

taking efficient steps for killing wild sheep on Government land?—I think so: I do not know exactly when it was.

2742. Are the Committee to assume that you thought two Inspectors sufficient to cope with the evil there, and bring about a better state of things than that of which the settlers complained?—There was somewhat of an anomaly existing in that district so far as the appointment of the Inspector was concerned. He was placed in charge, with orders to clean that district. He was supposed to be in the position of coping with the evil so far as he was concerned; if he was not, he might have applied for more assistance. If he had done so, I would have attended to his application.

2743. Have any steps been taken to kill off wild sheep?—Yes, there have.

2744. Will you tell us the circumstances?—I think I have already stated that Mr. Leverton has a contract for that purpose with the Government.

2745. Do you consider, knowing the nature of the country, its extent, and the work that has to be done, that the steps taken by the department were sufficient to insure the clearing off wild sheep?—I am informed so. I have not been informed to the contrary; the man who looks after that part or subdivision has not requested more assistance. In connection with this I may state that, in a conversation which I had with some of the older settlers up there, they said that they would prefer to have a man acquainted with the district, who would deal with matters quietly, rather than a stranger. Strangers, they appeared to think, would not know the country, and would hunt the wild sheep through their fences into their runs. They preferred to have one man who was reliable with dogs, as he would be likely to do the work more efficiently and to their satisfaction.

2746. Did it occur to you that this matter might have been indefinitely postponed because of the wish of these settlers to have only one man employed in killing off these wild sheep, the consequence being to prevent the district being clean, or to delay that result for some time?—I was guided by the Inspectors not having requested me to put on more men; I trusted to them and to the settlers themselves for information of that sort.

2747. *Hon. the Chairman.*] With regard to killing sheep in the Wairarapa bush, are you satisfied that none of the runholders are allowing such sheep going on to their runs, and so keeping up their stock?—The whole of the country is not fenced off. I think it has cost one settler £100 a mile to convey fencing material on to a portion of this run. It is clean. If the wild sheep were to go back it would be useless.

2748. *Hon. Mr. Campbell.*] Do you know the district well?—Pretty well.

2749. Do you know Mr. Miles?—I know that he is a Sheep and Rabbit Inspector.

2750. How many men has he?—He has three men to meet the requirements of his district.

2751. Do you know Mr. Hickson?—Yes.

2752. Do you think him very competent?—There have been no complaints made against him. There might be a more competent man. He has been a Civil servant for many years. He never had a charge made against him, except that at one time he was tardy in his work; but that I was only told. Now, I believe, there is no complaint against him.

2753. Did you not dismiss Mr. Macdonald?—I did not dismiss him. I intimated to him that he should resign.

2754. On what grounds?—He had, I believed, become unfit for his duty by age. He was incapable of performing his work. He was instructed to go into the back country to see if there was any invasion of rabbits, but he could not; he was physically incapable of doing the work.

2755. As to the man that at present occupies his place, does he do it?—He does; it was distinctly stipulated that, if at any moment he should be found incapable of doing the work, his engagement was at an end.

2756. Did you not pay Macdonald £400 when he retired?—No; I had nothing to do with that.

2757. *Hon. Captain Fraser.*] Are you aware that he got £400?—I cannot say that I am aware of it. The correspondence passed through my hands, but it did not come under my observation.

2758. Let us distinctly understand what he was paid £400 for?—I cannot at the present time distinctly state.

2759. In your ordinary knowledge, do you know that you paid him £400?—I do not positively recollect.

2760. Was he not paid £400?—I believe he was, but I should not like to assert it. I do not know what the amount was.

2761. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Then, you do not actually know?—No.

2762. *Hon. Captain Fraser.*] Who paid him?—I do not know who paid him. The correspondence would pass through the office.

*Hon. Mr. Campbell:* I know for a positive fact that he was paid £400; and he retired from the service in order to make room for another person.

2763. *Hon. Captain Fraser.*] Mr. Foster was asked why he had not enforced the 26th clause against a flockowner who was running rams with his sheep, and his answer was because the rams were destroyed: can you give any explanation?—I do not see where that can come in. I have a distinct recollection that, after a certain date, the clauses suspended in the Act were to be rigidly enforced.

2764. Did you issue instructions to that effect?—Yes.

2765. If they were not carried out you would know?—I do not know of a case.

2766. Were you aware that the 26th clause was not enforced in Marlborough?—That is the only place I know of where certain clauses were suspended.

2767. Are you aware that every clause in this Act was considered by gentlemen who might be considered "expert" in regard to this matter; that it was their intention that the Act should be administered strictly, so that scab might be stamped out of the colony?—I am aware of that.

2768. Are you aware that the Amuri County is as difficult to be cleaned as Marlborough?—I must differ from you in that.