

268. The Bill provides that in settled districts the Road Boards should have a permissive power?—Yes.

269. And in pastoral country the Commissioner of Crown Lands should have the power to act?—Yes; outside Road Board districts.

270. But where there is freehold country outside of the Road Board districts, would it not be desirable to have some other power besides the Commissioner for Crown Lands?—All the freehold country in Southland is included in Road Board districts, and assessment has for a long time been paid on all the freehold country in Southland.

271. Do you know how far the legislation in Tasmania has been effective?—I understand it has been effective. With regard to the previous question, I may say it was proposed that the Commissioner should be able to deal with waste lands of the Crown outside Road Board districts.

272. Do you think it would be desirable to make the Act applicable to the whole colony?—Yes; I think so.

273. Suppose the case of parts of the colony where there are no Road Boards; what machinery would you suggest?—In such cases, if there was a Sheep Inspector, I would attach the work to his department.

274. Where there is no Sheep Inspector?—Then there would be some difficulty.

275. Could it not be done by the freeholders forming themselves into a body—a kind of local Board?—Yes; but it would be more expensive. I presume they would want an Inspector.

276. Probably they would not like to come under the control of the Commissioner of Crown Lands?—Perhaps not.

277. It would then be necessary to have some kind of organization?—Yes.

278. Then could not the organization be supplied by the freeholders within the district?—Yes; but some independent person would be required to carry out the law.

279. Supposing a certain number of persons had power to constitute a certain district into a rabbit district, would not that get over the difficulty?—Yes; it might.

280. There is no clause of that character in this Bill?—No.

281. Would it not be desirable to insert one, so as to make provision for persons forming themselves into a Board?—Yes, I think so; and I think while we are legislating, it would be desirable to pass a Bill for the whole of New Zealand.

282. Did the rabbits come to you through the hundreds?—Yes; they come up the river along the river banks—that is, the wild grey rabbits come up from the sand-hills between Invercargill and Riverton.

283. Did you sign the petition signed by 44 persons praying for legislation?—Yes.

284. If all the owners and occupiers of land outside the hundreds—that is, in pastoral country—were compelled to pay the acreage rate proposed, and trusted upon that rate alone for the destruction of rabbits, how much per acre would be sufficient?—I should not recommend the raising of any rate for the purpose of destroying the rabbits. What I propose is the raising of a rate to create certain machinery, which machinery would convey power to the Board to enter upon lands where the holder neglected to do his work, and kill the rabbits at the expense of such negligent owner.

285. In the event of it being decided that the destruction of rabbits should be done by persons paid out of a rate, how much do you think that rate per acre would amount to?—It would be very considerable, but I have not gone into it.

286. *Mr. Andrew.*] What is your expenditure now?—It has cost me at the rate of 3d. per rabbit, without deducting the value of the skin. On calculating the cost, I should say it is about £487 a year; but that is independent of the amount lost yearly in wool and stock.

287. Would such an expenditure as that go on?—Yes, it would go on for ever unless my neighbours did not make the same exertions.

288. *Mr. W. Wood.*] How much per acre would that be?—About 4d.

289. Supposing all persons were equally energetic in suppressing the nuisance, how long would such an expenditure be necessary: two or three years?—I should think five years. I should not like to undertake to do it in less than five years; but even after that a rate (perhaps smaller) would be necessary.

290. *Mr. Manders.*] I did not catch what amount you expected to obtain from the assessment?—The assessment is proposed for the purpose of creating a machinery. It would be necessary to have an Inspector, with certain powers to enter upon land and destroy rabbits upon an individual's property, at his expense, if that individual would not do it himself. I think such machinery would be sufficient, for if a person once had a visit from the Inspector, he would find the process so expensive that in future he would kill his rabbits himself. I believe the plan has worked well in Tasmania and South Australia.

291. You only desire an assessment for the purpose of calling into existence machinery?—Yes.

292. You have not contemplated asking the Government for a bonus for rabbits killed. You are perhaps aware that was done in Tasmania?—No; I was not aware of it, and I did not propose it here. In answer to your first question, I may say, we expect the rate to bring in £600 or £700 a year in Southland alone.

293. *The Chairman.*] The maximum rating in the case of freehold and leasehold land is put down at a farthing and one-eighth of a penny. That is what you propose?—Yes; I think that would be a fair maximum.

294. What should be the maximum within the hundreds?—I have not gone into that. We thought the smaller the rate the less opposition might be looked for. Of course, if a higher rate were fixed, it would not be necessary to raise more than was wanted.

295. *Mr. Manders.*] Would there be any objection made by pastoral tenants and others, if a higher rate were fixed, say, one penny and one halfpenny respectively?—No; the amounts are only suggestive; but the £600 or £700 would be quite sufficient to commence with in Southland.

296. You have not contemplated asking the Government for a bonus?—No; we had no hope of