

759. Who gets them?—I do not know that any one gets them; the men employed receive so much a piece, and the skins as well; the money represented here is simply for poisoning land.

760. Is it by tender?—Yes.

761. I should like to see it?—Yes; but the only skins we get are from small sections.

762. You were speaking of a particular hundred, Mataikuna; I think it is 1800 acres?—If the runholders will keep the rabbit down I think they would get the use of it. I can give you all the information.

763. Is it right that the runholders should have to pay for lands which the County Councils have the ownership of?—The case to which you refer is not a solitary instance.

764. I want to know what steps are taken in such cases?—In all cases relating to areas of this kind it has been my endeavour, if possible, to rid the Government of the liability; I think I have shown that in my report. In each case of this description an inquiry has been made as to whether they are Crown lands: if they are Crown lands they must be dealt with; if they are a portion of unsold hundreds they are treated as unsold lands.

765. If there are 1,800 acres of this land to be cleaned, they who have the benefit of it should pay for that, if they are using it?—They use it, but they do not pay for it.

766. There is an entry of 1,833 acres in the Tiger Head District; £120 have been paid by the Government, while a certain runholder is getting the advantage of the ground?—Yes; I have pointed that out every year.

767. Is Mr. Cooper aware of it?—Yes; he is perfectly aware of it.

768. Has he communicated with the Lands Department?—I have made not merely one but a dozen inquiries of the Lands Department. Whenever it has been possible to get rid of the liability have done so. I have in every case endeavoured to shift the responsibility.

769. On the chain in front of large rivers, are you responsible?—Yes; in some cases.

770. Wakatipu?—No.

771. Mataura?—We had to do it in one part.

772. Cromwell, that is unsold land?—Yes; there are some cases in which we are compelled to do it.

773. Do you not think when they chain their own property they ought to do it?—Yes; but they do not do it.

774. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Are you of opinion generally that parties are doing all they can to eradicate the rabbit-pest?—I believe they are; I have no reason to doubt it.

775. *Hon. Captain Fraser.*] If it can be proved that poisoning and the natural enemy, ferrets, stoats, and weasels, can get rid of the rabbit-pest, do you not think it would be advisable to get rid of the abominable system of dogs and traps?—Yes.

776. Do you know that many of these dogs are running wild killing sheep?—I have mentioned that in my report. I know that £5 reward has been offered for them.

777. Do you know that the Government brought into this country weasels and stoats?—Yes; I sent the weasels up to Hawea, on the Timaru Creek. The stoats were taken——

778. On the Wanaka?—Yes; to where it was likely ground.

779. Were the whole of the weasels turned out?—Yes, and the stoats on the other side.

780. Are you aware that, when they arrived, I waited on Mr. Oliver and represented to him that they should be divided equally between Otago and Canterbury, and that they should be sent to places where rabbits were most abundant. Mr. Oliver assured me that that would be done.

781. But you have chosen to act differently; by whose authority did you act?—The whole thing was submitted to me.

782. By whom?—It was left to me; I acted on my own responsibility; it was about the time of the dissolution of Parliament; I was allowed to act as I thought fit.

783. I think you showed great want of judgment in putting them on a country where they could not be got at?—The rabbits abound on the borders of it: they are away from civilization, where they cannot be molested.

*Hon. Captain Fraser.*] Instead of being useful as intended, these animals will now most likely perish. You put them in a place where there are hard frosts every winter.

*Mr. Dodson:* Mr. Bullen, who has considerable experience, informed me that no better place could have been selected.

784. *Hon. Mr. Campbell.*] Do you recollect my sending to you and asking you to let me have some?—There were so many applications that if I had had ten times the number I could have disposed of them.

785. *Hon. Captain Fraser.*] How could you have refused the Hon. Mr. Campbell and myself?—I acted on my own judgment; there was no member of the Government here at the time.

786. *Hon. the Chairman.*] But you must have submitted the matter to some authority?—I submitted the matter to Mr. Cooper: I asked him whether I should take the responsibility on my own shoulders, and he said "Yes." It should also be remembered that these animals will not stand captivity for any length of time: the sooner they were again out in their wild state the better.

787. You judged the course you have taken to be the best to pursue?—Yes.

788. *Mr. J. C. Buckland.*] Are there any rabbits where they are?—Yes; they are just on the outside border of the rabbits.

789. *Mr. Dodson.*] You have no reason to think that you made a mistake in turning them out in that place?—No; I have no reason to think that I made a mistake. Many persons have told me that I adopted the best plan.

*Hon. the Chairman.*] A good deal has been said about unoccupied lands of which local bodies are the ostensible owners: is there anything in the Act that would compel County Councils or other bodies to clear such lands?—No; it is almost impossible to obtain a conviction.

790. For instance, suppose the Governors of the Otago University?—They are a corporate body; you can get at them.