

162. You say that the tenant had been induced to give too high a rent; was it too high in 1882, 1883, and 1884?—Yes; I think in the main it was. In many instances it was too high even then. I think that some were willing to pay a high rent, hoping that things would mend; and that some must have felt that they were paying a rack rent, but they were induced to pay it so that they might not be turned out in the cold.

163. That was not so in every case?—In a great many.

164. Will you give us an idea from your own case in 1882-1883?—Well, in the latter year I suffered serious losses from causes apart from the considerations I have laid before the Committee; for there were bad snow storms, a late spring, &c., entailing a scarcity of grass and loss of stock.

165. You did not suffer from a too high rent that year?—No wool was a fair price; we all hoped that wool would make matters right. No one contemplated that wool would fall. We thought it would maintain its price. Taking the last twelve months as it is, I am prepared to say that, after paying working expenses, rabbiting, and rent, the pastoral tenant has not had one sixpence for interest, and that even where he has had a good clip and a good lambing, he has had, in many instances, to pay a portion of his rent out of capital.

166. You have stated that the cost of management with the cost of rabbiting was 1s. 10d. to 2s. 6d. Was that the case in 1882, 1883, 1884, or is that your estimate for this year?—It was the case then, and is still so; but I may say that, in 1882-1883, many, myself included, hoped, by one or two years' energetic work on the rabbits, to get rid of that expense. I am sorry to say experience shows us it has been, and will be, a recurring expenditure.

167. When you say the cost of management is 1s. 10d., do you mean under ordinary circumstances?—I do not think it could be done in that class of country for less; but it would depend on the number of sheep, for the same staff would, in many cases, suffice to work a larger number of sheep.

168. Then as to boundaries, you say that in many cases they were obliged to take a different boundary?—You misapprehend me. Having purchased one subsection at auction, from the nature of the boundary laid down, it was incumbent on him to buy another one. He could not have worked the one without the other. If the boundary had been marked off in an intelligent manner, so that each subsection could be worked by itself, he would not have been bound to buy another. But, as it was, with the one subsection it was impossible for him to carry on. He had to take the boundaries as they were.

169. Are you speaking of high or low country?—Chiefly of high country.

170. When the leases were offered for sale, the boundaries of the original runs were maintained as a rule?—The runs that were offered for sale were the subdivisions of the original runs. If a pastoral tenant secured the whole of these subdivisions he would suffer no inconvenience from the character of the boundaries during his lease. Those who marked off the subdivisions did not even take as a guide the subdivisional boundary fences that had been erected for years. If the subdivisional boundary fences had been adopted as boundaries for new leases, it might not have been so bad, but the lines were run straight, crossing fences in all sorts of ways.

171. Is that a source of complaint now?—No; not until the present leases expire; but it made men give more than they intended for the land.

172. And you say that the rents were too high to allow the tenants to make a profit?—They certainly were and are. I have mentioned this only to show you how it was they paid too high a rent. This was one of the things that led to unfair competition.

173. *Mr. Brown.*] Are the rabbits as numerous now?—No.

174. Then that expense is getting less?—On the contrary, it is getting greater, as up to a certain point the fewer rabbits there are the more it costs to kill them.

175. You alluded to a run just now. Was that the Miller's Flat?—No; the Kawarau Run.

176. That is held by the New Zealand and Australian Land Company?—I think the lessees are Stewart and Melvin.

177. *Mr. Brydone* is the manager?—Yes.

178. Do you know the Moa Flat Run?—Yes.

179. Does it join yours?—It joins my run at the top of a high mountain; it does not touch me on the lower boundary.

180. Have you seen *Mr. Clark*?—Yes, I have seen him; but only for a minute or two.

181. Do you know whether he is making a profit or a loss?—I could not say; his is chiefly freehold country.

182. Has he back country?—Yes; he pays rent for it, but does not use it.

183. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] This question of boundaries has been much spoken of. I should like to have it quite clear. You have distinctly stated that one reason they gave such high prices was because the natural boundaries of the subsections were neglected, and boundaries were given, as it were, out of the office; so that, having bought one subsection, they were obliged to buy another to work it?—I was speaking generally, not of my own case.

184. Will you state any case where you know it worked unfairly? Will you give an instance where it affected the price that was given?—Morven Hills and Ardour Stations were notable instances. The boundary lines were drawn across impassable ravines, from the summit of the mountains to the base. Having secured one section they were bound to take the adjoining one at almost any price.

185. Did that cause the huge cost of the run?—They had to pay higher rents in consequence.

186. As a matter of fact, did not they get the frontage first, and then the other fell into their hands cheaper?—No; the boundary line ran from the top of the hill to the bottom. I do not know about "falling into their hands cheaper," they had to pay rent at the rate of 2s. a sheep, if you call that "falling into their hands cheaper." They paid that by competition.

187. Would not the fact of the boundaries being bad tend to make these subdivisions go at a lower rate?—No, I do not think so, for the reason I have given: that having got one, it was no use