, and prevent this being done if the Inspector had not power to act.

58. *Mr. Beetham.*] From your knowledge, do you know that the right of the Inspector has been challenged in your district?—The Inspector has no power; the Trustees have the power. One person upon whose property poison is being laid has put an advertisement in the local paper threatening all sorts of penalties against us. This has not troubled us.

59. Have you power to enter?—I believe we can do so.

60. *Mr. De Lautour.*] You could not enter unless you had decided that the person neglected to clear his land; then, of course, clause 18 would come in. If he refused to do so, you could press for a penalty under clause 18?—We endeavoured to do so, but found that, as he was the owner, and not the occupier, we could not deal with the case. The clause says "occupier," and the occupier has neither sheep nor money. We were advised that it was no use to summon the owner, because he was not the occupier. It shows that you ought to be able to get at both owner and occupier. If we could have come upon the owner afterwards it would have been all right. The occupier had nothing on the land except rabbits.