

8. *Mr. MacDonald.*] Are the whole of the lands you describe now unoccupied?—Yes, the greater part of them. With regard to the value of these lands I have mentioned, I produce before the Committee a poster showing some of the lands the Crown proposes to put upon the market in the immediate vicinity of Taupo Town on the 24th October—*i.e.*, this month. Part of this block is adjoining on the lake. Some of the sections are right up to the lake itself, and some are within half a mile of the town of Taupo. There are some small grazing-runs which extend along the Taupo and Napier Road. The lands on the shores of the lake and adjoining Taupo are placed at various capital values running from 10s. an acre up to £1 19s. an acre or £2 an acre. These are all small areas. The largest one is 134 acres. I am not speaking of the grazing-runs, but of the rural sections. The grazing-runs are valued at from 5s. per acre for the capital value—*i.e.*, the unimproved capital value. The others, the rural sections, vary from 10s. to £1 19s. per acre.

9. What value do you put on the grazing-runs?—The capital value for one is 5s. 2d. per acre, and the other is 4s. 6d. per acre. The latter is a run which has a very inferior soil. That is the capital value on which the land is assessed, and the rent would be $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on that. The area for one is 4,000 acres, and for the other 2,246 acres.

10. *Mr. Neuman.*] What is the rent?—The rental for one is £21 and for the other £10 a year. It is allotted by application, not by auction. I should say 5s. is the proper value of that land. All these small runs are opened at a very low price to encourage settlement. They are small grazing-runs. It has been shown that this light soil is capable of growing root crops after cultivation—winter root crops. I saw some grown on Mr. Vaile's property, and was perfectly astonished at their size, because that class of land had been formerly looked upon as useless. Some members of the Committee may also know that where fruit-trees have been planted they have done remarkably well in that soil. I have seen wonderfully good crops of apples on land which has had little cultivation.

11. *Mr. Forbes.*] Is that the utmost amount of land you are going to open for selection as shown on the poster—7,000 acres?—That is all we propose to offer at present.

12. Is there a demand for the land there at all?—It is proposed to subdivide the lands known as Whirinaki and Pohukura blocks; in fact, the Pohukura will be subdivided and probably put on the market as small grazing-runs next year, unless countermanded.

13. What effect will the railway have upon those lands? In fixing the value on which the rent is based is any consideration given to the fact that a railway is going into that country?—No prices have been fixed for these lands yet, except those shown on the poster.

14. If a railway were constructed there would be a considerable advance in the price of those lands, would there not?—These lands are up to £1 19s. an acre. I do not know what additional price would be placed on them if the railway extension were going on: that is problematical.

15. How would these people be able to sell their produce?—At present they would have to cart it to Rotorua—that is, those in the immediate neighbourhood of Taupo.

16. That must mean a considerable tax on the settler, and must be taken into consideration as affecting the price?—Yes. When it is decided that the railway shall be extended, in fixing the price of future sales that would have to be taken into consideration.

17. If these Crown lands would be benefited by a railway to such a great extent—as undoubtedly they would be—would it not be wiser to construct a railway and then put the lands on the market, so that the State might get the benefit of the increased prices?—Yes; but I think that is a matter for the Committee to consider.

18. Do you know what the price of similar lands is about the lake at the present time?—I have just shown you the poster.

19. I mean the private lands?—No, I do not know what price they are asking for them.

20. Are there many settlers there on the Crown lands?—There are none at all, except in the township.

21. You cannot speak from your own knowledge of how the settlers are doing on the land?—No, I cannot.

22. *Mr. Reed.*] What is the present outlet for the Crown lands you have mentioned if the settlers go on them? If there are settlers there now, what would be their present outlet?—The present outlet would be the town of Taupo. That would be their rallying-point.

23. The town of Taupo is a rallying-point for the settlers if they go on the Crown lands?—Yes, for those lands I have spoken of.

24. And under present circumstances they would have to cart their produce to Rotorua?—Yes. If they liked they could send it another way by steamer to Tokaanu, and then cart it to the Main Trunk line. Part of the other lands would have an outlet from the Galatea side through to Rotorua.

25. Then you maintain that within the area you have mentioned the produce will be concentrated on to the lake through Taupo, and would go by rail, supposing that railway-extension were made?—I understand your question to mean, would the produce of these lands—or the greater part of those mentioned—be carried by the railway-line if it were extended to Taupo: is that what you mean?

26. Yes?—Undoubtedly it would.

27. What is that country suitable for? I saw by a report recently in the newspapers that similar lands had grown turnips and oats: do you think that land is capable of growing turnips and oats?—Yes, certainly. It has grown good root crops.

28. Would that land develop into dairy country?—I cannot say.

29. At all events, it is sheep country?—It is sheep country at present; but, as I have said before, it has been proved to be capable of growing remarkably good root crops.

30. *Mr. Myers.*] Has there been any demand for this class of land up to the present time?—No.