

before it came out the trustees ceased to exist, and the Government inherited their assets and liabilities. The assets amounted to £2 Os. 6d., and the liabilities consisted chiefly of forty-four coils of wire-netting, ordered of Levin and Co., at £42. The Government paid for this, and used a portion of it for fencing a paddock at the boundary, and the remainder was afterwards handed over to the committee, who were also endowed with £300. The committee afterwards raised £2,500 by voluntary contributions, and the fence is now erected to the extent of eleven miles of completed fence, and two more in hand.

712. What district was rated for that fencing?—The Provincial District of Hawke's Bay generally.

713. The whole of it?—I think so, as far as I am informed.

714. It was simply to protect Hawke's Bay?—Yes; from the inroad of rabbits, with which the Wairarapa was infested.

715. And they were paying sheep-rates at the same time?—Yes.

716. Have they scab in that district?—No.

717. I believe the rate on the sheep far exceeds the expenses?—It exceeds it by some few hundreds of pounds.

718. Have you communicated with any other Governments to ascertain their experience in regard to the treatment of rabbits?—We did some years ago.

719. Not lately?—No.

720. Did you get any information then?—Not much.

721. Would it not be a good thing to communicate again?—I think it would.

722. I have heard it stated that in Canada they have also great difficulty in dealing with the rabbits; and, to a certain extent, they have been able to keep the pest down?—I have not heard of that. It would be very easy to make inquiries.

723. Western Australia, I believe, has also had some communication with Germany on the subject. Would the Government take steps to ascertain?—I think they would if they were applied to. I should like to say a few words with respect to the question asked of Mr. Bayly here, by the Hon. Mr. Menzies, on the subject of the introduction of the marten. That subject was mooted, and a suggestion was made to the Government that it might be a valuable thing to introduce, and letters were written to the Agent-General, in England, and also to Mr. Creighton, who acts in a sort of a way as Agent for the Government in San Francisco. The Agent-General wrote out to say that it might be possible to obtain a few of the marten-cat in Scotland, and they would cost £5 a piece there, exclusive of the expense of sending them out; and Mr. Creighton never answered the letter at all. The Agent-General promised further inquiries, and never wrote again.

Hon. Mr. Menzies: The marten is getting scarce in Scotland, but they are common in California.

Hon. Mr. Holmes: I think Mr. Creighton is away from San Francisco.

Witness: This was two years ago, and he was there then.

Hon. Mr. Menzies: I should think Mr. Creighton ought to have no difficulty in getting them.

724. Hon. the Chairman.] The American Government takes great pains to collect information of all descriptions, and they ought to be likely to have information on this subject?—I think so.

725. Would it not be a good thing to employ some one in New Zealand to experiment with rabbits to discover a poison which would be useful in summer, or some other means of destroying them?—It might if you could find a person able and willing to do it, but I am afraid there would be some difficulty about that.

726. There is a gentleman, I believe, in the Agricultural Department (Mr. Reeves), would it not be possible for him to superintend something of the kind?—I do not know what his qualifications may be for a scientific inquiry like that.

727. He may be presumed to be scientific, otherwise he would not be there?—It is a question I could not answer.

728. Did the Government try to bring out stoats and weasels by the "Elderslie," for instance?—No.

729. Have the vessels the same objection to bringing out acids, carbon, or phosphorus?—No; but they are carried on deck, and in bad weather they frequently find their way overboard.

730. The abandoned lands seem to be the chief cause of difficulty in dealing with the rabbit nuisance?—That is because they are the most difficult of access.

731. Then, there are the lands which have never been let, and the commonages?—The lands which have never been let are unfit for occupation, and those which have been abandoned are less unfit, but not good for occupation.

732. Could not a plan be devised in relation to these for working the rabbit?—There are lots of places that you cannot get at. You cannot get phosphorized grain up to the top of these precipitous mountains and crags, and the only way would be to lay a cordon of poisoned grain as far as you can take it.

733. That was recommended by the Committee that sat two years ago. Has it been carried out?—The officers have been instructed to do it, and as far as we know are doing it.

734. Hon. Mr. Buckley.] Would you explain about the importation of phosphorus?—At first, when the use of phosphorized grain began to be general, the Government thought it advisable to buy large quantities of phosphorus and keep it in stock, to be issued to the people at cost-price, in order to prevent the excuse that they could not get it. After the first two or three years the Government came to the conclusion that it was not necessary any longer to interfere with the ordinary course of trade. Some people imported it at a much less cost than the Government could have let them have it at, and others went to the trade in the colony. That was as soon as the thing became established. All the Government do now is to keep a stock for their own use in poisoning the Crown lands that they are forced to poison, and they occasionally allow private people to obtain a portion if they want it.