

578. What has been done in regard to the east coast of the North Island?—Ferrets in large numbers have been turned out on the edge of the fence, and there is a man specially employed in watching the fence to prevent any of them getting over.

579. I have been asking these questions *apropos* to your answer just now, that you thought the matter should be left in the hands of the Government, and not to local administration. Do you not think there would be a great difference between a Board elected by ratepayers administering money raised from themselves and the old Boards of administration?—There should be.

580. Would they not take such an interest in the matter as would insure efficiency?—I should think so.

581. Then, it would be good to elect a Board if they administered locally-raised money?—As I have said before, it would apply in some places, but generally it would not.

582. Why?—Because there are so many small owners, and such diversity of interests.

583. Suppose you confined it to the lands of small owners?—Then it might work.

584. In regard to wire-fencing, would not fences be very valuable to work against for poisoning and using ferrets?—Yes.

585. Do you know anything about the fence from Waimate towards the Manawatu River?—I have seen a portion of it.

586. Do you know how that fence came to be erected?—By voluntary contributions.

587. Do you not consider that a remarkable illustration of the advantages of local administration as against Government administration?—There, undoubtedly, it has been a partial success; but, once the rabbits increase in large numbers, I am certain it will not be a permanent stoppage to them. It checks them at present in a great measure.

588. Do you know the number of rabbits that have been killed on the south side of the fence?—A few have been killed.

589. And on the north side?—A few.

590. The actual numbers are eight on the north side and one hundred and twenty recently on the south side. That will go to show that the fence has been an advantage?—Undoubtedly.

591. You think that local administration, if it worked well, would be better than Government administration has been?—That is hardly a fair question.

592. If there had been local administration, would rabbits have been there?—There would not.

593. Then local administration has been a success?—There it has, undoubtedly.

594. *Hon. Mr. Buckley.*] Is it not a fact that, immediately the rabbits in the Waikato country were reported to the department, you were instructed to get the best man in the service and send him up there?—That is Mr. Hargraves.

595. Is he not one of the best men in the country?—He is.

596. And he was sent up at once?—He was.

597. Have you had any report from him?—Not yet.

598. In regard to a portion of the country in the South Island, where it was said the rabbits were likely to come in from the Westland County, did you not get instructions to send a man there at once and create a new district?—Yes.

599. Is not that a good man?—A very good man.

600. And have you not sent instructions to the agents to use the most energetic measures for the destruction of rabbits throughout the country?—Yes.

601. And, as far as the department is concerned, everything has been done that could be done?—It has. In regard to the Waikato country, I was confusing Cambridge with Alexandra.

602. But you had no report up to that time about the spread of rabbits at all?—None.

603. I understand the most stringent rules have been enforced, so far as the Inspectors are concerned?—Yes.

604. You led the Committee to suppose that appointments had been made by the department without reference to you?—There have been one or two.

605. Who are they?—One is Mr. Reynolds.

606. Was his name not submitted to you before he was sent?—No.

607. Is not he a fit man?—Quite, for the appointment.

608. Is not the name of every applicant submitted to you, as to whether he is a suitable person or not?—Not in all cases.

609. Tell me one other?—Mr. Hargraves. I was ordered to send him there; though I grant that a better appointment could not have been made. I might mention another—Mr. Munro.

610. Was it not at your own suggestion that he was appointed?—No, it was not.

611. Is not he a very suitable person?—Yes; and doing well.

612. Were you not away five months, to clean your own district?—Most of the infected part was in the District of Nelson.

613. The whole of the rabbit agents and Sub-Inspectors are now under the control of the Chief Inspector of the district?—Yes.

614. Was not that at your suggestion?—Yes.

615. Is that working well or not?—I do not think there has been time to see whether that is the case or not.

616. Are there not several people breeding ferrets and selling them?—Yes; down at Southland.

617. Are you not aware that several gentlemen have brought ferrets into the country at their own expense, with Government facilities?—Stoats and weasels.

618. We provided the machinery, until the New Zealand Shipping Company refused to bring any more?—Yes.