

67. *Mr. Lewis.*] In your experience, do you get better results from pond-fish or wild fish?—Do you mean here or at Home?

68. If there is any difference between the conditions here or at Home, would you say tame fish or wild fish?—Wild fish, most unhesitatingly.

69. *Mr. Wood.*] If there is no necessity, why build hatcheries?—Hatcheries are undoubtedly necessary. Many thousands have been spent at Masterton for the same purpose.

70. *The Chairman.*] Your main fishery is on the main stream above Okoroire?—It used to be there, but for several years the fishing there has gone right off. This year we have had to put large quantities of yearling fish out to keep the stock up. We have not found out what is wrong, but there is disease amongst the fish in the Rotorua neighbourhood, and Mr. Gilruth was sent up to make a report on it. We were refused the result of Mr. Gilruth's report.

71. *Mr. Lewis.*] To what do you attribute the disappearance of ground-game?—My own impression is that poison is the cause. That is a general impression; but others say that it is the peculiar seasons.

72. Rabbits?—Poisoning on a very large scale on all the roads for rabbits.

C. R. C. ROBIESON examined. (No. 3.)

*Witness:* I am sorry there is one error in my report. I was called upon to make the report at about half an hour's notice, and I did not have an opportunity of looking up the boundaries of the district of the Auckland Acclimatisation Society. Therefore, I accept Mr. Payton's statement that these streams I referred to as having been recently stocked by the Department from fish given by the Auckland Acclimatisation Society are outside their boundary. The question seems to be one of what is best to be done under present conditions—not of what was best in the past. In regard to the ranger, I think you will find on the files I have given to the Committee that there was a controversy between the Auckland Society and the Department as to appointing a permanent ranger two years ago. The society said they were unable to have a permanent ranger in Rotorua unless the Government gave them the right to open a fish-shop to sell fish. I think Mr. Payton is wrong in saying that they had a permanent ranger in Rotorua prior to the season before last. I do not know if Mr. Donne knew anything about it. He was absent when the discussion took place. Mr. Walnut has been there only two years. I do not think there is any use in expressing an opinion as to whether honorary or paid rangers are more advisable. So far there has been nothing to show what would be the result of Government Rangers, as there have not been any. Mr. Payton said there had been no contention about dual control. I want to point out just one or two cases. At Lake Tarawera last year hundreds of fish died in the streams entering into that lake on account of getting suffocated with the ash that washes into the streams from over that district, and it was some time before we could get anything done. The matter was brought before the Auckland Acclimatisation Society, and ultimately they agreed to bear the cost of wire-netting the mouths of streams at the places required, if the Department would agree to bear cost of transport and erection. At the present moment fish in the Fairy Stream at Rotorua are in a very bad state. The society has done nothing so far, although the matter has been brought under their notice. In regard to rangers, I want to point out that right through the Rotorua district this Department has officers permanently stationed—at Okaroire, Tarawera, Waimangu, &c. Guides are constantly going over that district, so that we must be in an excellent position to range that district. In regard to his statement about a smaller area being taken away from the Auckland Society and a larger area left, I would like to say that the Rotorua district is one that contains nearly the whole of the lakes and most of the rivers. The statement has been made that if we take away this district we are taking away the greater portion of the society's revenue, and that in consequence the society will not be able to carry on. I want to show from a statement made by the secretary of the Auckland Society, from 1896 to 1905, that they stated, without counting the expenses of the hatchery, that they have spent more money at Rotorua than they have received from it; so that in that case there could be no argument that the Government would cripple their finances by taking it away. (In answer to Mr. Payton, the income was £276 13s. 6d. in 1905, and the expenditure £262.) Another question is that the Auckland Society knew nothing about the proposed change. I want to point to a letter written on the 28th November, 1904, to the Colonial Secretary, protesting against the application of the Rotorua people for a separate district. On page 3 of that letter they claim that the greater part of their revenue comes from tourists. Mr. Payton made a statement just now that the society got most of their revenue from season-license holders who are not tourists. The statement of the Auckland Society's secretary seems to me to show that if there is anything that the Government is entitled to it is the money that tourists spend in Rotorua. The General Government has gone to great expense to attract people there—the railway traffic has risen from five thousand six hundred to eighteen thousand, and these are the people who are contributing to the Auckland Society's revenue. It seems to me that if any one is entitled to the benefit of their presence and the money they spend, it is the General Government.

73. *Mr. Lewis.*] Do you not give the society credit for creating the traffic?—I give the Government credit.

74. People go there to catch trout that the society has put into the stream?—If the Government had done nothing for Rotorua, then these people would not go there. They are not going solely for the fish. A large number of people who come out to see the sights and go to Rotorua for that purpose also fish there. One other reason I want to put in evidence is this: a petition which was before the House last year, and signed by 205 residents of Rotorua, praying for a separate association was recommended to the Government by the Committee for consideration. Those people who signed this petition have, since the proposal was made to place the district under the Tourist Department, written and telegraphed to the Department that they are fully satisfied that the administration should be under the Department, and not under the local society.