

651. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Do you think, from your experience, that the Nelson Act, as administered under the Provincial Government of Nelson over a similar area, was efficient for its purpose?—I do not.

652. Would you be favourable to a return to an Act of that kind, instead of the general Act now in force?—Certainly not. The Nelson Act was a great misiake. We paid more than £1,000 to the Government of Nelson for no earthly good.

653. Have you had any experience of the Marlborough Sheep Ordinance?—It is just as bad or worse than the old Nelson one.

654. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Have you any further remarks to make as to the present Act or the manner in which it is carried out?—I have only to say that if the Act is thoroughly carried out these runs will soon be cleaned. This is a grievance of the Amuri sheep-farmers, who have all cleaned their flocks, that they have been fined so heavily, and had to pay their fines, while fines are now remitted in the case of Gibson and others, who have had six years to do it and will not clean their sheep. People who are doing everthing possible to clean their runs, and people who have cleaned, are running a great deal of risk from these Marlborough runs. The fines being remitted there is no protection against them.

655. *Captain Russell.*] Can you tell us the actual result of scab in a merino flock: what could a man replace his flock for? I want to know what would be the value?—At present it would be about 10s., but after shearing time it could be done for 7s. 6d. per head.

656. Then, you could not replace it for less, say, in any case than 7s. or 8s?—No.

657. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Have you had any assistance in cleaning outside your own neighbourhood?—I do not know any one that has suffered more than we have on our run since the present Act came into force; but we never grumbled: we did our best. We never got a shilling to help us in any form. We have suffered heavy loss upon our wool, and some 1s. 6d. a head on sheep. All our sheep are now clean.

658. You refer to the dipping when crossing the Waiau River; that is, because under the Act your district is regarded as an infected district. I want your view as to that dip?—It costs 2s. a head to pass over into Canterbury; 6d. I think is charged for dipping. The sheep are reduced in value by 1s. 6d. or thereabouts. At present, as far as I know, the whole of the district on our side is clean. We are hardly content to pay this money for dipping on crossing into Canterbury. The people of our district object to it.

659. But, as long as yours is an infected district under the Act, it cannot be avoided?—No; not unless there is some discretionary power given to the Inspector by new legislation.

660. What is it causes the district to be kept an infected district?—Gibson's run.

661. You are directly interested in getting Gibson's run cleaned?—Yes.

662. If that run was clean, yours would not be an infected district under the Act?—No.

663. Here is the latest return of the Kaikoura Subdivision, which gives McRae 9,000; Ingles, 9,000; Gibson, 60,000; Parsons, 12,000; White, 480; Bullen, 23,000. You say the whole of the owners who have cleaned their sheep are endangered by one or two men?—Yes.

664. *Mr. Dodson.*] The only troubles are Messrs. Gibson and Ingles?—Yes.

665. *Mr. Lance.*] If they were clean, the district would be proclaimed "clean," and the disabilities you complain of would be removed?—Yes.

666. In the Tarndale country they have cleaned their sheep?—Yes.

667. That is as high and difficult a country as the other?—Yes, higher, and more difficult. It is a great deal more difficult, for there they have only summer to do their work in. In winter that country is covered with snow. I should say it is ten times more difficult than the other.

668. It is much higher up?—Yes; it is the roughest country I have seen in New Zealand.

Mr. P. R. McRAE, examined.

669. *The Chairman.*] You are a runholder in Marlborough?—Yes.

670. What is the name of your run?—It comprises four runs adjoining; the run is a separate run.

671. Have you scab on your run?—I have on one run.

672. At least it is scabby under the Act at present. Has it been infected long?—Since November last.

673. Will you explain to the Committee what you know about the working of the Act in your district: is it satisfactory?—I think the Act is satisfactory. I was infected for several years. I think that was in 1867, when the Act came into force. I could see I would have to go on fencing if I were to get the runs clean. I think it took me three or four years—three years, going slowly.

674. *Mr. Dodson.*] The Act came into force in 1878?—Yes; it was in 1877 I began to fence. In January, 1879, I had all the runs fenced and the sheep cleaned.

675. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What sort of country is that?—Some of it is very rough.

676. It is high country?—Yes, very high.

677. It is a timber country?—Yes, some of it.

678. Had you much difficulty in cleaning?—Not after I got my run fenced.

679. Had you any Government reserves or unoccupied runs adjoining?—Yes; there was one reserve adjoining me—a reserve of 12,000 acres.

680. Unoccupied?—Yes; but there were sheep on it,

681. Scabby?—Yes; they were all scabby at that time.

682. What did you do to get rid of it? First of all, where did these sheep come from?—They were sheep belonging to a number of people that used to shear on that reserve; it was a shearing reserve before the Act came into force. It is called the Awatere Shearing Reserve.

683. Is it unoccupied now?—Part of it.