

not. I have personal objections in respect of some of the officers and of the management of the department, but I do not think this is the proper place to bring these forward. I think I have told you all which, in my opinion, is desirable in the way of changing the Act. I have had occasion to complain of two or three of the Inspectors, but that does not touch the question you are examining me upon. I may, however, just mention to the Committee that I have had an inquiry held in one case. I do not know the result; but three days ago I had a letter from the Colonial Secretary, informing me that there was a Committee sitting upon the Rabbit and Sheep Act, and that I might submit complaints to that Parliamentary Committee. But I do not intend to lay a departmental complaint before this Committee. I do not think it is the place for anything of the kind at all.

239. *Mr. Walker.*] I was about to ask whether Mr. Bell thinks that any good would arise if the local bodies had more direct control over Inspectors in different districts?—It did not work before when the Rabbit Trustees were elected. The question was then regarded as affecting large landholders alone. Now, however, the rabbit is known to affect everybody who holds land, and I think the local bodies might exercise duties in the matter with advantage, but I cannot say I have really thought the matter out.

240. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Where there is a difference between the landowner and the Inspector, do you think that the local body might be the proper judge?—No; I cannot say that I have formed a definite opinion on the subject of giving local bodies inspecting powers. I am beginning to think that the local bodies can be used specially to cheapen the enormous expenditure in connection with carrying out the Act. The number of men engaged as officials is too large as compared with that which might do the work.

241. Do you not think that if the local bodies had anything to do with it, we might give up the hope of a uniform system upon which to work the Act?—I am not prepared to positively advocate the system of local bodies having special powers; but I have really not yet formed a definite opinion. The local bodies represent a class interested in the extermination of the pest, and would, perhaps, be able to judge of the efficiency of means to be adopted.

242. *Mr. Dodson.*] You mean County Councils and Road Boards?—County Councils, where they exist.

243. *Captain Russell.*] Does Mr. Bell feel that it is necessary there should be ample powers in the hands of the Inspector?—Very strong powers.

244. Absolute?—No, I do not think absolute.

245. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You do not suppose it to be necessary to appoint men with such plenary power?—I do not think there are many men in New Zealand fit to be entrusted with such powers as the present men are given.

WEDNESDAY, 17TH SEPTEMBER, 1884.

Mr. P. R. McRAE, examined.

246. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Have you had much experience of rabbits?—Yes.

247. Would you put on rabbiters and dogs to get rid of them?—If you want to breed rabbits keep rabbiters.

248. Then you would rely on the natural enemies of the rabbits, ferrets and cats: have you turned out ferrets?—Yes; I have turned out 1,300.

249. Do you think they increase in their wild state?—Yes; we have seen them with litters of from five to ten.

250. Have they killed a great many?—There is no doubt they have killed a good many rabbits. There is certainly something that works severely on the rabbits. We do not now see so many young ones. It will take a year or two for the result of ferrets being employed to be fully ascertained. That they destroy a great many rabbits is without doubt. If rabbiters are kept off the country, and the work of exterminating the rabbit is carried on with poison first and afterwards turning out ferrets, we shall not be further troubled with rabbits.

251. Have the Inspectors asked you to put on rabbiters?—Yes; but I have simply refused.

252. Did they take any steps against you?—No; they said, in one instance, "Oh, what is the use of turning out ferrets?"

253. They did not insist on it?—No; they did not insist on it.

254. How long is it since you first turned out ferrets?—Two years.

255. You have a very large number: do they breed fast?—Yes, they breed fast. I have a hundred breeding ones; they average seven in a litter, and they have generally two litters in a season.

256. What kind is yours: the white ferret or the pole-cat?—White; I have five of the others.

257. I think the pole-cat is the hardest ferret, is he not, and the most fierce?—I could not say; we sometimes get very good ferrets which are white ones.

258. What poison have you been using?—We use oats; the rabbits seem to take oats better.

259. Do you use rhodium?—No; nothing but phosphorus. I used sugar and rhodium at first, but it was an extra expense.

260. Do you find them take it in summer?—Yes; the only thing is that in summer it sets fire to the grass; the heat of the sun sets it on fire.

261. You must make it very strong?—We use 1½ lb. to the 100 lb. of oats.

262. How do you prepare it?—We have a phosphorizer something like a cullender; you put your water in hot. When the grain absorbs all the water, put in your phosphorus; the steam dissolves the phosphorus. We use arsenic when we cannot use phosphorus.

263. Have you heard of ferrets that have been killed by the arsenic?—I have lost some dogs that have been poisoned through eating the entrails of rabbits.

264. Do you know whether the ferrets attack sheep or lambs?—I do not think so. The