

WEDNESDAY, 17TH SEPTEMBER, 1884.

Mr. A. WALKER, examined.

2394. You are a resident of the Wairarapa District?—The Upper Wairarapa or Whareama District.

2395. You have sent to me a communication in reference to the objects of this inquiry into the working of the Sheep and Rabbit Acts?—They are the suggestions of a committee which had been appointed by a public meeting held at Te Nui. There was another meeting held on the same subject at Masterton.

2396. It is in connection with these suggestions that you appear?—Yes; they were forwarded to me.

2397. Were those suggestions drawn up by the committee you refer to?—Yes; by a majority of the committee.

2398. This Committee, I presume, would not be expected to examine these proposals this morning, as we are engaged taking evidence; another morning we shall be able to consider the proposed amendments. But we would like you to state, as far as you can, the reasons for making these suggestions?—The principal thing is that the Act is ambiguous. Different Inspectors read it in different ways. An Inspector in the North Island reads it one way, another Inspector in the South Island reads it in a different way altogether. There have been many instances in the Wairarapa where the Inspectors have been favouring one person and coming down upon another.

2399. I gather, then, that your chief reason is that the Act is not enforced equally in all districts?—Yes.

2400. Your object is, therefore, to provide that there should be no ambiguity about it? will you point out the sections in the Act you refer to?—The first is section 13, which provides for the manner in which the Inspector goes upon the run. Several instances have occurred lately in which the Inspector thought it right, in the discharge of his duty, to pull fences down in a scabby district, making the danger of spreading scab very great indeed. Some instances can be mentioned by the aggrieved parties themselves coming forward.

2401. Do you mean that the clause should be altered?—What is suggested is that certain words should be added.

2402. I shall read the clause as it stands: "It shall be lawful for any Inspector, at such times as he may think fit, to inspect any sheep within his district or subdivision; and, for the purposes of such inspection, or for the purpose of inspecting and examining any dipping apparatus, or for doing any other act which he is authorized or empowered to do by this Act, it shall be lawful for any Inspector, at all reasonable times, to have free ingress, egress, and regress through, over, and upon any premises, lands, or tenements whatsoever." To that you propose the addition of the words "by the usual means in use by the owner or person in charge"?—That is what was suggested by the committee. Another thing is in connection with slip-bars. The owner has put them on the run to get access to the different parts of his run. The Inspector comes along and he removes these slip-bars, or rather he puts them up not in the manner they should be to prevent sheep rubbing them down, thereby endangering the scab spreading. We ought to have the right to send men to see that these bars are put up properly.

2403. You say that they should give you notice as they go?—Yes; that would enable us to see that no damage, or as little as possible, were done. As it is now—the Inspector is only a mortal man like the rest of us—he might take a dislike to a person. What is to hinder him putting that man to perhaps £1,000 damage? I know of my own knowledge two Inspectors who have had machinery made for drawing staples so that they might go on to property.

2403A. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Might not that be that they would be able to get over the ground with the greater freedom?—There is a misinterpretation of the Act on their part. They say they can go where they like, even into a person's bedroom if they please.

2404. I imagine that the Inspector, in riding across the run, comes to a fence. Rather than go round by the road, he draws a staple so that he may go through?—Yes; they have machines made for that purpose.

2405. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Then, you speak also of their going to the houses: they say they have power to do as they like?—Yes.

2406. Would it not be a proper thing to give the manager notice that they were going over the run?—There are some who would do so, others would not; they would say it was nothing to them. If they were to come to the house and say, "We are going over your run to-day," we could not interfere with them in the discharge of their duty.

2407. Do you object to that?—Not at all, if they give us notice.

2408. I think it is clear that he should not go through and leave gates opened?—The Act is so ambiguous as to leave it in that way. The Inspectors ought to be taken to school and taught the Act. Another great point with us is that two years ago sheep were sold or allowed to be sold provided there was no danger; now they are not.

2409. Do you mean that they were allowed to be driven to market?—Yes; provided sufficient precautions were taken.

2410. What remark do you make about that?—The suggestion is that where there are several flocks, only one being infected, the Inspector should examine the other flocks and give a permit for their removal if they are found to be clean. There is a new clause suggested: "When an owner of sheep shall have several flocks depasturing upon any run, or upon any adjoining run, and only one of such flocks is infected, he shall have power to call upon the Inspector to examine any other flock or flocks in his possession for the purpose of obtaining a permit for removal of such sheep; and if, upon such inspection, no infection shall be found in the other flock or flocks, the Inspector shall grant such permit: Provided, however, it shall be lawful for the Inspector, if he sees fit, to require the owner to dip all sheep he desires to remove." Suppose a man has one flock infected. Against