

35. *Mr. MacDonald.*] Speaking of Native lands, you say they would be settled if the Natives were allowed to sell: are they not allowed to sell up to 5,000 acres now?—Yes; but there is a great deal of preliminary work to be done, and from practical experience it is a difficult matter, and an unpleasant matter, to acquire Native land.

36. I suppose you do not know which is Native land and which is Crown land?—When I was in Auckland I made careful search of the Crown lands and found there were 600,000 acres. Although a great deal of that is nominally let, the men are not on the ground. About one-third at the outside would be occupied.

37. The chief reason why it is not occupied is because there is no means of access, and because that country needs a particular kind of treatment?—Yes. At the back of my property there are over 100,000 acres cut into two blocks which are nominally let to people not there. They would want about £20,000 to develop blocks like those.

38. It is all on pastoral lease and on such a tenure that they cannot develop it?—Yes.

39. *Mr. Hindmarsh.*] When you are speaking about large areas is it not essential that a man's capital should be proportionate to the amount he takes up?—When you take up a block under pastoral license the Crown has a right to re-enter at a year's notice without compensation, and it does not pay a man to take it up. A question was asked me whether a man without money ought to take up this land. I think the country is as well adapted for that purpose as any other country.

40. *Hon. Dr. Pomare.*] Do you say the Taupo settlers would be as advantageously served by a line from Rotorua?—Absolutely. They would have a third less freight to pay to start with.

41. Would they not have one-third less freight to pay on a Government line from Putaruru to Taupo?—If there were a Government line through Putaruru there would be a slight saving in freight. The difference in the total length would be approximately twenty-five miles, and at the end of a two-hundred-miles run that additional freight would be very little.

42. What about time?—Supposing your train arrived an hour or two hours later that would not matter. The great point is to have your goods handled as few times as possible, as there is a big chance of loss in each handling.

43. *Mr. MacDonald.*] Mr. Clifton in his evidence the other day said, in his opinion, that country should be worked in large areas, and that it is practically a breeding country for stock. Is that your opinion?—No; I cannot say I agree with Mr. Clifton. I think it is more adapted to be worked by the plough in small areas. I have seen parts of the Waikato before it was settled, and the appearance of that country was similar, and Mr. Pond's analysis of the soil is the same. You can handle it better in small lots if access is provided. At the present time it is no good driving fifty lambs to Rotorua; you want to have five hundred. If you could truck them you could send a dozen lambs at a time.

44. You said the line was easy for fifteen miles: is there difficult ground between that and Rotorua?—No. Between Rotorua and Waiotapu I am not familiar with it, but the engineers, I understand, say that it is easy country for railway-construction.

45. And you say it would suit the people of Rotorua, when the country is settled, to have a direct route to Tauranga?—Yes; as soon as the Port of Tauranga was developed it would certainly be the outlet.

46. *The Chairman.*] You have 40,000 acres?—Yes.

47. Supposing the company's line is put into Taupo, would that benefit you at all?—Not in improving it, but it might improve the salability of a portion of the country.

48. What do you estimate it would add to it?—I cannot say. If the present tariff continued I could haul goods over the road for the same money.

49. You do not think it would put up the price of your land to a great extent?—I do not think so.

50. What do you value it at now?—I am asking £1 an acre for part of it.

51. Would it put it up 20 per cent.?—If the present rates were retained which the company have a right to charge I do not think it would improve the present price.

52. Assuming they would charge the present rates do you reckon it would put your land up 10 per cent.?—If I could put my goods on the country at £1 2s. 6d. a ton I think it would improve the value of my land 10 per cent.—perhaps a little more.

53. If the line comes down from Rotorua through Waiotapu and the Government does not accept the proposal of the company, how much do you reckon that would put on the value of your land?—That depends upon the route selected. There are three routes, but the route over my country the Government Engineers have not seen. If it came through my land it would increase the value of it.

54. Would it put it up 50 per cent.?—It is difficult to estimate, but I think very likely it would.

55. You would not be able to sell that land for £2 an acre?—I do not think so.

56. With all the improvements you have put on it?—I am speaking of the unimproved value.

57. And it is the unimproved land for which you ask £1 an acre?—Yes.

58. It would not put it up another £1?—I do not think so.

59. It might put it up another 10s.?—I think that is possible.

60. Did I understand you suggested that the Government should give the company the right to negotiate with the Natives for their lands, so that the company should get some profit from the sale of these lands for putting their railway through?—I am not quite clear what the company's proposals are, but I understand they have asked for 200,000 acres.

61. You said that the power from the Aratiatia Rapids and the Huka Falls might be suitable for the company's line as well as the Government line?—Yes, I think so, if the Government allowed the company to use it.