

rabbits?—I do not think they will exterminate them, but they will settle any difficulty in ultimately getting rid of them. They will first diminish them, and then effectually keep them down.

164. Has the feed on your run been much affected by the rabbits?—They have been numerous enough, and are so still; but the effect is not so perceptible now as it was two years ago.

165. Can you estimate at all the difference it makes in regard to the number of sheep you can carry?—No; we have found a great difficulty in doing that. It is a very difficult question. We have tried in different ways. There had been a falling off in the quantity of wool and lambs, which we cannot attribute to any other cause, but we have not been able definitely to fix it upon the rabbits in approximate proportion. It is a very difficult thing indeed to estimate the reduction of stock in consequence of rabbits.

166. Did you say you were using wheat?—Wheat and oats.

167. Do you find oats as good?—Quite as good. We use oats exclusively on one station.

168. It has been stated that the rabbits took the wheat and left the oats?—In as many cases the experiments have turned out the other way. I have tried it carefully myself. I think I am perfectly justified in stating that there is no difference, provided both are mixed by the same man with the same precision.

169. Do you use rhodium?—No, we do not use rhodium: we use sugar, and sometimes salt.

170. How do you lay it?—Not in a heap; we lay it in scattered lots, no two grains on the top of each other, to diminish risk to stock.

171. Do you find they take it readily, both in summer and in winter?—No.

172. Will they take it in summer?—To a very slight extent; it is almost useless in summer.

173. What number of ferrets have you turned out?—About fifty, from first to last.

174. Have you any reason to suppose that they have increased?—I know they have bred, because the young ones have been found.

175. Can you say whether the ferrets have attacked any lambs or sheep?—No; I have no knowledge of anything of the kind.

176. Are you satisfied with the Act itself, or would you suggest any amendments in it?—I cannot help thinking myself that, considering the number and class of the men that become officials under this Act, the powers conferred by the Act are dangerous. I am very much interested in having a proper and strong inspection, that is, having the Inspector armed with every necessary power; but, considering the class of men that are put in possession of these powers, they are apt to be injudiciously and dangerously used. Still the Inspector must be armed with very strong powers.

177. Can you point to any particular portion of the Act which you would amend in the direction you speak of?—The section of the Act conferring the powers I speak of is the 10th section of the Act of 1882.

178. You object to that: on what grounds?—That the powers which are conferred under this section should only be conferred, if really conferred at all, on men of the greatest possible discretion and experience. They are powers unknown in other laws. A great number of appointments are made in this department. I know of seven men regularly coming to one of my stations alone, including the chief officer. These men are very ordinary people; most of them respectable enough, but I do not think they are qualified to hold such powers. They appear to be unfit to hold powers of this kind, which are unprecedented.

179. You find fault with the administration of the Act?—I am not speaking now of administration; I am speaking of the powers conferred by the Act itself, not of the manner in which they are used.

180. Would you limit those powers? I gather from what you have just said that you object to the persons appointed to carry out the Act. I understood that to be included under the head administration?—I do not want to be so understood in answering your present question. You asked me whether I would suggest any amendments in the Act. I suggested this amendment, and gave a reason for so doing.

181. In the amendment you suggest, would you desire that the clauses containing these powers should be struck out, or that the powers should be limited?—I would suggest, at any rate, that the words "in the opinion of the Inspector" should be struck out, in the first place.

182. Then you would leave it to the Resident Magistrate, or the Judge of the Court, whoever he might be, to decide whether the evidence were sufficient to prove the charge?—Yes; the pretence is that such is the case now, but it is not the case. It is otherwise. Why not allow the Inspector to fine without going to the Court at all? The theory of the Act is that the Inspector must take you to Court; but when he takes you to Court, though you are able to prove there that he has been mistaken, or even wilfully wrong, the Court must decide that you are guilty even if convinced that you have not transgressed the Act. The Court must act on the "opinion" which the Inspector gives in opening the case.

183. Surely the onus of proving that rabbits are not there is thrown upon the owner of the land?—So it should be.

184. Is not that the effect of this clause?—No; the effect of this clause is that it makes it impossible for any accused person not to be found guilty. It makes it impossible for him to prove himself innocent. The Inspector says simply, "It is my opinion." Unless you prove that that is not his opinion, you are found guilty. Of course, it is impossible to prove that. The Resident Magistrate explains that it is impossible for the defendant to prove his innocence. The Inspector need not bring any witnesses at all. He has only to say, "That is my opinion," and that constitutes the offence. I think also that the expression, "if there should be still rabbits upon the land," is unnecessarily comprehensive, for we all know that there are rabbits in every part of New Zealand, wherever they have been before.

185. What would you have in place of it?—It seems to me that the intention was that it should not mean where there were, say, a few or only half-a-dozen on the land. It means not only "where there are a considerable number," but also "where they have not been diminished to