

pelled to pay for these twenty-three miles simply to have their goods pass through Rotorua. They are entitled to have their goods from Auckland in as short and as cheap a way as possible. As to the cost of construction, I need hardly dwell upon that. I heard some figures read which showed the cost of the line to Rotorua to be £400,000. That is based on the plan sent by the Rotorua objectors. We have had that examined, and our estimate is £500,000, including the expensive bridging of the Waikato and a less expensive bridging at another place. We have had that plan examined, and you will see where the line crosses the Waikato, and I think you will be justified in concluding that it will cost not less than £500,000. Now, where is the money to come from? I am going to show you that the Rotorua line will not serve the territory under consideration to anything like the extent the Taupo line will. You have £150,000 difference in expenditure, you have the difference in distance, and the great delay that will take place in construction. It will be many years before the Government can undertake the line, and before it could be running perhaps some thirty years must pass. But what is going to make the Rotorua line pay? We offer £11,600 a year in timber freights on our line, but where is that to be supplied on the Rotorua line, where there is no timber? It is suggested that timber will be available from the Government plantations and prison camps, but within what time? It will be fully fifty years before there will be anything like timber fit to be carried. We will carry on our line by the aid of timber traffic until settlement can maintain it without the timber traffic at all, and that will obviate any loss that would otherwise fall upon the Government. Then, the earnings on the Rotorua line must be on £400,000 or £500,000 instead of £180,000, as in the case of our line. These observations will show how illusory, how much a matter of dreamland, is the talk about the railway from Rotorua to Taupo. You may say that on the map the Rotorua line looks as if it would serve the same country as our line, but it will not. On the western side of the red line on the map is a range of mountains, and you cannot serve the western portion of that area of 2,000,000 acres by the Rotorua line. Shortly, my point is that, even if the two lines were in existence, they would serve different territory and not the same. There is one further point. You may say, "What is the hurry? let things stand." Well, I ask you very seriously to pause and consider the great loss now existing in this district. Is it to be allowed to continue through some dog-in-the-manger policy? Settlers have seen me and told me about this, and one will give evidence that if we were to remove the Taupo Totara Timber Company's railway he would be ruined, and so would all the settlers along his district, because they could not get their stuff in and out at a rate of cartage that would enable them to go on. There is no reason why the company should not stop to-morrow, and disaster to these people would then happen. There is no assurance to any settler that this private company is going to run its railway for ever, and what they want is some assurance that if they make their homes there, and put their savings there, they will have some such access permanently. You cannot give them that assurance unless the Government gives it. With regard to settlement, I would like to give you some figures as to how many settlers can be settled on that area. There are 2,000,000 acres of land, as I have said. Mr. Kensington will be able to tell you that 300 acres of the better land will be sufficient to maintain in comfort and a fair measure of prosperity a settler with his wife and family. On the rougher lands the areas must be larger. I have allowed 800 acres to every settler, and that will amount to 2,500 settlers. That means probably ten thousand or twelve thousand souls; and we are told by the Hon. Mr. Anstey and other gentlemen that every settler you put on the land gives employment to two men off the land. That is an illustration which shows the necessity for promoting settlement. Now, this land must remain idle unless you have a fair means of carrying fertilizers to it cheap. For otherwise you will never get settlers to go into that territory. If you had 2,500 settlers there I need not dwell upon the enormous national asset it would be to this country. Now, as to the tourist traffic, you have at present four thousand men and women going to Taupo every year. I have travelled to Taupo in midsummer, and could not see the leaders in the coach for dust. It is by no means a pleasant route for tourist traffic in summertime. But if you could provide means of communication to Taupo from Rotorua in five hours and a half at a cheap rate, it is easy to see what an enormous traffic there would be even from Rotorua, and the development of this traffic from Auckland to Taupo would be immediately enormously increased. However, that is a matter which I need not impress upon you, as I feel that you are as alive as I can possibly be to that. There are 350,000 acres of Crown lands unoccupied, and mainly unoccupied because of the want of access. Now, may I pass to the question of the Native owners. Even-handed justice should be done to them, but this done it is submitted that they must bear their burdens the same as Europeans. At present their land is covered with noxious weeds, and is the "happy hunting-ground" for rabbits. Surely that is a condition of things we should end if we possibly can. Suppose you do take one-fourth of the 800,000 acres from them, can the Natives complain? I do not think, however, that any compulsory taking will be necessary. Can there be better proof that this land is not wanted by the Maori owners than this: that for years past this land has been absolutely unproductive? I believe it has been individualized. But there is no means of getting at the land. If a fourth of the area were taken the increase in value caused by the railway would largely pay for the railway. The remaining 600,000 acres in the hands of the owners would be increased by probably 50 per cent., so that they would have a proposition they would welcome, and I believe it is welcomed by a large number of them. Our main difficulty will be with the people of Rotorua, and I am going to deal quite frankly—and I hope quite fairly—with the Rotorua people. Mr. Raw gave these answers to questions in the evidence of last year, at page 19: "Question 34. You are not opposed to private enterprise?—No, not as a fair question. Q. 35. The Government having announced their policy is to complete the main lines, such as the East Coast Railway and other important railways, first—consequently there is no chance of this railway being done for a number of years—if a private company is prepared to do it, to spend money on roading and bridging and improvements, and