

1219. *Hon. the Chairman.*] I gather from your remarks that, in case of the runholder (Mr. Ingles) fencing off the outside hill run, unless some steps are taken to kill the sheep on that part, you will be in danger of being scabbed?—Mr. Ingles has never mixed with me, nor I with him; but I have with Waipapa.

1220. You say that the fencing is not all that is necessary: that the sheep must be killed off the outside country. If the runholders undertake this, you would have to contribute?—Yes; I would be perfectly willing to do so.

1221. Then, you say that some steps should be taken to kill the sheep outside the fences?—Yes. I also wish to state my judgment of the unfairness of the fines. If minimum fines were struck out of the Act; if, instead of fining because sheep are scabby, it were shown that a man could do no more—and that nobody could do more—then I think he ought not to be fined. Fines should be inflicted for neglect.

*Hon. Mr. Campbell:* That is your opinion.

1222. *Hon. Captain Fraser.*] That is your judgment. We have it in evidence that, had the Act been energetically administered, you would have been all clean a long time ago?—Or ruined.

1223. *Hon. Mr. Robinson.*] I think you told us that your sheep had been scabby for twenty years?—Yes.

1224. You have never paid any fines?—No. For a great many years, as I stated in my evidence, the general impression was that it was impossible to clean; that it was no use to try to thoroughly clean; until the passing of this Act—that is the time from which we should reckon. I should like to point out the unjust principle, because my neighbours have a better country, that the majority should try to tread me out. It is against the industry of New Zealand that anything of the kind should be done. It is as if a man having a large estate an attempt should be made to cut it up.

*Hon. Mr. Campbell:* We are not going into that; we cannot have that.

*Witness:* I merely wish to state that the same principle carried out warrants one as much as the other, if the majority has the right to do what it thinks fit.

*Mr. J. C. Buckland:* For the good of the country; but then you would expect compensation.

1225. *Hon. the Chairman.*] If there is any opinion you would wish to express in regard to the Act or the working of the Act we are ready to hear you; but I do not think you are justified in concluding that the Committee has a foregone opinion. By “foregone conclusion” I allude to proceedings of last year?—I wish to place on record my judgment that the principle of inflicting fines, if carried out, will leave a most unsatisfactory state of things. If this small portion of the Waipapa is cut off, the country being extremely rough, I shall be in greater danger than at any time before. That is the point I wished to lay before the Committee.

Mr. SUTTON, examined.

1226. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You have been in the employment of the Government for some five years?—Yes; when I was first appointed, in 1879, I was sent to Marlborough in charge of the Blenheim Subdivision.

1227. You were then moved to Wairarapa?—Two years afterwards I was removed to Wairarapa, in charge of North and South Wairarapa.

1228. *Hon. Mr. Waterhouse.*] What was the date?—In March, 1879, I went to Marlborough; it was the same month in 1881 when I was moved to Wairarapa.

1229. Had you much to do with scabby sheep in those districts?—Marlborough at that time had a great deal of scab in the subdivision I had charge of. I was also about a good deal among the districts.

1230. What was the reason of your leaving?—I was moved to take charge of Wairarapa, on account of having carried out the Act satisfactorily in Marlborough. Scab was rife in the Wairarapa.

1231. Were they making a change, or were you added?—I had charge of the district; there were subdivisions—North and South Wairarapa. There was an Inspector for each subdivision.

1232. In Wairarapa had you many scabby sheep in your district?—Both North and South Wairarapa, when I took charge, were infected, but, shortly afterwards, South Wairarapa got clean. In the north part the scab was pretty bad. It was something marvellous to see the changes that took place. There would be a clean certificate given, say, to-day, and after a time the run would be infected again from different causes.

1233. Can you state the cause of infection?—In one part, on the East Coast, there is a block of Crown land; it was full at the time, and is now, of wild sheep; some of them are very scabby.

1234. Did you make any efforts to clear these places?—Some months after taking charge of the district, when I had looked through it, I saw what was necessary to be done. I applied to the Government, with the result that I was made Crown Ranger, so as to be able to deal with Crown lands. In that capacity I wrote to the Crown Lands Commissioner, stating what I thought was necessary to be done, and asking authority to deal with the wild sheep on Crown lands.

1235. How long was it after you went into the district that you made that application?—About three or four months.

1236. I believe that two hundred odd sheep were killed?—That was a long time after that. I got no reply.

1237. Did you find any difficulty in getting the sheepowners to carry out the Act?—In certain cases I had to lay informations.

1238. Did you lay informations in all cases where the owners of sheep came within the operation of the law?—I used to lay informations, and then sometimes I used to withdraw them.

1239. Why withdraw?—If I laid two or three informations, and I got a conviction, I used to withdraw the next one, because some of the sections work in with others. I never cared if I found men willing to come to terms. I never liked to press, so that they should be fined heavily. I would give them some chance to clean their sheep.