

735. *Mr. Lance.*] It seems to me that the Colonial Secretary's Department has very little control over the lands, and that they are almost entirely under the control of the Minister of Lands?—The lands are entirely.

736. Would it tend to the more efficient working of the Act if the department were shifted?—Very likely it might. If it was connected with the Agricultural Department I dare say that it might enhance the efficiency.

737. If Boards were established, with or without rating powers, would it not be necessary to have some absolute head to compel them to work the Act?—Certainly.

738. *Hon. Mr. Larnack.*] What number of animals were brought out by each shipment?—About a hundred and twenty to a hundred and thirty.

739. What was the nature of the objection offered by the proprietors of the steamers?—The inconvenience caused to passengers by the stink.

740. Have you ever asked the company if they would consent to a smaller number being imported at a time?—No; we might do so.

741. Do you not think they would consent to a score at a time?—I think they might, but I have no means of forming a positive opinion.

742. *Mr. Dodson.*] You would want an experienced man to bring them out?—It would, of course, raise the cost per head on small shipments.

743. They are difficult to get?—They are not easy.

744. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Do you think the system of offering a certain price for the animals on landing would have the effect of assisting their introduction?—It might; but if the ships would take them we could bring them out ourselves much cheaper.

745. What price would they cost?—About £3 10s. per head for stoats and weasels.

746. What would they sell at?—Some sold at £5 per head.

747. *Mr. Dodson.*] Has the Government taken into consideration the possibility of breeding stoats and weasels in this country, and the probable cost?—No; they will not breed in confinement, I believe.

748. What provision was made for a constant supply of feed for them on the Wanaka Peninsula?—There was no provision made. The result would be that they would cross the isthmus and get on to the main land in search of more rabbits and birds, after killing all those on the peninsula.

749. Should not steps have been taken to feed those animals as soon as it was found that the rabbits were getting scarce?—The only way would be to drive the rabbits on again.

750. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Does the Land Department assist you in carrying out the Act; do you find any difficulty in the divided authority?—No; the difficulty is that there is no means of giving the land into the occupation of people for nothing, or at a nominal rent, on condition that they will kill the rabbits.

751. Have you recommended to the Government that provision of that description should be introduced?—It has been recommended over and over again by the Inspectors.

752. If the Rabbit and Sheep Department was handed over to the Agricultural Department, there would still be the same difficulty in regard to the Crown lands?—No; the Agricultural Department is under the Minister of Lands.

753. You are satisfied with the working of the department and the officers?—Yes, I think they work fairly well.

754. You are not prepared to make any recommendation as to a change in system?—No.

755. You do not even recommend the adoption of the proposal in regard to the trusts?—I have not considered it sufficiently. The suggestion that there should be nominated trustees was only made to me a short time ago.

756. Do you take steps to ascertain how the Act is working, or do you wait till complaint is made?—Mr. Bayly is looked upon as the responsible officer, and is supposed to know what every officer is doing, and to report if necessary.

757. And you are satisfied that he does report?—I think he does his work well. I do not say that every officer in the department is perfect. Some are smarter and more energetic than others.

758. *Hon. Mr. Menzies.*] We know that certain natural substances have a fascination for certain animals, such as valerian for cats, and aniseed and oil of rhodium for certain other animals. We do not know that there is any substance which possesses a fascination for rabbits. Do you think any practical good would arise by referring this matter to the Inspectors, and asking them to make experiments if they had opportunities of doing so?—I think it would be a good idea, but better still to consult a person of experience at Home. The great thing would be to hit upon something to induce rabbits to eat grain when there is an abundance of rich grass.

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FRIDAY, 4TH JUNE, 1886.

Inspector FOSTER examined.

759. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You are the Inspector under the Sheep and Rabbit Acts in the Marlborough District?—In the North Canterbury District; and I am also in charge of the Amuri District and Kaikoura Subdivision of the Marlborough District. I am in the position of a Chief Inspector in the Amuri and Kaikoura Districts.

760. And you have under you?—Inspector Clifton at Kaikoura, and Inspector Cook at Amuri.

761. Would you state to the Committee whether, in your opinion, rabbits have increased or diminished during the last two years—since you were before a former Committee?—They have increased in the Amuri District—that is to say, they have come on to the Amuri District from the