

we agreed that the person whom the committee had most confidence in was Mr. John Drummond. He was a man of large experience in sheep and scab, and of sterling character—a man who would not be influenced by one or another, who would do his duty, and do it well. The Government did not give us all we asked, but they appointed Mr. Drummond. They went a step beyond that, and dealt with the then Inspector, which we did not ask.

888. In what way?—Practically he had to resign; that is, he was to be removed. He declined that, and lost his appointment.

889. Was it in consequence of the Act not being carried out sufficiently stringently, or because the Act was not being put in force, that you were dissatisfied?—Because no substantial progress was made in the eradication of scab. I was anxious not to bring any sort of charge against the Inspector.

890. I asked you whether, as a general result, the Act was not put in force so as to be satisfactory?—It certainly was not put in force in a manner that was satisfactory, because the scab was not got rid of as it could have been got rid of. My opinion at the time was that the Inspector was asked to do more than he could do. He had got charge of an extensive scabby district. He had charge not only of that district but other districts. He had also office work to attend to, and the administration of the Rabbit Act. We wanted a man with plenary powers—a man who should be free from all this rabbit work and central office work. It was a district which required one qualified man to go into it and work the Act. We concluded that the Government agreed with that, because they appointed Mr. Drummond.

891. If I understand rightly, the fault you find is in the fact of there not being sufficient power in the Head Inspector in your district—that is, that he had not sufficient assistance—and not with anything in the Act itself?—We undoubtedly were agreed with regard to the amendments to the Act itself. We put our wants into the form of resolutions. Had I known I was to be examined with reference to the Sheep Act I would have brought those resolutions with me.

892. We have received a copy of amendments suggested by a number of sheepowners at the meeting: are not these they?—Some of them.

893. Mr. Walker has explained them to us?—Some of those contain resolutions passed at our previous meeting.

894. Do you recognize them as copies?—Some of them; not all. Two of them were undoubtedly agreed to by us. Simultaneous dipping was one thing and the provision of dipping apparatus another, and the making the giving a certificate compulsory if the sheep were found to be clean. I regard those amendments as necessary. The other resolutions on this paper are chiefly relaxations of the Act, on which I express no opinion. Generally, I believe the value of the Act depends on the resolution and determination of the Inspectors, the support given to the Inspectors by the department, and the firm administration of the Act in the Resident Magistrate's Court.

895. Can you tell us of any instance of a person being summoned in whose case the Act was found to have failed?—No; I am not prepared to give cases; but I think there are two or three things in which difficulties present themselves. The Inspector does not, or did not, get the aid of a solicitor in all cases. It appears to me that he ought always to have professional assistance at his command. A layman is at a great disadvantage without skilled advice. If I were a public officer, having to conduct prosecutions, I think it would be unjust to deprive me of professional assistance: it is very damaging to the authorities to deny that assistance. An Inspector ought never to take a case into Court unless he is certain to succeed. He wants professional advice, in the first instance, before he takes proceedings. The Government should secure that for their officers. Certain Inspectors under the Rabbit Act went into Court without knowing the law. They were defeated on a technical point. They were blamed for taking the case into Court; but the blame was with the department for not seeing that they were properly advised. The public does not see the ins and outs of the tripping-up, and concludes that the Act may be defied. In the Resident Magistrate's Court, under the Rabbit and Sheep Acts, there was a certain amount of leniency shown. There is not a sufficient recognition of the fact that a man who allows scab to continue in his sheep, and neglects to eradicate, not only robs himself, but does an enormous deal of injury to his neighbour and the whole district. The fine that may be inflicted on him is as nothing compared with the injury done to the neighbour and the district. It has appeared to me that there was, if not is, a real want of professional aid to the Inspectors and a want of firmness on the part of the Resident Magistrate. There is a combination required of these two things. The administration of the law under these Acts would have been more satisfactory had this been done. The administration of the Act is everything. I feel that the Rabbit Act and the Sheep Act are strong enough if the man who administers them is thoroughly supported.

896. You are in favour of having the Act carried out strictly?—I am. I believe in it. The best Act is useless if you do not carry it out firmly.

897. Do you think the department has not backed up its subordinates?—I do not say that; but there has been a certain amount of slackness here and there. There are wanting vigour and determination. I heard the late Inspector say that he had applied for sufficient aid to enable him to clean the Crown lands, and that his application was neglected.

898. We have before us correspondence relating to this. It appears that there was some authority given to two persons. There were some two hundred sheep that were paid for. You do not think that was sufficient?—Two persons could not do the whole of the work. It is a very large tract of country to clean. They must go over the whole place and root things out. There are one of two courses for the Government to take—either to clean these lands, or to get rid of the responsibility by putting the lands into the market. Every one appears to be agreed that scab has been kept alive largely by sheep in these Government lands. I have Government lands adjoining me out of which Government lands, in connection with an open gully on private lands, I was scabbed. I can only trace it to that.

899. *Hon. Mr. Robinson.*] I should like a straightforward answer from you as to whether you