

are useless?—No; what they say is that the Inspectors are not doing their duty, and in some cases they are exceeding it.

940. You do not mean to say the settlers think the Inspectors ought to be done away with altogether?—Yes; many of them feel very strongly in that direction.

941. They feel they could manage better by themselves?—Yes.

942. And you think they would?—My opinion is that a nominated Board would be the best.

943. If the Inspectors were dismissed, would it be absolutely necessary to have a Board or some authority that would compel them to continue exterminating?—Certainly.

944. You would not leave them to do it themselves or not as they liked?—The Board should have the same powers as the Inspectors.

945. *Hon. Mr. Holmes.*] Are you of opinion that a nominated Board would be better than a Board elected from payers of a rabbit-rate?—I think a nominated Board would be best; they would not be liable to pressure.

946. Who is to have the nomination?—The Government.

947. How do you propose the bonus should be given—for the purchase of rabbit-skins or for a shipment?—Either would do. In some places you would have to pay more on account of the rabbits becoming scarcer, so that it would be better that the Board should pay the bonus.

948. What kind of natural enemies do you propose introducing?—Ferrets have been a success in a good many parts of the Tuapeka County—at Tapanui, for instance, they have been found to be very destructive.

949. Has not the mongoose been introduced?—Yes, on Cargill and Anderson's run.

950. Have weasels done any work?—I believe some have been liberated at Moa Flat Station, and I understand they have been a success.

951. Which do you consider the best?—I am not able to express an opinion as to their respective merits.

952. Is there not a good deal of mortality among the ferrets?—That I cannot say. I know several runholders are very anxious to procure ferrets.

953. Would you be in favour of the Government introducing stoats and weasels, that are known to stand the climate better than anything else, and to be more effective?—I think it would be desirable to have natural enemies of each kind as a test which was best.

954. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Would you leave private individuals to introduce natural enemies as they thought fit?—The Government should supply these natural enemies to any one who is desirous of obtaining them.

955. *Mr. Cowan.*] With regard to the proposed bonus, have you calculated what 3d. per skin would amount to?—I think it would amount to a very considerable sum; I could not now say exactly what it would be. The larger the better, I should say, for the time being.

956. Nine million skins at that rate would amount to £112,500?—It would be money well spent. The settlers in my district are willing to contribute.

957. What portion?—I should say a third.

958. I suppose you recollect the time when rabbits were not in Tuapeka County?—Yes.

959. Where do you think they originally came from?—From Clyde and Alexandra; they were at one time very numerous there. It is country rather favourable to the breeding of rabbits.

960. Have you formed an opinion as to the possibility of stamping out the pest at all under the present administration? Is it to be done?—Yes.

961. By the present administration of the Act?—No; I think it would require the alterations I have suggested, and the Boards should have full power to control, with the same powers as Inspectors have.

962. *Mr. Kerr.*] What is the best means of destroying rabbits?—You would have to adopt various means. You can only poison in certain seasons; but that is the most effective.

963. You would take the skins to pay for that?—It would be advisable, in my opinion, to apply every possible means to eradicate the pest.

964. *Hon. the Chairman.*] I gather that you think the Act itself is not sufficient in its power, even when properly enforced, to keep down the rabbit-nuisance?—I think the Act itself is very stringent, if applied alike to every one. In our district this is said not to be the case. In one part—Waitahuna—there has never been any attempt to enforce it, the settlers being able to control the pest.

965. You think, if the Act were impartially enforced, it would be sufficient to meet the difficulty?—It would meet it far more than it does at present.

966. Do you think it absolutely necessary that the amendments you spoke of should be adopted?—My opinion is that if after notice has been served on the holder, and nothing being done towards exterminating the rabbits, the Inspector should call at the settler's house and accompany him over the land. Evidence in Court is usually very conflicting as to whether rabbits in numbers are there or not. If the owner is not taking proper means, the Inspector should put on labour to destroy the rabbits, and charge the owner.

967. They can do that already?—But they do not. Another matter the settlers have to complain about is this: When the Inspector proceeds against them, he generally takes a number of cases at a time, and employs the best solicitor to prosecute, and at one time a large fee was charged each defendant, the solicitor making a good thing out of it.

968. Who engages the solicitor in these cases?—The Inspector.

969. On his own responsibility?—Yes.

970. So that, if he failed, he would have to pay for it, not the Government?—That I cannot say.

971. Do you think the suggestions you have made regarding the alteration of the Act and system would be likely to be effective in very high and mountainous country?—Yes; we have in our district a variety of country.