

647. Are there any that you are not satisfied with?—There is no man in the service that any complaint has been lodged against.

648. That is hardly an answer to the question?—As far as I know, they have performed their duties properly.

649. That is hardly the question. You say that you know them personally, save one or two. Are you satisfied they are competent and good men for the work?—I am; they are the best men I could get.

650. It has been stated here that the Inspectors are not fit for their positions in consequence of their being selected from a class of men who could not be supposed to have the necessary qualifications; that they are taken from an improper class of men?—I am not sure whether the witness who gave that answer discriminated between the agent and the Inspector.

651. That is the point I wish to come to, for the evidence goes to show that the agents have exercised certain powers?—They have none.

652. Do you say they have no power?—They really have no powers.

653. If that evidence referred to the Inspectors, would you agree with that statement?—No, not if it referred to the Inspectors.

654. Then you think they are properly fitted for their duties?—As far as the Inspectors are concerned.

655. Then, as far as the agents are concerned, they have no powers at all for killing rabbits?—None whatever.

656. Their duty is to report simply?—Yes, to report simply.

657. You have heard complaints such as we have heard of?—Only one in Otago; that was the case of Mr. Bell.

658. Did you draw the attention of the Inspectors to these portions of the circular?—Yes.

659. You wrote it, and it distinctly defines their position?—Yes.

660. In view of the complaints that were made, do you not think it would be well to remind the Inspectors that agents have no authority?—It was only within a few weeks since that this was brought under my notice: I would, in the ordinary course, draw the Inspector's attention to it, telling him, at the same time, that if the statement was correct he had overstepped his duty.

661. Do you pursue the same course in other parts of the colony as you have in the south with regard to agents?—There is a slight difference in Wairarapa.

662. What is the difference?—There were three agents there whom it was deemed necessary, as they were skilled men, to appoint as acting-Inspectors of sheep, so as to give help to the Inspector who had charge of the scabby portion of that district, and they were to have every means of obtaining all the information that could be got about the flocks, and how to deal with them, with the necessary powers. These agents could not have acted then without their appointments being legalized. They were appointed acting-Inspectors, but they were not on the permanent staff of Inspectors.

663. To whom do you refer?—To Messrs. Vallance, Cameron, and Smith. With regard to Vallance, he is a rabbit agent; he was appointed a Sheep Inspector, which appointment gave him the legal power necessary to deal with infected sheep: in that capacity he travels through the country; the Inspector, whose agent he is, could order him to go and inspect a lot of sheep if the Inspector had not the opportunity of going himself.

664. Have you ever heard complaints of some of these men in Wairarapa entering upon lands and bringing with them two or three dogs of various descriptions?—I have never heard of it.

665. Do you think it would be right for an Inspector to go over runs in this way with dogs?—As a rabbit agent it would be necessary for him to go upon the land; this would be one of the facilities afforded him, to see whether there were rabbits there or not: but a man by himself might look about for a week over a considerable area before he would see any rabbits; if he were accompanied by one quiet trained dog, I cannot see that it would do any harm.

666. But if he went there with more than one?—I do not see the necessity of it.

667. With regard to these lands, they come under the authority of the Crown Lands Department: do you think the relations of your department with that department is satisfactory in respect to dealing with such lands; could the Colonial Secretary act, or would he act without reference to the Lands Department?—We have invariably to refer to them.

668. Would it facilitate matters if some change were made in that respect?—I think myself that it should appertain to the Lands Department; that both should work together, both the Lands and the Rabbit Departments; both are directly interested in the same object. Perhaps I might have misunderstood your last question by confounding it with a question put by the Hon. Mr. Campbell. I may state that the Inspector forwards contracts for destroying rabbits on these lands: the Colonial Secretary deals directly with that; I mean with that work on Crown lands.

669. Then you have not any difficulty arising out of relations of your department to other departments of the Government, such as the Lands Department, in dealing with the pest on Crown lands?—The only difficulty that I see is in clearing rabbits from runs that have been given up and have fallen in; we have to spend several hundreds of pounds yearly in destroying rabbits upon them. Having fallen in they are after a time put up to auction or offered for sale; often a period of very valuable time elapses before these runs are disposed of, during that time the rabbits increase; there is a greater effort to be made to get rid of them; the Government has had to spend several hundred pounds in keeping them down meanwhile; the value of the property has depreciated if rabbits increase upon it, so that it has to be cleared over again.

670. But all Government land has to be put up to auction, and due notice must be given: what would you recommend?—I think I have mentioned it in my report: my recommendation is that they should be let forthwith, so as to find ownership for them.

671. *Captain Russell.* That they should be leased or sold?—These lands are often put up at a rental which they will not fetch; the consequence is that the letting or sale is postponed from