

55. What, then, is the cause of the acknowledged difference between rearing young sheep up the west coast, for instance, beyond Wanganui, and rearing them, we will say, in the Wairarapa or Canterbury?—The wet climate of the west coast is principally responsible.

56. Would that apply to Wairarapa?—The Wairarapa climate is much drier than that of the west coast; there is on those lands an enormous growth of grasses. On the drier country probably the herbage is more nutritious.

57. *Hon. Sir J. Findlay.*] It is about a year since you gave evidence before a Committee that was dealing with the same matter as this Committee is dealing with?—Yes.

58. During that time have you had occasion to alter your mind regarding any of the main statements you made here a year ago?—No. I would willingly have put my former evidence in to-day.

59. I desire, therefore, to merely draw your attention to some of the evidence you gave then for the purpose of getting your reaffirmation of what you said then upon half a dozen important points. You were asked whether, looking at the whole country within the borders appearing on the map, you were hopeful of it, and you said, "Decidedly." You still take that view?—I do.

60. Then you were asked: "And you think it is amenable to treatment?" and you answered, "Yes. It is on that account that I have induced the Department to make experiments. It is only now several experimental plots are being completed throughout this district." Have these been advanced since then?—Yes.

61. And has the result been to encourage your view?—In most directions, yes. They are principally grass-plots; it is found that certain grasses are, as far as one can tell, successfully adapting themselves to the conditions.

62. *The Chairman.*] With the 3 cwt. of manure?—That has been the usual application. I think it would have been about that.

63. *Mr. Buick.*] Do you put it down every year?—No. The usual process is to apply the manure at each crop—that is, when the land is in cultivation. In top-dressing it would depend on the state of the pasture. Probably an application every third year would be satisfactory.

64. *Hon. Sir J. Findlay.*] At any rate, the experiments you have so far made assure you that the view you expressed a year ago was right?—Yes.

65. Then you were asked, "Taking it all over, you think the land would improve very much by occupation?" and you answered, "I think two-thirds in the course of some years will be useful land for settlers." Do you reaffirm that to-day?—I do.

66. Then you were asked, "Do you think a reasonable amount of settlement can be effected along this comparatively poor country if they have communication?" and you answered, "Yes, the better part of it immediately, and almost all for pastoral purposes"—That is so.

67. Then you were asked to make a comparison: "You think as good results can be got in this country as in the Murimotu country?" and you said, "Yes, over the greater part of it; and from the experiments we have made for years past there is great encouragement. The red-top grass (*Agrostis canina*) is not a first-class grass, but it is growing well." Where is the Murimotu country?—Out towards the Main Trunk line; but this plot that we are speaking of is on the road from Waiotapu to Galatea.

68. Then, it is on the class of country we are now dealing with?—Yes, practically the same district.

69. Then you were asked, "You think it is absolutely necessary to have communication there before the land is tackled?" and your answer was, "I think, undoubtedly so. All this country requires fertilizers, as all other country. It is a long distance to transport, is expensive, and fertilizers and supplies must be obtained cheaply. I do not think the country can be attacked without railway communication." That is what you state to-day?—Yes.

70. Then it goes on, "The present line or the line that has been spoken of from Rotorua to Taupo—which do you think would open up the most country?—If I were a settler at Taupo I should prefer the railway from Putaruru, inasmuch as the distance would be shorter"—That is evident.

71. "You are quite satisfied that, as far as growing root crops is concerned, that country has passed the experimental stage?—Decidedly. Of course, there is land of many varying descriptions. On the greater part of it root crops can be grown." That answer you reaffirm to-day?—Yes.

72. Then finally you were asked this: "Apart from the quality of the soil, are the general conditions in this district suited to settlement?" and you answered, "Yes." Then, "Would you say they are exceptionally favourable—the climate, for instance?—I should think the climate is the finest in New Zealand. Apart from its present isolation, it would be eminently suitable, as far as health conditions are concerned." Q. "And the cultivation of the soil would be very cheap in the working of the land?—It is very light land and easily worked." Q. "It does not contain much clay, and is easily ploughed at any time and in any weather?—The greater part could be cultivated at any time"—That is so.

73. You think, then, that, taken generally, there is wide room for settlement in this large area of country?—Undoubtedly.

74. And that settlement cannot proceed without a railway?—It cannot proceed. It is impossible to attack that country without railway communication.

75. And do you think that the railway proposed, leaving Putaruru and ending at Taupo, and making the whole of Lake Taupo available as a means of transport, would furnish the necessary communication?—It would be the first means. I think it is certain that there would require to be extensions; but the key to it is an approach to Lake Taupo.

76. May I put it in this way: if that railway is completed to Taupo, and Lake Taupo is joined with the Main Trunk Railway in that way, you will have found the first key to the settlement of this country?—Undoubtedly.