

Mr. T. MACKAY, Jun., examined.

1407. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You are in charge of a run in the Wairarapa?—Yes; belonging to the Rev. Mr. Andrew.

1408. There is scab on that run?—We will not admit that there is, but we are without a certificate.

1409. Has it been without a certificate for any length of time?—Ten months.

1410. Have you any idea where scab came from?—It was caused through a general spread of scab throughout the district, which took place last year.

1411. To what do you attribute that general spread of scab?—To the maladministration of the Sheep Act.

1412. Will you point out in what way you think the Act has been maladministered?—I mean, with regard to that outbreak, that it was through the runs not being properly inspected. I believe the infection existed before the Inspectors were aware of it; I also attribute the spread of it to the Crown lands. I think these are the main points. I do not wish to make remarks about any Inspector in the district more than I can help. We have had a case in Court. One of these Inspectors—Mr. Andrews—I had to order off the premises; so that I would rather keep clear of the personal aspects of the case. I take the whole question on the broad grounds that there has been maladministration of the Act. Mr. Bellis is a small owner, with about twelve hundred sheep. This run is in the centre of a large number of other runs. He has been fined for not cleaning. The Inspector's evidence went to show that there had been great neglect. I think that, in a case like that, it was the Inspector's duty to have taken over those sheep, as the Act provided, and to clean them. Instead of that, the man is allowed to go on muddling away, meanwhile jeopardizing the whole community. The Inspector might, if he were any good at all, have taken over these sheep, and cleaned them in a few months. The Inspector's evidence, in my opinion, shows carelessness. The man is fined. What is the result? the man has not his certificate. I believe the sheep are clean at this moment; but he has not a certificate. There has been a great risk run all through the whole affair. There is power in the Act, I think, to take over flocks like that.

1413. You mean under section 33?—Under section 33.

1414. Do you know of any other respect in which the Act has not been carried out?—There have been various things done in the district that I take exception to. I take exception to the way the Inspectors are appointed. I think incompetent men have been appointed—men without any knowledge of their work.

1415. Does that refer to the existing state of things?—Yes, to the existing state of things. I think it can be brought to light that there are men appointed who have no such knowledge of scab as to warrant them holding that position.

1416. To whom do you refer?—I consider that, with regard to scab, Inspector Valance is not competent.

1417. Is there any other?—I believe that, on the whole, the others are competent: Mr. Drummond is one of the most practical men in the department.

1418. Do you know by whom Mr. Valance was appointed?—Not in the slightest. I imagine that he was appointed by Mr. Bayly, on somebody's recommendation. I have seen Drummond pick out scab, but I do not think the Inspectors are so useful as they might be. With regard to Drummond, I think he lacks administrative talent.

1419. Do you mean that he does not lay informations?—No; but there is a great deal of tact required. It wants a man with somewhat large views, and not a man with narrow views, to administer this Act properly.

1420. *Hon. Captain Fraser.*] What do you mean by narrow views?—A man of narrow views would perhaps think that sheep are to be cleaned by imposing fines; but there are preventive measures that can be taken against the disease, or there ought to be, under the Act.

1421. How: has it been found that men will not clean their sheep unless they are fined; if so, what do you propose as a remedy?—I have some amendments that I would suggest.

1422. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What would you suggest?—Simultaneous dipping is one thing which I would suggest.

1423. Have you any other?—I can point out another remedy; it is this: I think that in many cases there should be a power under the Act at any moment to allow the Inspector to take scabby sheep and destroy them by paying to the owner a fair compensation. I would point to a case in the Inspector's report for last year. There appears to be 231 scabby sheep in the Auckland County of Marsden. There were some twelve Inspectors in this district, receiving salaries to the amount of £1,700. Now, the salary of one of these men would have bought the whole of these sheep, which might be killed, and so eliminated scab from the district.

1424. You are aware that the district is a very large one, and that travelling about the district is difficult?—The number of sheep in that province is about half a million, while we find two and three millions of sheep in other provinces worked by four, five, or six Inspectors.

1425. There is not half a million?—If there is less that makes the case worse. In those cases which I have mentioned, had there been a clause to destroy scabby flocks for compensation, we would have stamped scab out in the Whareama.

1426. You were referring to the cause of the spread of scab, and you attributed that to two causes: the maladministration of the Act, and the unoccupied lands?—Yes.

1427. These sheep on the unoccupied Crown lands would affect the adjoining runs?—Yes; but it spreads from one to the other. I may point out this fact: that scab in this district now is entirely different from scab some years ago. Formerly we had no rabbits to contend with. Now we have rabbits, and we have Inspectors insisting on employing huge packs of dogs, who have not only hunted the rabbits but also the sheep. That is one of the most pernicious things that has ever been done.

1428. Do you attribute scab to that as another cause?—In my own case scab was found at