

62. Is that a good vehicular road?—Yes.

63. It is suitable for wagons, and so on?—Oh, yes. There is another road which is partially formed passing Lake Rotoaira and going across the Waimarino Plains to Waimarino Station on the Main Trunk line. It is not quite formed throughout as a cart-road, but is formed at both ends.

64. Would not the access to this country here [place pointed out on map] be to the Main Trunk line?—It is all on the western side of the lake. The principal access to the land on the western side of Lake Taupo would be the Main Trunk line.

65. And not to Taupo?—I think so, undoubtedly.

66. These white blocks marked on this plan are supposed to be freehold private lands?—Yes.

67. What is the character of that land?—Similar to that of the land held by Mr. Vaile.

68. And this land from Lichfield downwards?—That is all light land of a similar character.

69. Do not the Taupo Totara Timber Company own some land of their own?—Yes; this is their totara forest [shown on map].

70. What is the practice in selling lands that face a stream, as to fishing-rights?—Wherever there are fishing-streams the Crown makes a 25-links reservation, more or less: it is generally 10 links up to 25 links, according to the character of the banks.

71. And if the Natives were to sell their freehold rights of this land to an individual or to a company without any such reservation the individual or company would have a monopoly of the river-fishing?—Yes, I should think so. The right of reservation only applies to Crown lands.

72. But that would be the effect, would it not?—Yes, that would be the effect.

73. This country marked yellow—what is the general character of its contour: is it flat country, rolling downs, or precipitous country?—It is broken country. A good deal of it could certainly be ploughed.

74. What proportion of it—roughly?—I could not say.

75. Could two-thirds be cultivated?—I should think two-thirds could, approximately. I have only seen it from the lake.

76. Could you give us any idea, roughly speaking—comparing this block with the ordinary Crown lands of the Dominion—of the prairie value it would be before improvement?—It varies so much, I should simply say from 5s. an acre up to £2 an acre. I am not speaking of the value of the timber. Generally speaking, the land can be classed as land fit for pastoral and agricultural purposes at from 5s. up to £2 an acre in cases where the land is very much better or for any other particular reason.

77. How much of this land do you think is only worth 5s., how much is worth £1, and how much is worth £2, roughly speaking?—Two years ago I would have said that a third of that land was worth 5s. an acre. I would not say so to-day, because of the results shown by the growth of root crops grown by Mr. Vaile and others, who have demonstrated that it is of very much greater value than we ever put on it.

78. How much do you think would be worth £1 an acre or £2 an acre?—I would rather not say.

79. Is there much of it worth £2 an acre to-day, unimproved?—Some proportion of it might be, but I could not give you any idea of how much.

80. Would 1,000 acres be worth £2 an acre apart from the bush?—Yes.

81. Would there be 2,000 acres?—There might be that, but I cannot answer the question.

82. *The Chairman.*] You know the proposed route of the line from Rotorua to Taupo?—Yes.

83. Putting it shortly, which would be the best route for the Dominion as a whole?—I am afraid I could not answer that question. You are asking me questions that only engineers should answer.

84. I mean in opening up the country?—You will notice in my evidence I said that within certain limits I considered these lands would be tapped by the extension of the present Taupo Totara Timber Company's railway, but the other part of the lands would be tapped from the Rotorua direction.

85. You are referring to the two railways?—I thought you asked me had I considered which would be the best route for the whole of the Crown lands—to extend the company's line or to extend the line from Rotorua?

86. Which line do you think would be the most beneficial in the interests of the Dominion?—If I were asked to state my private personal opinion, I should say the extension of the Rotorua line would open up a greater portion of the Native lands—that is, private and Native lands—from Rotorua to Taupo. Our Crown lands lie in the vicinity of Taupo, and that is the point I cannot get away from. A railway-line coming from Rotorua, as it stands at present, would not benefit very much Crown land—that is, the projected line. The Crown does not at present own any considerable areas of land—practically little land—between Rotorua and the town of Taupo along the line of any projected railway.

87. Can you give us any idea of the Native lands—which has the greater acreage on each route?—That I cannot give you. If you would like me to have a map prepared showing the whole of the Crown land that would be influenced by a line from Rotorua to Taupo, I should be very glad to have it done in order to give the Committee the whole of that information.

88. *Mr. Dalziel.*] You know, I suppose, all about the Crown land you have sold or leased in recent years?—Yes.

89. Is any substantial area at present not served by a railway?—There are considerable areas not served by railways at present.

90. Lands which have been settled?—Yes, both north of Auckland and south of Auckland.

91. On the west coast of the North Island is there a very considerable area not served?—Yes; but one requires to know what you mean by "served."

92. I mean, immediately served?—Yes, there is.