

manure and fertilizers the country is capable of growing crops, root crops, grass, and fruit. We have grown oats on our property with excellent results. We also have an orchard of about five hundred apple-trees which gives us an enormous amount of fruit, so much so that notwithstanding the constant use in considerable quantities of fruit for dessert, sweets, and jam in connection with the tourist resort at Wairakei, we have more than sufficient fruit to last the whole year round. Mr. Vaile, of Broadlands, has demonstrated what the land can do with manures. The whole difficulty lies in this: the freight cost of obtaining fertilizers and fencing-material is so great at the present time as to be practically prohibitive, so that the cost at the present time of bringing the land into cultivation is so great that, taking into account the fact that there is no absolute certainty in the result, the settlers do not see their way to risk their all in the development of the land, and consequently it is lying waste and unproductive, and a burden on the country. The settlers need assistance from the Government, or an enterprising man or company with capital, to give them a lead, and if positively assured by extensive experiments that the land is what we believe it to be, they would not hesitate to develop their holdings, provided they had reasonable means of getting manures and materials in and produce out. The country is crying aloud for development and settlement, and if we had a cheap means of obtaining fertilizers and the necessary implements and requirements, such as fencing-material, &c., and also a cheap means of consigning our produce to market, we think the district would develop rapidly, and the whole face of this huge belt of country now lying waste and unproductive, and a discredit to the State, would be converted into an area of green crops and pastures and smiling homesteads. I have gone thus fully into detail so that the Committee may understand the difficulties the settlers are labouring under from (1) the nature of the soil, (2) the distance from any centre (we are situated in the heart of the North Island), (3) the cost of freight. We therefore contend that we have special claims to consideration and assistance from the Government. I would like to here point out that the objectors admit that it is necessary that railway communication should be given to Taupo, and that it is in the best interests of the people of this Dominion that the 2,000,000 acres referred to should be brought into cultivation. [See Mr. Raw's evidence, page 13, questions 47 and 48.] It being admitted then that railway communication with Taupo is necessary, the only remaining question is one of ways and means. As to these, two alternative propositions have been suggested: (1) that the Government construct a line from Rotorua to Taupo *via* Waiotapu and Wairakei, a distance of some fifty-six miles; (2) that the Government grant the petition of the Taupo Tetara Timber Company enabling the extension of their present Putaruru-Mokai line for a distance of some twenty miles *via* Wairakei to Taupo. Dealing with the first proposition, the Taupo settlers have gone carefully into the question of whether there is any likelihood of the Rotorua route being constructed by the Government within, say, twenty or thirty years, and have come to the conclusion that there is not the slightest chance. Firstly, according to Mr. Vaile's evidence (page 23), Sir Joseph Ward stated within the past twelve months that there was absolutely no hope of the then Government starting the Rotorua line within fifteen or twenty years. Secondly, when the Rotorua Chamber of Commerce deputation approached the ex Minister of Public Works a few months ago, Mr. MacDonald replied that owing to the large amount of railway-construction work on hand at the time there was no possibility of the Mackenzie Government even considering the construction of the Rotorua line for many years to come. Thirdly, the Rotorua Chamber of Commerce are advocating the immediate construction of another railway-line connecting Rotorua with the East Coast Railway at Paengaroa, a distance of thirty-four miles of new construction. Hence at the present time the Rotorua Chamber are asking that a line of ninety miles of new construction be undertaken at a huge expense of nearly £1,000,000, in order, as they say, to give Taupo outlet to Auckland *via* Tauranga. The Taupo people, on the other hand, want outlet to Auckland direct. They can obtain this by means of twenty miles of new-construction railway at no expense to the State, but at great benefit to State assets. They can leave Taupo at 7 a.m. and arrive in Auckland at 5 p.m. the same day *via* Putaruru. Such a connection can be running inside of two years, whereas the Tauranga connection will not be running, even if started at once, for about thirty years. Fourthly, the contour of the country on the Rotorua-Waiotapu line is against the construction of a railway. I understand no survey of this route has been made, consequently it has not been demonstrated to be a commercial practicability. It is quite likely that if a survey were made it would be found that the cost would be utterly prohibitive. Why did the Rotorua Chamber of Commerce not have a trial survey made if they are genuine in supporting their route? They have misrepresented the position in the pamphlet issued by them. They state on page 4 thereof that "There need be no tunnels and no big bridges"; yet their own sketch-plan attached shows that the line selected by them has to cross the Waikato River twice, consequently there would be two bridges, one of which, at any rate, would be a very large one. Further, they estimate the cost of construction of their line at £3,000 per mile, although the average cost of construction of Government railways is nearly £11,000 per mile (see page 5 of pamphlet). Then, again, their method of estimating the increased traffic is even more fallacious. On page 2 they say, "What increase of traffic would it be reasonable to anticipate from such cheapened and improved facilities? When omnibuses ran from Queen Street, Auckland, to Ponsonby at a fare of 6d., the weekly traffic amounted to about six hundred passengers. When horse-cars were established with more commodious and somewhat more comfortable vehicles, a more frequent service, and a fare reduced to 3d., the traffic rose to six thousand at once, or an immediate increase of tenfold with exactly the same population to work upon. When electric cars were established again with better vehicles, a much faster and more frequent service, and a fare reduced to 2d., the traffic jumped away out of sight. Precise figures on the Ponsonby run are not available, but it is well known that the number of passengers increased enormously—to a greater extent even than on the advent of horse-cars: so much so that the trams on all the lines have often carried well over