

705. Do you not think that such a fence serves as a frontier on which you can work?—It is a great help, no doubt; it is a help to a certain extent.

706. Do you not think it is wise to block out certain area of country?—Decidedly; that is endeavouring to be done. At present, whenever rabbits are known to be near or coming near, steps are taken to stop them if possible.

707. You cannot give a reason why Government refused to do what was asked?—I think I recollect the matter being spoken of. I think, whatever objection was raised, it was to this effect: that this being only a portion of the colony, if fencing were granted, numerous applications would come in from all parts of the colony. This, I believe, was what precluded it being done.

708. Do you not think it would be advisable that there should be an efficient barrier between the country that is at present clear and the introduction of the rabbit?—Such a course would be beneficial; there is no doubt about that.

709. Do you think it would tend to check them very much?—It would.

710. You do not attach much importance to the erection of rabbit-proof fences, I believe?—I do, in subdividing stations; but I think the natural enemies can much more quickly prevent the influx of the pest upon the surrounding lands. [Captain Russell put in a map of the district referred to, with the report of the local committee.]

711. Do you not think that it would be advisable, the Crown owing large reserves in that neighbourhood, that the Government should take steps to join the settlers in clearing the country of rabbits?—Decidedly; but I think that is being done as far as it is possible to do it.

712. But it is done by a voluntary rate contributed by the sheepowners of Hawke's Bay. You do not think it possible to frame a principle by which a rate could be levied for this purpose, although the people of Hawke's Bay find it necessary to rate themselves, the Government not giving any assistance?—That such a boundary would be of service there is no doubt: it is rather a difficult question to answer, as it comprehends so much; it is not confined to Hawke's Bay alone.

713. Quite so. We have there found that the law is not sufficient for us. We have been obliged to go outside the law. The position is this: that those who are public spirited pay subscriptions, while those who are not can refuse to do so. Do you not think there should be a clause under which there should be a special rate?—I think, if that could be done, there must be addenda that would apply to each locality, and not in the general Act.

714. *Mr. Buchanan.*] The diary is a guide, is it not, for the satisfaction, I presume, of the head of the department?—Yes.

715. You know, of course, that the Inspectors have very large powers?—I am aware of it.

716. Are you aware whether, in any district, they are so much in fear of the Inspector that they would not allow their true feelings to appear?—No; I was not aware of that.

717. If you receive no complaint you take it for granted that things are satisfactory?—Unless when I am there myself I know nothing to the contrary.

718. If the Inspector sent rabbiters with, say, thirty dogs, and a request that you should clear, suggesting this method as a very good plan, would that appear in this diary?—No; it would not.

[*Mr. J. C. Buckland* requested that the monthly report from Mr. Shaw, of Mount Ida, should be put in. Put in accordingly.]

719. I presume the diary is sent to the office at Wellington, and kept there as a record?—Yes; all of them.

720. *Hon. Mr. Campbell.*] Is it sent to you first?—Yes.

721. Then you send it to Mr. Cooper?—Yes; it remains in the office, and if there is anything in it I would take notice of it.

722. *Mr. Buchanan.*] The Committee understand you to say that you yourself attached great value to the natural enemies from information you had gained up to the present date?—I do.

723. Poisoning first, and the natural enemies afterwards?—Yes.

724. I shall read the 9th clause of the Rabbit Nuisance Act. I will next read the report of Inspector Macdonald [reads], in which he speaks of poisoning to October; from that to January, hunting; fumigating with bi-sulphide of carbon. Then he goes on to say of the ferrets, "I have no opinion of them as enemies. Wild ferrets are numerous in Southland. The ferrets will in time be as numerous as the rabbits were before. The ferret now covers a large area," and so on. Now, looking to the fact that the opinion of the Inspector carries the conviction of the Court, and noting your own reply to the Committee—noting also your reply to a question put by one of the Committee as to whether or not you were satisfied that your Inspectors were men upon whom you could thoroughly rely on being fit men to apply an Act giving them large powers—do you think that an Inspector deliberately framing his report in this language is the right man in the right place?—He is, decidedly, a very good Inspector. I think he has the confidence of those among whom he is. The fact of his reporting his convictions does not say that he omitted to do his duty.

725. The landowner is had up before the Court for non-destruction of rabbits. Then the conviction hangs on the opinion of the Inspector. The owner, we will say, has followed the steps which you told this Committee would be the best for destroying rabbits. Now, taking the report of Mr. Macdonald, would not conviction ensue because the owner followed the exact steps which you proposed to be best, and because these steps were opposed to what Mr. Macdonald thought best to be done. He enjoys your confidence. The landowner gives his evidence that he took the means which you, the Head Inspector, thought best. But Mr. Macdonald thought these not efficient means. The Court would convict upon the opinion of the Inspector by giving the information. The Court would be bound to accept that opinion?—There is no case in point where Inspector Macdonald has had any conviction on the grounds expressed in his report. I do not agree with his idea, as far as the ferrets are concerned; nor do I believe they are getting numerous, as he states. It cannot possibly be. I think his a rather overdrawn statement.

726. I do not think you have exactly answered my question, whether or not conviction followed