

864. Supposing local Rabbit Boards were created, how ought they to be worked in relation to the Inspectors?—The Boards should have control over all expenditure, and the Inspector should be instructed to carry out their instructions in that respect; but I do not think the Board should have any further control over the Inspector in connection with carrying out the Act.

865. Do you think the Boards should have the right to levy rates, or should the levying be made compulsory by the Government?—I think a minimum rate should be compulsory; but the Board should have power to increase that amount up to a certain limit in case further funds are required.

866. And the rate should only be collected in country infested with rabbits?—I think it should be left to the Colonial Secretary's Department to decide what localities should be formed into rabbit districts. I should not leave it to the people themselves, because the scheme might fail as in the case of the Act of 1880, and Boards would not rate themselves in some cases.

867. How about the rate in the case of a district not infested with rabbits, but threatened with them?—There should be some power to rate those districts to pay one-half the cost of the fence, as it would be mainly for their protection.

868. Have you any idea what amount would be raised per annum in a district now infested, say at $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per sheep?—I think there are some 8,500 owners altogether. The latest returns I could get were for 1884, and these showed that of this number 5,500 owned under five hundred sheep; and, averaging those flocks at three hundred, it brings it to a little over a million and a half; that leaves thirteen million to be rated supposing the whole country was declared into rabbit districts. I believe it would be about ten million. I would suggest that the rating should be by acreage, not on the sheep; and I average roughly that in New Zealand, leaving out the small farms, it takes two acres to graze a sheep; therefore the rate would be equal to $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per sheep, and that would make about £20,000.

869. If that were subsidized pound for pound by the Government it would yield about £40,000. Is that sum anything like sufficient to start with for the first year, so as to deal out vigorous measures?—I am not able to judge very well, as I have not had the opportunity of seeing what would be required, but I should think it would not be sufficient. It would go a great way though. I should expect that a great deal of private expenditure, however, would be going on at the same time; but one-half of that private expenditure is at present thrown away, through not having simultaneous action, and want of knowledge as regards the natural enemy.

870. The construction of the two fences which you have so strongly advocated—from Lake Tennyson down the Clarence, and one or two in South Canterbury—would cost £20,000, I should think?—Probably.

871. So that there would only be £20,000 left for the rest of New Zealand, at the rate of $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per acre?—Exactly.

872. *Hon. Mr. Peter.*] Why do you consider that owners of flocks under five hundred should not be rated?—Small farmers, as a rule, do not suffer much from the rabbits, except from infested hill-country adjacent to them. They also think that the present sheep-rate is enough for them to pay.

873. *Hon. Mr. Robinson.*] Which would be the fairest way to levy a rate—upon the value of the land per acre or the sheep in the district?—On the land, I think.

874. In that case, what would you do with regard to the land belonging to the Crown, and at present used for grazing sheep? Would you allow leasehold land to go scot-free?—I believe it is proposed that Government should subsidize at the rate of pound for pound, which would represent their liability for the rate on the leasehold land.

875. You would not propose to tax the sheep at all on Crown lands?—I think so.

876. How?—I should say that the holder of the lease of the land should also pay a rate, though a smaller one than on the freehold.

877. How are you going to get at that rate?—If you strike a certain rate on the freehold, then you might decide on a half or a quarter of that amount for the leasehold.

878. Then you would tax the leasehold lands?—Yes.

879. Do you think the officers who have been carrying out the Sheep Act are eligible as Rabbit Inspectors?—That is a question that I cannot answer, because I know so few of the officers of the department; but I know there are some among them who would be the very best men you could get for the position.

880. Do you think a wire-fence will keep the rabbits back?—I think so, if properly looked after.

881. What sort of a fence would you put up?—Judging from what I have read in the *Australian*, and from conversation with other people, I believe it should be a 3ft. 6in. fence, with 6in. sunk in the ground.

882. If wire-fencing is to be adopted, would it not be desirable to procure officers who possess a practical knowledge of such work?—It would be desirable to have men who had had such experience.

883. It is held that, if you put a fence down vertically underneath the ground, it would not stop a rabbit ten minutes, but if you sunk it a little, and then straightened out the wire at right angles to the fence, it would prove more efficacious?—I think rabbits generally do not burrow at a distance from an obstacle, but go straight to it.

884. Are the rabbits increasing in Amuri and Kaikoura?—They are spreading rather than increasing in numbers.

885. It is only lately you discovered rabbits in the Acheron?—Quite recently. We had no intimation from the owners of the runs in that country.

886. Do you consider that the eradication of scab and the extermination of the rabbit can be carried out efficiently by the same set of officers?—I should think so, because in a few months we shall have got rid of scab altogether, and then the work will be lighter.