

62. You said the company's line would interfere with the tourist traffic to Rotorua?—I think so, very seriously.

63. Do you think the attractions at Taupo are greater than those of Rotorua?—I would not say greater, but I think they are equal.

64. Do you think tourists would rather go to Taupo than to Rotorua, provided the company's agents were touting for business?—If left to their own independent judgment they might want to go to the lot, but I think if I were interested I could induce a man to go to Taupo in preference to Rotorua.

65. Do you not think some arrangement could be made between the Government and company for the issue of through tickets so that your fear of the company's touts injuring Rotorua might be dispelled?—The tourists would still have to undertake the physical inconvenience and delay of a journey of a hundred miles back to Rotorua.

66. Do you not think the company would be willing to make some such arrangement?—If they did the tourist would still be faced with this journey of a hundred miles.

67. If they did not make that arrangement, you think the tourists would not go to Rotorua?—If they made the journey for nothing the distance would still be a hindrance.

68. *Mr. Dalziel.*] Last year you told us that you had no hope of the Rotorua line being constructed in the near future?—Things have happened since last year.

69. What has happened?—A change of Government. My reason for saying that last year was that Sir Joseph Ward was very much against it. That personal equation has been removed.

70. You said then, and I suppose you will confirm it now, that if the Rotorua-Taupo line is not to be constructed for fifteen or twenty years you would support the company's proposal?—If there is no hope of the Rotorua line, then I say this line will be better than nothing.

71. You think, as a matter of fact, that it ought to be constructed?—Yes, if there is no Rotorua line.

72. Do you think your property is worth £1 an acre without access?—That is what I have been asking. If any one came along to buy I do not know but that I might be tempted to sell.

73. Do you think the country round about Taupo can be developed without access?—Only the very best of it. For the ordinary land you must have carriage to and fro.

74. *Mr. Laurensen.*] You said the change of Government has caused you to alter your views?—Yes.

75. In what respect?—Last year I had an interview with Sir Joseph Ward and other members, and he assured me that there was no hope of an extension from Rotorua to Taupo within the next twenty years. I said, in view of that, the company's line would be of advantage to the district. But I have always said that the line from Rotorua to Taupo ought to be built as the one that would assist the country better than the company's line.

76. Do you think the present Government will build it?—I presume that if the Committee recommends the Government to construct it, it would be a very great lever towards it.

77. *The Chairman.*] You have not waited on the present Government in any way?—No.

78. Your interest in this matter is, of course, not a personal one. You do not want the railway from Rotorua to Taupo because it will go within a short distance of your land and put the price of it up: it is purely in the interest of the public you are here?—I am not going to pretend, like some witnesses have, I believe, that I am disinterested. I am greatly interested, and I hope I have been able to show that my interest coincides with that of the public.

79. You have in your evidence advocated that the company should negotiate with the Natives for their land in order that it may finish this twenty miles of railway. Assume that the Crown and Native lands are now worth 5s. an acre according to valuation, and that they go up in consequence of the construction of this piece of line to 10s. an acre or more, do you say that increased portion should go to the company to pay them for building this piece of the line?—I do not see why it should. Last year Mr. Kensington said the experimental work which had been carried on had put a totally different value on to this land. Well, it would be just as reasonable for my neighbours and myself to say, "Give us a portion of that value."

80. This is a totally different thing: this is a case where a piece of railway is not built, and the company say they are willing to build it under certain conditions. I asked you whether you considered those conditions fair, and you say you do not?—No, I do not.

THURSDAY, 19TH SEPTEMBER, 1912.

ROBERT WEST HOLMES sworn and examined. (No. 21.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are?—Engineer-in-Chief of the Public Works Department.

2. The Committee have called you to advise them in connection with the Taupo Totara Timber Company's petition. They want all the information they can get from engineers and other people, so that they can form an opinion as to whether they can advise the Government to purchase the company's line on the terms mentioned or not, or accede to the prayer of the petition in any other way. Will you make a statement?—I was instructed by the Government some time ago to examine into the best means of bringing Taupo into communication with the existing Government railway system, and with that object in view I examined the whole of the country lying along the Taupo Totara Timber Company's tramway route. After having made an examination of the country I prepared a fairly voluminous report on the whole question, copy of which can be supplied to the Committee.