

1578. Who was the Inspector?—Mr. Drummond.

1579. Do you know of any other instances?—Another case that I complain of is that of my son, Richard, whose sheep have not been infected sheep. After taking the precaution to have his sheep dipped in Hawke's Bay, he is not allowed to have a certificate. He has been obstructed on the road in driving his sheep under the certificate which he brought from Hawke's Bay.

1580. Can you say what was the reason for that?—I can give no reason for it. I look on it as deliberate persecution.

1581. Who was the Inspector?—Mr. Orbell; and he stopped him on the same ground as he would have stopped me.

1582. I do not quite understand?—I stated Mr. Drummond told me that Mr. Orbell informed Mr. Drummond that if he gave me permission to remove six hundred fat wethers, when they reached the Ruamahunga Bridge, and came into Mr. Orbell's district, he would stop them.

1583. Did he assign a reason why he would stop them?—Mr. Drummond did not tell me.

1584. Are there any other cases?—Yes; my son, Edwin, was subjected to prosecution in the Resident Magistrate's Court for not making his sheep scabby in the eyes of the law; or, in other words, for refusing to brand sheep with S, for which sheep he held a clean certificate.

1585. If he held a clean certificate, how could the Inspector call upon him to brand his sheep as if they were scabby?—I cannot tell why, but the information was not upheld.

1586. To what do you attribute the existence of scab in your district?—Do you allude to open runs?

1587. Generally?—I should say that the chief reason that scab exists in the open country is because of the manner of administering the Act?—The 23rd section of the Act is not sufficiently attended to.

1588. How do you mean?—The Inspectors do not put themselves in communication with persons whose certificates may have been recently cancelled and induce them to take steps for the eradication of the disease in its early stages. Another and more potent reason is the way in which section 29 is abused; so that where people have sheep in separate flocks they are not allowed to sell, and so lessen the number of sheep liable to disease, and facilitate the means of cleaning the balance. Owners cannot have the means to fence so long as they are debarred selling their sheep.

1589. *Hon. Mr. Robinson.*] How many sheep have you in a flock?—The largest number I have in a flock is two thousand.

1590. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Those that you have just mentioned are the causes to which you attribute the existence of scab on those runs?—Yes.

1591. Then, your evidence amounts to this: that these clauses have not been properly put into force?—I think so.

1592. Do you think the fault is in the terms of the clauses themselves that they are not put into force?—I think the 29th and the 32nd sections do conflict. I can read them without difficulty, but I am satisfied that the Inspectors stumble over them.

1593. The 29th is the one that refers to separate flocks; the 32nd to the clean certificate?—Some Inspectors, in reading the 32nd clause, read it as if it superseded the 29th.

1594. Have the Inspectors in your district laid many informations against runholders?—No doubt they have laid a good many. It is a large district.

1595. Have the Inspectors carried out the Act—setting aside what you mentioned in regard to partiality—satisfactorily in other respects?—Beyond that there is a great deal of favouritism shown.

1596. Do they enforce the Act outside the cases which you have mentioned?—I suppose so; except for the favouritism.

1597. Then, you say that in working the Act great partiality has been shown?—Yes.

1598. Do you think the Act is better administered in its present form, under the colonial department, or have you any suggestion to make?—Yes; I would repeat a suggestion made by a deputation to Sir John Hall on the subject. I think the Act, being administered by the Colonial Secretary, militates very much against its being carried out in its integrity and in being carried out successfully.

1599. What do you suggest instead?—That there should be a Chief Inspector, who should have control of the working of the Act. He should be selected for his thorough practical knowledge of the subject he has to deal with. He should be a man whose character is above suspicion.

1600. He would be under some authority?—He would be responsible, no doubt, to a higher authority—Parliament; but he would have complete control. He would probably adopt the same system which they have adopted in Australia. There is a head officer—Mr. Kerr for Victoria, Mr. Bruce for New South Wales, the late Mr. White for Tasmania. I believe all these gentlemen have got rid of the disease in their respective districts without undue hardship to any one.

1601. In what way are they appointed?—Directly by Parliament, I think.

1602. Are they independent?—They are independent of any political influence and responsible to Parliament alone—responsible, I think, to Parliament.

1603. *Hon. Mr. Robinson.*] Suppose that one of these flocks—you say in number about two thousand—were to be diseased, how long would it take to cure?—In my case it would be cured in a week.

1604. There is no difficulty in curing scab in sheep?—That depends on the country in which they run.

1605. What has the country in which they run to do with it?—It has everything to do with it. In a rough broken country it is very difficult to muster.

1606. You do not understand me. Of course, if you cannot get the sheep in, you cannot cure them; but, given two thousand sheep, no matter where, can you cure them?—Yes; so long as they are yarded, and not mixed with scabby sheep. It is very easy to clean. There is no difficulty in curing scab; none whatever to a practical man.