

evidence, the results in diminishing the number of rabbits were allowed to be satisfactory? It was found in my district that evidence was given in repeated cases before the Court to the effect that such steps were taken as ought to have resulted in diminishing the number of rabbits, yet they seemed to be as numerous as ever. This evidence was not exactly in accordance with the fact. Those who could have proved it were mere dummies supposed to be interested in the extermination of the rabbit; but, as a matter of fact, they are not so employed. In condemning the present law, can you suggest a remedy by which such a state of things may be avoided for the future: by which it might be lawful to deal with a case according to actual results, and not regard so much actual means taken?—I do not think any suggestion I could make would meet the whole case you describe. If the progress of the work is not satisfactory, after a certain time has been allowed in the locality of work, the means would not be regarded as sufficient. Even where the results were satisfactory, the Magistrate might not hold them to be so.

224. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Are we to gather from your evidence that, in your opinion, the class of men employed as Inspectors are not such as they ought to be?—I have not said that. I said that a number of the men employed are not men who should be intrusted with the immense powers given by this Act. I have but a very slight knowledge of the Inspectors generally; but in our district, at all events, it would be out of all question to speak of them in terms of such sweeping condemnation. It would be quite as unreasonable as it would be to pretend that they are all the right kind of men.

225. *Mr. Dodson.*] Do you think that there are places where trapping, netting, and shooting would be required?—There may be a few places. I think that even during winter there may be a very few places where trapping might be carried on successfully.

226. Do you object to the Inspector saying that is necessary?—No, I do not say that I unconditionally object where no ferrets are supposed to be. I think they should have the power to order trapping where ferrets are absent, wherever the thing is shown to be necessary and unavoidable, provided that the person instructed to do so should be allowed to show that it is not necessary and is undesirable, or if it can be shown to be against his chances of diminishing the rabbits by his own efforts. Your question, you will remember, refers solely to trapping.

227. You perceive there is a conflict of authority here; you would leave in the hands of owners the right to say whether he would do so?—If there is an irreconcilable conflict of opinion between the owner and the Inspector it should be decided in the Resident Magistrate's Court—with a fair chance to both sides, of course; not with the present certainty that, right or wrong, the Inspector will win.

228. Are there places where the rabbits will not take poison?—I would not go the length of saying that there are such places; but, even if there are, I still think the right to say that rabbiters should be employed should be in the hands of some person with considerable discretion. To say that the Inspector who happens to be assigned to that locality should decide such a question where there is a conflict of authority would be more or less of a sham. He is much less likely to be right than the owner in such a case; and, if wrong, he would utterly spoil the work of systematic poisoning.

229. *Hon. Mr. Nurse.*] I understand you to say that you had been forced to do things which you objected to?—Yes.

230. And you say that being forced to do those things operated against your chance of getting rid of rabbits?—Yes.

231. And you were prosecuted for not doing the things you objected to?—I was; but I had the determination to see how things were best done, and act upon my own experience and that of others.

232. You had more interest in having the country clear of rabbits than the Inspector?—That I could not say. I suppose you might judge of how that stands.

233. You would leave the landowner to have the fullest liberty as to the means he would consider best to get rid of the pest?—He should have the liberty to use the means he thought best, provided they are not *prima facie* absurdly inadequate, for a certain fair time.

234. And the Inspector to judge of results?—After a certain time.

235. What would be your opinion of a state of things which would put the self-interest of one against the other?—I do not believe in the landowner's self-interest in such cases. It cuts both ways. Self-interest for the owner may mean to him that he should keep his money in his pocket. A fine is nothing compared with what has to be expended on rabbits. I do not think self-interest is sufficiently strong. If it were the Rabbit Act would not be required at all. There are plenty of people who do not think the matter of any importance. They think the whole difficulty is raised by squatters and other objectionable people for the purpose of getting State aid. To such people self-interest would appear to mean no steps at all.

236. Are there any unoccupied lands in your neighbourhood?—Yes, there is a certain quantity of unoccupied land; but the question has not been raised by me with regard to these lands. So far as they are within my own lines, I clear them myself. The Government reserves outside my own boundaries there have been properly attended to, I think, on the whole.

237. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Have you small owners that do not comply with the instruction of Inspectors?—As a general rule in my own district I think they cannot afford to bear the same amount of worrying that I am supposed to be able to bear. Small owners, especially those who are agriculturalists, are protected in summer by the fact that their lands are covered with growing grain. It is difficult for them then to attend to the killing of rabbits. It is also an unpopular thing to enforce the Act in the case of small owners, and this affects some of the Inspectors. Except in winter, it is impossible for them to afford to take such steps as have been enforced upon myself, for instance. In winter, I think, poison and the work of the ferrets will be found sufficient on all properties, large and small.

238. Have you any other observations to make as regards the working of the Act?—I think