

45. Do you wish the Committee to assume that willow-trees are a marketable commodity? Has Canterbury invested much money in North Island land—say, in the Waikato, for instance?—I think so.

46. How much money have they been able to get back?—They did not get much back a good many years ago.

47. A new generation has arisen?—Yes.

48. And they are going to have another try?—They are going to get it back this time.

49. *Mr. MacDonald.*] This association or company of Canterbury settlers have gone and examined this land, and no doubt compared it with similar land under cultivation in the vicinity?—Yes.

50. That is one reason why they are of opinion that that land can be made profitable for cultivation?—Yes.

51. *Mr. Dickie.*] I suppose that would lead these men to believe that it was good land at low prices compared with the prices they have been paying for land down in Canterbury?—The farmers did not look at it in that way: they looked at it purely from the quality of the soil.

52. If this railway were closed down where this block of land has been taken up, I suppose the “spec.” would not be much good?—It would certainly have a very detrimental effect.

53. *Mr. Buick.*] I suppose the gentlemen you mentioned are more interested in selling than in improving the land?—I think they are just now.

54. *Mr. Laurenson.*] Where does that 20,000-acre block that you mentioned lie?—About fifteen miles south of Putaruru, to the north of the lake.

55. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Would fifteen miles distance from the railway-station be considered any serious matter in Canterbury, as far as carriage is concerned?—It would not be so serious there as in the North. In Canterbury the roads are all metalled, which makes all the difference.

56. Is it correct that 3 tons is a fair wagon-load on the pumice roads up yonder?—I do not know that I am in a position to answer that question. I have not had to deal with any loading at all.

57. Did you not say that it would be a serious matter if the railway were taken away?—Yes, it would be.

58. Is it not fair, then, to assume that you have considered this question of carriage?—Yes.

59. But you are not able to answer my question?—I have never had a practical knowledge of carting in the North.

60. What do you consider should be charged for cartage for fifteen miles from Putaruru outwards towards this block of land?—I can only judge by what they charge from Rotorua to Waio-tapu: that is twenty-two miles, and the charge is about £3 a ton.

61. Would you be surprised to learn that evidence was given before the Committee that cartage was done for fifty-six miles at £2 a ton?—I should be surprised.

62. *Mr. Dickie.*] Are these roads suitable for traction-engine service?—Some portions of them.

63. In Canterbury most of the haulage is done by traction-engine?—Yes.

EDMOND CLIFTON examined on oath. (No. 14.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you, Mr. Clifton?—Director of Fields and Experimental Stations, Department of Agriculture.

2. The Committee desire to hear any statement that you may wish to make as to the value, characteristics, or capability of this country for close settlement, and will be glad of any other information you can give them upon the subject. We understand that you are acquainted with the country in question. Will you make a statement?—I would sooner reply to any questions that you may wish to put.

3. *Mr. Buchanan.*] What knowledge have you of the country now served, and proposed to be served after the railway is extended, by the Putaruru-Taupo Railway?—I know the Taupo country fairly well—better some years ago than of late—even so long ago as 1876; and of later years the Taupo district came into my district when I was Stock Inspector in the Auckland Provincial District. The part of this country in immediate consideration, of which I do not know much, is that at the further end of the Mokai Railway—the company's railway. At the time I knew the country that part was forest—there was no access; but the rest of the country I have travelled over extensively.

4. Will you tell us what you know of the productive capabilities of that country?—It is country of a somewhat similar nature to a great part of the lighter lands of the Waikato, and extends from that description of land to the very light pumice soils with which one cannot at present associate utility. It is very difficult, however, to make an estimate of the proportion of those lands. As a rough estimate one might say that two-thirds of that land would come into useful occupation. As to the other third, at present I have no conception of what use might be made of it. Taking the other two-thirds, one-third would be useful land; the other third would, I think, require to be occupied in large, or comparatively large, pastoral holdings. It is to be clearly understood that there is no natural stock-carrying capacity as the term is accepted in most parts of New Zealand. The capacity of that land depends practically and entirely on the extent of the agricultural operations to grass it and to maintain that grass.

5. As to the portion that you think could be occupied in comparatively large pastoral areas, how could it be so occupied without cultivation?—I do not think any of it can be improved except with the assistance of cultivation. I do not think any part can be naturally grassed without some form of cultivation.

6. What proportion of the country would you call easily ploughable land—that is, so level or undulating as to be capable of fairly easy cultivation?—An enormous proportion of the Taupo