

in the case before the Court, if the owner followed the course which you gave to the Committee as the best?—I do not think, if the landowner did his duty properly, that any conviction would follow.

727. Will you explain to the Committee?—If he got down the rabbits sufficiently low no prosecution would have taken place and no conviction would follow: the number of ferrets turned out might be wholly insufficient to deal with the difficulty.

728. But the landowner takes steps to poison, and follows that up with the natural enemy?—Yes; if he turns them out in sufficient numbers.

729. Your opinion would be that the landowner had taken the necessary steps?—Decidedly.

730. Mr. Macdonald holds the reverse opinion; my question, therefore, is this: if he carried out the Act would it not follow that the landowner would be convicted for doing what you stated was best to be done?—Undoubtedly, if that course is followed in discharge of his duty as Inspector of the district.

731. Agents are paid so much a day, are they not?—Yes.

732. In the case of some agents they are paid half-time for Sunday?—Yes; I think so.

733. Do you fancy it is good to leave the agent to fill in the time that he has actually worked?—I have stated that the Inspector would be responsible for all that. The diary goes through the Inspector's hands and he indorses it.

734. My general question is, whether you approve of a method of payment which evidently subjects the agent to a heavy temptation—the temptation of returning to his Inspector a full day's work for what was only half a day's work?—I do not know how you could place any other check on it than the supervision of the Inspector.

735. I think there are one or two places where the manner of work is different?—If there is any place in particular I can explain it in a moment; in some cases where men are placed in a rough country or in expensive districts.

736. In the Wairarapa they are paid half-time for Sunday?—There they would be acting-sheep Inspectors.

737. Is it not better that they should be employed at a certain rate per annum, but subject to dismissal at a month's notice?—I hardly think so, because that would be immediately making a permanent staff of huge dimensions, which could not be dispensed with in the same manner as these agents can.

738. You are satisfied that such engagements could not be made without bringing them under the regulations of the Civil Service?—Yes, that is it.

739. Have you inquired into it?—Yes; in my original reports I pointed out that very fact.

740. *Hon. Mr. Campbell.* If you were managing a run, would you allow any overseer so much a day, and let him claim compensation?—This is done for the purpose of avoiding compensation.

741. I want you to answer my question?—I can hardly follow it.

742. If you were managing a run, would you allow your overseer or your shepherd to send you in any document he thought fit as a claim for remuneration?—Certainly I would not allow my overseer or any one else to do so.

743. Your answer to Mr. Buchanan would make it appear as if you allowed it?—No; it is the same as in any other case: you pay him according to his work; you would not pay a first-class man as you would one who had less capacity or skill.

744. Do you not think it would be a desirable thing to stop it?—I do not know any other means of paying.

745. Why not pay a salary, and let us know the end of it?—They would then become Civil servants on the Civil list, and could claim compensation on retiring from the service.

746. *Hon. Captain Fraser.* I see that, in one case, you were asked 15s. a day, when similar agents were receiving 10s.?—Owing to the friction in this particular district, and the necessity of keeping these men independent of any favour, they were paid slightly higher; the difference was in order to prevent that.

747. You have stated that none of these agents can be employed without your confirming the appointment?—They are all submitted: the names are submitted to me: if anything is known of them I am made aware of it.

747A. Supposing you were in Auckland?—He would be advised by telegraph.

748. I see a charge of £120 here in one case for poisoning "commonage:" why has the Government to pay for cleaning commonages which are in the occupation of local bodies?—There must be a very good reason for it.

749. I should like to know the reason?—I think this is the reason: the obligation to clean the commonage is repudiated by County Councils; the necessity for it is repudiated by County Councils, who, I think, are not the absolute owners.

750. That surely cannot be called Crown land?—I know that County Councils will not clean these lands, they repudiate the responsibility.

751. Yet they occupy?—Well, I cannot say.

752. Is not this simply an endowment for the municipality. They do occupy, but the public money is employed to do what they are bound to do. Why is the runholder obliged to clean such land?—If there was not a good reason for it it would not be done.

753. You have documents relating to it?—I believe I have.

754. Who gives you authority?—It is submitted to me, and I recommend it or otherwise.

755. What is the actual amount?—It is shown in the appendix to my return.

756. Can you give me an approximate idea?—It is here.

757. On all the Crown lands?—There are 44,458 acres; the tenders accepted altogether would amount to £3,886 5s. 6d.

758. How many bales of rabbitskins did you get?—I do not know that we have exported any rabbitskins; the land is away back in the country; it would not pay to collect them.