

16. What is the relative attractiveness of Orakei on the one hand and Waiotapu on the other?—Orakei is a very poor place, and is altogether different from Waiotapu. In fact, you would hardly notice anything in the way of thermal activity unless it was pointed out.

17. In the case of tourists starting from Auckland and going from Rotorua to Taupo on any of the lines you have described they would have to return northward a certain distance if they wanted to go to Wellington or southward in returning to Auckland. They would have to turn back as far as Putaruru?—They would have to go back to Frankton if they wished to come to Wellington; but there is another route, to Waiouru, on the Main Trunk line.

18. Has any exploration been made from Tokaanu to Raurimu, which is only about sixty miles as the crow flies?—No exploration for that purpose, but I know the country well, and it is quite possible to construct a railway-line through Waimarino to Tokaanu at a very moderate cost. It is quite easy, but it would be a very long one.

19. What length?—About fifty miles, I suppose, although the distance to Waihi by the Native track is about thirty miles.

20. Would not that be a great gain to the tourist starting from Auckland, instead of his having to return back?—I do not think any tourist traffic would make the line pay.

21. But the country in the neighbourhood of Tokaanu and Rotoaira has been described to the Committee as very fine country: would not the produce assist to make it a payable line?—It would assist, certainly.

22. Is there any quantity of timber in that neighbourhood?—No, only a limited quantity.

23. Turning to the company's line, did you examine the class of sleepers that have been used?—Yes, I did in places.

24. Were they heart of totara, or what?—Those I examined were heart of totara. I did not examine them very closely. I did not go there with the object of valuing the company's line.

25. So there might have been considerable portions of rimu or other timber?—Yes.

26. Have you any doubt in your mind, assuming that the line from Putaruru to Taupo is adopted, as to the desirableness of bringing it up to the standard of Government railways?—I hardly think it would be desirable to do so. But I am of opinion that if the Government owned the line they would not be able to resist public pressure to bring it up to the Government standard, so that the ordinary rolling-stock could run over the line.

27. You are of opinion also that the prospect of traffic for the railway in agricultural produce, live-stock, and so forth, is not so good as from the tourist traffic?—I should look to the tourist traffic as the principal source of revenue for many years to come.

28. Is that opinion based on what you have seen elsewhere in pumice country?—Yes.

29. *Mr. Buick.*] Are you acquainted with the quality of the land on the spurs of Lake Taupo?—Fairly.

30. What is your opinion of the country round the lake?—I have a poor opinion of it.

31. Do you see anything to warrant the construction of the railway to Taupo to assist the country?—I should be very sorry to put capital into it.

32. Do you see anything to warrant the construction of a standard Government line at the present time?—Not at the present time.

33. I suppose you think the present light line will be enough for any traffic likely to be there for some years to come?—Quite.

34. Have you considered the advisableness of constructing a line from Tokaanu to Waiouru, on the Main Trunk line?—A line could be constructed between the two places, but I doubt if it could unless steep grades could be adopted, owing to the great height the line would have to pass over.

35. *Hon. Mr. Fraser.*] Did I understand you to say that the rolling-stock of the Dominion railways could not travel along a light line, or did you refer to this particular line of railway?—To this particular light line of railway.

36. Why could it not? I am not talking of the heavy engines, but of the ordinary rolling-stock, such as trucks and carriages?—They are not suitable to run round $1\frac{1}{2}$ -chain curves.

37. What is the minimum curve they are suited for?—The locomotives, I think, about $4\frac{1}{2}$ chains. The ordinary carriages and trucks could get round these curves at a very low speed, but the wear-and-tear would be terrific.

38. If the curves were not so acute as they are, would the mere fact of it being a lightly constructed line and the speed low prevent the rolling-stock travelling over it?—There would have to be some restriction placed on it. Some of the rolling-stock could pass over the light rails. Some of the rolling-stock is as heavy on axle-load as locomotives.

39. Could a loaded truck passing over a light line be used without having to transfer its load to another truck to go along the regular lines of the Dominion?—If the curves are flat enough, then the lighter rolling-stock could be used on the line, such as the short Ms and the L wagons.

40. If properly selected rolling-stock were used there would be nothing to prevent goods such as timber, agricultural produce, or even passengers being carried on the line without transference at a terminal point?—That would be quite possible.

41. The curves on this line are very sharp, are they?—Very sharp indeed.

42. Are the trucks that pass along the sharp curves carried right through after arriving at Putaruru?—No, they stop at Putaruru, and their freight is transferred to the Government wagons.

43. Is that absolutely necessary in your opinion?—Yes. My reason for saying so is that the company's wagons are not up to the standard required by the Railway Department, travelling in long trains. They are not able to stand the shock when forming part of a heavy train.

44. That is because of the peculiar construction of the trucks?—The truck on the whole is not strong enough.