

997. Do you think it is possible to keep the rabbits down or exterminate them in your district?—If inducements were offered to kill the young as well as the old the evil would be reduced to a minimum very speedily. It is leaving the young alive that causes the trouble. In the case of very small rabbits they would not take the trouble to skin them: they could cut their heads off. It is not all money sunk: skins will fetch something in the market, but it will be money sunk that is given for young ones.

998. Have any ferrets been turned out in your district to any extent?—Yes, in the Wanaka district. I am told they are all dying from some mysterious disease, something very noisome.

999. It would not be from starvation?—No; it might be from too much food.

1000. Do you think natural enemies are beneficial?—I think their introduction was one of the most dangerous things ever attempted in this country.

1001. Why?—They are not particular what they kill so long as they get blood. I believe there are several instances indeed where they have attacked children. It is very certain they will attack a man. A well-armed man would be required to beat off half a dozen if they attacked him; and if he lay down to sleep they would destroy his life. They also destroy poultry and game.

1002. You do not know of any cases of that kind in your district?—They are quoted as having occurred in the Wairarapa.

1003. With regard to the Act as it stands now, if properly carried out, would it meet the rabbit difficulty?—As it stands now it will never have that effect.

1004. How?—Poisoning is ineffectual during a certain part of the year, while to fail to provide for the killing of young rabbits causes all the mischief.

1005. Under the Act the Inspectors have surely the power to give notice to kill rabbits at any time of the year?—Yes; but that would not compel the killing of the young ones. It is impossible that an Inspector could watch every rabbit, and see that a man does not put back the young when he catches a doe.

1006. Is wire-netting used in your district?—Yes; one very large owner—Mr. Clark, of Moa Flat—has fenced in a large portion of his property.

1007. Are you able to say whether it has proved effective or not?—It is a question really at issue; but the weight of opinion is that he has created a very nice warren, and that the rabbits cannot get out of it.

1008. But it would enable them to be killed better?—Yes.

1009. *Hon. Mr. Menzies.*] You know the district about Wakatipu, of course. Do you believe that if the rabbiters were paid a fixed price for the skins the rabbits could be exterminated, or, at any rate, greatly reduced in numbers?—No, I do not; the country is too rough.

1010. Do you think poisoning is the only course to adopt in rough and high country?—I can see nothing else.

1011. What would be charged to the Consolidated Fund if a bonus were given of 2d. per skin?—I have been trying to obtain figures as to the quantity of rabbit-skins exported, but I have not been able to do so. There would be very little loss on 2d. per skin.

1012. Supposing ten millions were exported, would it not be necessary to have a much larger export in order to reduce the rabbits materially?—Yes; if you could get rid of twenty millions there would be so many less next year.

1013. Do you think rabbiters would be likely to kill as many as they could in order to obtain a large bonus for a year or two, without looking to the possible diminution of their earnings by the reduction of numbers in subsequent years?—I do; on the same principle that a gold-miner gets all the gold he can out of a claim and lets the future look after itself.

1014. *Hon. Mr. Peter.*] Are you aware of anybody who has made use of carrots steeped in arsenic?—I am not aware of any one in my district who has done so.

1015. Has any one tried the plan of wire-netting with large traps at the entrance?—I believe that is the way it has been done.

1016. By laying off a few acres sown with parsley and carrots, and putting a trap at the other side, that would be a good way of killing rabbits in summer time?—Yes; it would catch them all the year round. Whenever they see a green crop they wish to get at it. The experiment has been tried with success at Earnsclough by Mr. Fraser.

1017. *Mr. Cowan.*] You do not look forward to the pest being entirely eradicated?—No; they will always have a certain fixity of tenure in some parts of the country, where you cannot get at them so freely.

1018. Supposing all the energies of the Government were strained in the direction of giving a bonus, and the time arrived when it would not pay to kill rabbits on account of their scarcity, what would be the result if left alone?—In the first place, I do not think the time would ever arrive. If they were left alone for two years they would again devastate the country.

1019. Have you considered the point of giving the administration of the Act to County Councils?—Yes; I think they are the proper bodies to have it. It is impossible that officers living remote from the spot can exercise the same beneficial influence as a local body.

1020. Where the district generally is overrun with this pest, every owner is alive to the necessity of keeping the pest down?—I am positive of it.

1021. It has been shown to us that the cost of rabbit agents amounts to £13,000 a year—men employed under the Inspectors?—I have never heard of any rabbit agents in any district; I do not know them by that name. I have, however, seen men out with the Inspector, who were, I suppose, in his employ.

1022. *Mr. Kerr.*] Do you approve of County Councils being empowered to deal with the rabbit-question, or would you advocate a distinct and separate Board?—I am strongly in favour of handing it over to County Councils. This multiplicity of Boards is a very great nuisance, especially in country districts where the population is scattered. The County Councils are composed of men representing all classes of the community, and if they are not able to cope with the matter it is questionable where you will find a Board of better composition.