

such an extent as the owner might have done if he had taken all the precautions requisite for that purpose." Could not an expression be used to convey that meaning? Wherever there have been rabbits there they are now.

*Hon. J. Williamson*: The clause is vague; there is no doubt about that.

186. *Hon. the Chairman*.] Is there any other point to which you would refer?—I think the Act itself is on the whole a very good and at present a very necessary one.

187. Have you any other matter to which you would draw attention?—I think a very large number of persons are appointed under this Act. I also think that the great expense incurred in carrying out the Act is wholly unnecessary. I think it could be carried out with very great diminution of the number of appointments. I do not know whether you desire my views under this head, but you are asking my opinion, as I understand, generally.

188. I have no doubt your opinion is valuable. You say there were no less than seven Inspectors visiting one of your runs, including the head of the department?—Yes.

189. What is the size of the districts?—They are confined to portions of three counties.

190. Do you think the work they have to do is not so much as they might do—that there are too many Inspectors for the work?—Yes, there are too many inspectors by far.

191. Are they subordinate one to another, or are they all on the same footing under Mr. Bayly?—There are three principals, three subordinates, and one chief.

192. If I understand you rightly you think that the power which the Inspector has of ordering the owners of land to trap and kill with rabbits is not desirable?—I should not like to make so sweeping a statement, to apply in every possible case. I suppose it is occasionally desirable. I think it might be laid down, at any rate, that when the Inspector finds that efforts are made to introduce the ferret, and that the attempt is honest and not merely a sham to put him off, he should insist that men should be prohibited following with traps and dogs. I think there exists sufficient temptation to interference with really efficient means, on the part of inferior Inspectors. I dare say the majority of the present men are superior to anything of the kind, but not all of them.

193. I understand you to say that where there are ferrets it is undesirable to use traps?—I spent £100 near my own homestead in making experiments with ferrets. I was ordered to place men and traps on the same piece of ground. The answer I got from one of the subordinates with whom I remonstrated was, "I don't believe in these ferrets myself." In order that I might try the matter I refused to comply with the notice to employ rabbiters on the ferret ground. I was summoned and fined for this piece of land. A man who is charged under this Act cannot prove himself innocent. He might be charged if there never was a rabbit on the land. That fact might be proved by witnesses. But while the witness was in the box answering the questions the Magistrate might ask the Inspector, "Is it your opinion" that rabbits are there? If the Inspector should answer "Yes," all the rest of the evidence simply goes in mitigation of fine. It cannot be less than £1. The Government employ counsel against you: then you have to pay costs of the department's counsel, a thing you have not to do even if you were charged with a really criminal offence.

194. *Hon. J. Williamson*.] With regard to the use of poisoned grain, do you suffer much loss among your stock?—We are persuaded there is some annual loss; but it is not of a serious character provided the poisoned grain is laid in a proper manner. But if it is in heaps the loss of life would be great.

195. You seem to think that it should not be in the choice of the Inspector to insist upon putting on traps and rabbiters where proper steps have been taken by the owner of the land to get rid of the rabbits. The Inspector might summon him to Court, but it might be proved by the owner that he had taken the proper steps. I suppose cases might arise when it would be necessary to have traps and rabbiters?—It is of no avail to prove that you have taken proper steps. You cannot escape conviction. That is the reason why I say that some alteration in the Act is advisable. I think that a person should have some chance—some facility in making his defence to a quasi-criminal charge. If he were accused of any other offence he would have such facility allowed. When a conviction is recorded under this Act it affects any subsequent charge. But you cannot escape a conviction being recorded. The consequence is a heavier penalty the next time you are charged, whether you are then to blame or not.

196. Do you think that ferrets alone would be able to keep the number of rabbits under?—My experience convinces me that poison in winter and ferrets subsequently would be sufficient.

197. Without the aid of trapping, dogs, or firearms?—I think that these might perhaps be called in aid where the rabbits were increasing in spite of the other means, if in special spots such increase should be found really to take place; but only as a special and otherwise objectionable expedient.

198. Has it come to your knowledge that dogs become wild?—Yes.

199. And destroy sheep?—Yes. Will you allow me to say, in reference to what has been said, that, either by law or strong recommendation made to the chief of the department, care should be taken that ignorant Inspectors should not insist, at lambing-time and for some time before and after, on dogs being worked, if dogs cannot really be prohibited altogether. We suffer severely from this dog-pest.

200. *Hon. Captain Fraser*.] I would ask you whether the Government have offered to send you some weasels and stoats?—No.

201. You are aware that ninety weasels and stoats have been received by the Government from England?—Yes.

202. Do you know where they were turned out?—I heard they were turned out at Lake Wanaka.

203. Would you be glad to have had them?—I should have refused them under existing circumstances. I would under other circumstances have taken them. By "existing circumstances," I mean that the Inspector might probably have insisted upon them being killed as soon as turned out.

204. Do you find any difficulty in lambing time?—I cannot say that I definitely traced any