

69. You have no objection; the spas are Government leases?—With considerable terms to run.

70. There was no question of a monopoly?—No. I think the leases have forty-seven years to go.

71. Do you really think it would be an injury to the public if this property were taken up and largely developed? Do you not think that would be beneficial to Taupo and to everybody concerned?—Yes, I think it would be a public benefit and a benefit to the promoters; but any one else wishing to compete with the company would be at a very serious disadvantage.

72. Might it not be a very great advantage? Forty years is not a very long time in the history of the country; might it not be a very great advantage to the State to have these sights developed by people with capital?—Of course, the reversion should be worth more.

73. You know that Wairakei is not leased—it is Crown land?—One side is Graham's freehold, and the other, I understand, is Crown land.

74. *The Chairman.*] Mr. Dalziel asked you if you were against this railway because the Government should make its line from Rotorua to Taupo?—Yes.

75. You made inquiries since you were in Wellington, and found there is no chance of the Government making the line from Rotorua to Taupo?—I had the honour of an interview with Sir Joseph Ward, and he said there was absolutely no hope of the Government starting it within fifteen or twenty years. I have also the statements of a large number of members on both sides of the House, and they have expressed the same opinion.

76. They would not know much about it?—I take it principally from what Sir Joseph Ward said. The Government naturally has the first and greatest say in such matters.

FRIDAY, 29TH SEPTEMBER, 1911.

W. LEWIS LUXFORD, of Hamilton, examined. (No. 5.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—W. Lewis Luxford.

2. What is your address?—Hamilton.

3. The Committee will be pleased to hear what you have to say?—I have come down here, seeing the reports published very fully with regard to the proposition being made by the Taupo Totara Timber Company, and also a full report of the position shown by the Rotorua people. I may say that I am a farmer and an occupier of 8,000 acres close to Rotorua, and cannot understand why the Rotorua people show any opposition. My circumstances are the same as many others—I may say thousands of others—and the Taupo Totara Timber Company's proposition appeals to me in a very forcible way. We are surrounded by thousands of acres of Native land, and any proposition that is feasible by which these Native lands could be occupied will positively benefit me to the extent of many pounds, and also others similarly situated. These lands are absolutely a harbour for noxious weeds and many other troubles. If cattle get away, it is generally the last that is heard of them, and therefore any proposition that would be the means of bringing these lands into occupation is what appeals to me. Then again, the expenditure, or probable expenditure, under this proposition of a large sum of money in developing these lands must prove an immense advantage to others who are nearer centres on similarly situated lands. For instance, if I can get fertilizers or manures at a paying rate I can put more money in my pocket, and improve my property. It is only the difficulty of getting these fertilizers that prevents a very large amount of development going on. Of course, there are the bulk goods to handle, and the only possible way is by railway. I have had many years experience in Taupo and round that district, and am convinced that if the pumice lands are properly treated, then they can be made productive in a measure. As far as I am personally concerned, I contend that if by any expenditure of money the Taupo lands could be raised in price from 10s. to 30s. per acre my property would go up correspondingly—being the nearer centre—and therefore the proposition appeals to me most strongly. I did not come down pretending to favour the proposition from any colonial or general standpoint; I think that would be agreed to by the Legislature. As far as I am personally concerned—and I say there are dozens of others similarly situated—it would be of immense benefit to us. There is another argument that I use, apparently in sympathy with many of the Rotorua people, and that is with regard to the benefit that this proposition would absolutely be to Rotorua. Of course, a great many of them say if a railway is taken to Taupo and Wairakei it will injure Rotorua. I do not think many of them have been very far. The argument I bring forward is—I have travelled pretty well all over the world, and, taking Switzerland as an example—there they cater not for the development of any one particular State, but for the easiest means of access to all the different parts of Switzerland, and that is the reason why they get the large influx of tourists; and the more you can show tourists, and the variety of sites, the more they will come to the country; and is it likely that any people coming from a pleasure point of view would come to Wairakei and Taupo and not to Rotorua? If, where now a thousand people come in, they could bring in fifteen hundred by other inducements, then it must be an advantage to Rotorua as well as to the other places.

4. *Mr. Guthrie.*] Have you been invited by the company to give evidence?—No. I have come absolutely on account of seeing reports in the papers.

5. You were connected with this company originally?—Yes.

6. You did the valuing of the company?—No. I was on the board of directors in the original formation of the company.

7. You said, in speaking, privately you would be benefited by this railway?—Yes.