

district can be ploughed. It is very difficult to estimate that without inspecting the country for that purpose. A great part consists of rolling downs, plateaus, and flats, extending in parts into hills, regarding which no question of cultivation would be considered.

7. You cannot give us a shot at the relative areas of cultivable and uncultivable land?—If you accept it simply as a shot, I would say that two-thirds of the Taupo district generally might be ploughed.

8. *The Chairman.*] You are referring to the country affected by the railway?—

*Mr. Buchanan:* Yes. I began by pointing to that area as the subject of my questions.

*Witness:* I should think in that particular portion possibly less than that proportion may be ploughed. The hills certainly are more prominent than in other parts of Taupo.

9. *Mr. Buchanan.*] You think, then, that roughly speaking one-half would not be cultivable, owing to hills?—Fully one-half. But I want you to take that purely as an estimate, made without looking at the country for the purpose.

10. Have you any idea of the location of Crown land, of Native land, and of private land comprising that area?—Only of some of the Native lands and a portion of the freehold.

11. You could not, therefore, give us any idea whether the rough land is mostly the Native land, the Crown land, or the privately-owned land?—I could not help you in that direction.

12. We have been told over and over again that want of the means of carriage at a reasonable rate has been the cause of this land lying undeveloped for so many years?—It is quite certain that the country cannot be profitably occupied until means of communication are improved: that is certain. I think that must appeal to every one. But at the same time the nature of the country has also prevented its being sought for. For one thing, it would require, under present conditions, a very considerable capital to operate on this land. It is not a poor man's country, under present conditions.

13. We have been told by some of the witnesses that it is more suitable for occupation in areas of from 300 to 500 and 600 acres than in larger areas, irrespective of the capital at the disposal of the intending settlers. Would you give us your idea as to that?—My own opinion is that the country must of necessity be occupied in areas of considerable size. I should say that you must make that country attractive to people of some means; that the capital involved must be considerable. The return from such lands that we know perfectly well are not of the highest class cannot be great; therefore men of reasonable means to take up a fair-sized holding are those who would be likely to occupy this country. Of course, another factor comes in, and that is, if the present owners improve that land and make it available. That is a process that has taken place throughout the greater part of the Waikato. Those intractable lands—as they were in the early days—were taken up by strong financial companies and improved. These companies' operations resulted in bringing that land into such a state that men of limited means can occupy it profitably.

14. Can you see anything to prevent the profitable occupation of these lands by settlers possessing a reasonable amount of capital, although the land may be, say, forty miles from a railway-station?—In these days forty miles is regarded as a considerable distance to transport stock. I think communication would require to be closer than that.

15. What would you consider the carrying-capacity of that class of land if it were worked by cultivation in rotation in the usual way? At what would you put down the capacity in, say, sheep, per acre?—That depends entirely on the extent and intensity of your agricultural operations. Take other places—for instance, the properties that have been developed in the Waikato. Possibly, with a rotation, renewing grass every fourth year, a sheep and a half to two sheep to the acre. That is on the understanding that grass is renewed by cultivation, or possibly maintained by top-dressings. That is another phase that may enter. And I must make another qualification: that would apply only to the lands of the better class.

16. Would you consider it possible to make a success of dairying on this country?—It does not in any way appeal to me as a district suitable for dairying. I should consider it more as a stock-raising country than one for dairying or for fattening.

17. You say that, having a fair knowledge of the history of the Waikato dairying country?—Yes.

18. In the Waikato they go in largely for dairying, do they not?—They do. A portion of the better class of land would come to that use, undoubtedly. But I should say that Taupo cannot become a dairying district.

19. How about water?—Taupo is generally well watered.

20. *Mr. MacDonald.*] You have been from Putaruru to Mokai?—Not quite into Mokai. That part towards Mokai I do not know.

21. You know from Putaruru to Lichfield?—Yes.

22. There are large areas of ploughable land right through to Lichfield and on?—Yes, very large.

23. You say that in fairly large pastoral runs the country can be occupied?—I take it that that must be the first development.

24. How are you going to grass it for pastoral purposes?—In the way in which the large properties in the Waikato were dealt with—practically through the medium of the plough.

25. *Mr. Buick.*] Do you consider that the cheap conveyance of artificial manures is a great factor in the cultivation of the bulk of those lands?—It is essential that manures be availed of; they must be obtainable on the farm at a reasonable cost, and for this transport must be cheap.

26. Do you think it would be possible to successfully cultivate those lands without a railway—by simply hauling the manures over the ground? Would it be possible to bring them from Putaruru to the southern end of the block that would be served by the proposed railway?—I do not think it is possible to bring those lands into occupation unless there is transport by a railway.