

same kind ; but it has affected the strength of the fibre, the length of staple, and the general character of the wool.

261. It has been given in evidence that it has affected the wool as regards quality ?—It could not make a fine wool coarse.

262. But it does make a serious deterioration in value as well as quantity ?—Of course, not only the quantity, but the value per pound is diminished most certainly.

263. *Mr. McKenzie.*] With regard to the question put to you by Mr. Fulton, as to sliding scale for rent, upon valuation every three years, do you think that would be an advantage ?—I have not considered the question sufficiently to speak confidently.

264. Has it not been necessary for a large number of Crown tenants that they should work on borrowed money ?—Yes ; in order to carry on their avocations.

265. Do you think that the money-lender will be inclined to lend money when he knows that rents may rise suddenly ?—I do not think that it will make much difference to him ; for the rent would be in proportion to value of the wool, so that profits would remain pretty constant. His security would be equally good, as an average margin would still remain for profit.

266. Do the runholders of Otago keep any other stock except sheep ?—No ; they keep no cattle as a rule.

267. *Mr. McKenzie.*] I agree with you as to the Scotch system of having the sheep valued and the incoming tenant taking them at that valuation ; but you say that the acclimatised stock of a run are worth a shilling or eighteen pence more than similar sheep in the open market ?—Yes ; if a man knew his business he would readily give that much more for them.

268. Do you think that if the Government gave assistance to tenants to put down rabbits that the tenants would assist in putting the pest down ?—Yes ; it is a question of money. In the case of persons who had a short lease, about to expire, they would not take the same trouble.

269. But they might be made to do it ?—If he got assistance I have no doubt he would feel more heart in the work.

270. He could not then turn round and say that it was an unfair thing to do ?—Not in the least ; that seems very clear.

271. Would you have these runs, when the leases expire, put up in areas large enough to have sufficient winter country and summer country in one block ?—Clearly ; each one to be worked independently by itself.

272. Is it possible to do that for areas sufficient to carry 5,000 sheep ?—No ; not over the whole country.

273. You know the McKenzie clause, making the areas sufficient to carry 20,000 sheep ?—Yes.

274. Do you know what was the reason the runholders were opposed to a clause seeking to do what they really wished ?—I do not know the whole of the reasons, and it might take too long to enumerate them.

275. You assume that they had objection, and very express objection ?—As a rule pastoral tenants were opposed to the clause, because it created a limit to the area. You will find that where there is a limit put to anyone's particular avocation he will object.

276. Do you think that it would be proper to have the areas sufficient to carry 20,000 sheep ?—Yes ; so long as you have a sufficient area of low country with each block.

277. Is it possible to cut up areas so as to carry 20,000 sheep ?—Yes, you could do that ; but it would have to be done by intelligent persons who had some knowledge of sheep farming.

278. *Mr. McMillan.*] You stated that when you started you had a heavy increase, but that in the presence of the rabbits the increase gradually decreased. Could that result have been brought about by overstocking ?—It was not brought about by overstocking as you mean, but the presence of the rabbits caused the overstocking.

279. You have assumed that all the evil attached to the presence of the rabbits. Is it not possible that the death rate had been increased, and the percentage of increase reduced, through overstocking as well as through the presence of rabbits ?—I do not think there had been overstocking to any serious extent in the country before the presence of the rabbits. I believe that many people did overstock a little while the rabbits were increasing on their property. They did that at the time, not understanding the evil that was happening to them.

280. *Mr. Macandrew.*] If the price of wool had gone up to 1s. 6d., would the petitioners have been agreeable to an increase of rent ?—That is another aspect of the question.

281. *Mr. McKenzie.*] Is this question of rabbiting also one for the Crown ?—Certainly ; I think the Government should show more interest in its tenants than a private individual could be expected to do.

282. What is the position of the freeholders ?—I am prepared to admit the hardship of their case.

283. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] You are aware that in 1881 the Land Act gave a valuation for improvements to the pastoral tenants to a certain extent—to the amount of three years' rental ?—Yes.

284. Do you think that is tending to create improvements ?—No ; for in 1882 there was hardly a run on which fencing and other improvements had not been erected to the value of more than three years' rental. The leases issued in 1882 did not provide compensation for any new improvements. The leases issued in 1883 provided for compensation to a limited extent, and advantage has been taken thereof.

285. Do you think that if a greater premium were given on improvements to the runholder, improvements would be made so as to increase the carrying power ?—I do most unhesitatingly say that the worst policy of any government is bad tenure. With short leases, and no compensation, you cannot have improvements made ; no man would expend a sixpence if he knows he must soon give up his holding.

286. Could the Government, do you think, increase the rental, if it gave greater security and length of tenure ?—Eventually I think it could. A large portion of Otago could be improved by growing grasses.