

be very loth to do so ; but the Act is very clear that if the Inspector finds lice he has to give an order to clean.

7. Is it not a fact that the Rabbit Act is equally imperative?—Yes.

8. Do you enforce the provisions of the Rabbit Act to the letter? Do you not, as a matter of fact, use a discretionary power?—Yes, to a certain extent.

9. Can you tell the Committee absolutely that you are not at liberty to use a similar discretionary power in the administration of the lice-sections of the Act?—It appears to me, by the reading of the Act, that it is imperative. It authorizes the Inspector to dip the flock if any lice are found.

10. Have you made any inquiries at head-quarters as to what is expected in this matter?—I think they would refer us to the Act.

11. It has been stated that the clause is not a bit more imperative than the clauses dealing with the destruction of the rabbits. Do you deny that?—I do not think they are both alike.

12. In the case of fat sheep passing through to market—possibly sold, and coming down to one of the freezing-establishments—if you discovered a single lousy sheep amongst them you would consider it your duty to order them to be dipped before going further?—We should have to do it by the Act.

13. Do you know that in the case of Mr. Mace that has been done?—Yes. It was a very hard case.

14. Was he ordered to dip?—I do not know. I could not say. It was Mr. Drummond's case.

Mr. DRUMMOND examined.

15. *Mr. Buchanan.*] You have had one or two prosecutions in your district under the lice sections of the Sheep Act?—Yes.

16. If you felt satisfied that you had discretionary power, would you have taken proceedings in the case of Mr. Whitcombe, in the Forty-Mile Bush?—Certainly not.

17. Has he dipped this year?—Yes.

18. To what extent did you find lice in the sheep?—I did not examine the sheep—it was Inspector Cameron; and he only saw about five or six hundred, and he said they were not very bad. I think he has two thousand sheep.

19. Do you think that in such a case Agent Cameron is a sufficiently-experienced man for a prosecution to take place on his report without personal visiting yourself?—I certainly think that the Inspector has no discretionary power. It is quite sufficient, once he finds lice, to give an order to dip. He examined a few of the sheep to satisfy himself that they were lousy, and Mr. Whitcombe pleaded guilty in the Court. The Justices of the Peace were not satisfied with this, and wished to hear evidence, and Cameron and Whitcombe were examined. They adjourned the case for two or three weeks, and then gave their decision, inflicting the minimum penalty of £5; but they intimated they would recommend that the fine be reduced to £1.

20. Is it not true that Mr. Whitcombe explained to the Magistrate that a delay took place before he could replace the dip owing to the timber not coming to hand?—What I understood was that he ordered totara, and instead of sending him totara they sent him white pine; hence the delay: and I reported to Mr. Bayly that I believed the timber was the cause of the delay in getting the dip erected.

21. Is it true that Mr. Mace was compelled to dip his sheep when they were going away?—It is quite true.

22. Is it true also that Tatham was compelled to dip fat sheep in a similar way?—No. He had an order at the time to dip all his sheep, and he asked me to allow him to move these fat sheep without dipping; but I told him I had no power. If they had been in a sale-yard I could have allowed him to move them to some place to be dipped.

23. You admit having a discretionary power under the Rabbit Act?—I have no discretionary power: we give notice to destroy rabbits on a property, and if steps are not taken to eradicate them I am obliged to take proceedings.

24. You contend that clause 2 of the Amendment Act leaves you no discretionary power?—I have no such power under the Rabbit and Sheep Act.

25. Suppose, in July or August, passing along the road, you saw lousy sheep in possession of an owner, do you mean to tell the Committee that you would order the dipping of these sheep if they were ewes, and either on the point of lambing or lambing?—I have not inspected sheep for lice at lambing.

26. You admit, then, you have a discretionary power to that extent?—I admit that I leave myself to get a rap over the knuckles.

27. *Hon. the Chairman.*] In regard to Mr. Whitcombe's case, he apparently failed to dip his sheep because the dip was not actually erected on his run?—That is so.

28. Is there not some clause in the Sheep Act which compels them to have a dip?—Not under the Lice Act; but under the Sheep Act a month is allowed.

29. Has Whitcombe lately come there?—No, he has been there for some time; but he has only had sheep for two years. He had a few cattle before.

30. Do you think it desirable to introduce an amendment into the Lice Act giving discretionary power?—I think so. If near shearing-time a month is not long enough, nor if on the eve of lambing.

31. The amendment you would recommend, then, would be in the direction of allowing a longer time to dip in at certain times of the year?—Yes.

32. But if you introduced a discretionary power to say whether a man should dip or not, that would be opening the door to all sorts of abuses?—Yes. I mean only in respect to time for dipping.