

ably fair ploughable country, and it has been practically demonstrated that pumice land can be worked and made productive. The chief difficulty is transport for manures and stock, and you want facilities to carry your stock away at once. At the present time the cost of driving from the far-back places is too great, and they have to hang on to their sheep until they have four or five hundred, instead of being able to get away a truck or so at a time. For this reason the feed is being wasted through their having to keep fat sheep over weeks or months. My idea is that the whole of that ploughable country is fit for sheep, although I do not agree with one witness that it is fit for breeding sheep. It is only fit for fattening sheep, and getting them away as soon as possible. I think that will be proved later on when the country is farmed. In my opinion the only possible way of opening up and developing the country is by means of a light railway of some description running through it. I do not think it is much use my going into the merits or demerits of the different routes proposed. I have been from Rotorua *via* Waitapu to Taupo, and right down that way, and agree that it is an easy line to make. At the present moment, so far as farming is concerned, there is more carried on there than anywhere else until you get down to Galatea or towards Runanga; but I cannot see how this proposed line would benefit the country down to Mokai, because the ranges between the proposed routes are very high, and there would be no means of getting access until it got down to Wairakei. There are large areas which are not ploughable and with a kind of soil which would not pay to work; but I have been through Mokai, where the bush is situated, and notice that a good deal of grass has been sown on land from which the timber has been taken. A good number of stock is to be seen there, which seems to be doing well. There is no doubt that the country will carry grass and stock. There is a good area of bush country, but I am not prepared to say how much. There is also a large area of swamp and flax country which will carry stock. I have seen oats growing in the swampy land, and there was a fair average crop. To help on this country you must have railways. When you cross the Kaingaroa Plains the country is all bush. There is a large amount of milling-timber, and after the bush is taken off it will carry good grass. I have not been through the country from Putaruru to Mokai, but only from Atiamuri to Taupo, and I understand it is very similar country. To my mind, if the Government have any intention of developing or opening up that country and making it productive, it can only be done by putting a tramway-line through it in order to give the means of transport to settlers for their produce both ways. At the present time the country is costing the Government a very large amount for poisoning rabbits. Even if the railway did not pay it would be better to work it than to continue paying £5,000 or £6,000 per annum for poisoning these rabbits. I am interested to a certain extent because, although this country is a hundred miles or more from Poverty Bay, the settlers there are paying a rate to poison rabbits to prevent them penetrating Poverty Bay from the Taupo district. I would rather see the Government spend money in fencing and wire netting than in rabbit-poisoning. The timber-mills have been putting out large quantities of timber, and the company seem to be carrying it over the track successfully. Seeing that the timber traffic has been carried on for a number of years it demonstrates that the line is serving a useful purpose, and if it were completed to Taupo it would serve the settlers and be of great value. If any reasonable arrangement can be made with the company for purchasing the required area of land to utilize their line I think it would be of very great benefit to the district. If the present line of fifty miles to Mokai is not continued, evidence has been given showing it is not advisable to take a Government line through because of insufficient traffic to make it a payable proposition.

2. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Supposing the railway was completed to Taupo, do you think this communication, plus steamer accommodation, would develop much of the country further south on both sides of Lake Taupo? In other words, if cartage is so difficult would the country be developed to any extent away in on both sides of the lake?—Yes, I feel sure. It is a big lake, covering about a hundred square miles. There are portions about the lake which are very poor land, but there are other large areas that could be made productive. Transport by water and rail would help that country very largely. Tauhara Block, to the eastward of Taupo, is Native land. The mountain is poor, but there is a lot of country adjacent suitable for cultivation. My electorate goes twenty-five miles down to Rangitaiki, where there are three settlers, but I have never been there.

3. You said that stock and grass were apparently doing fairly well on portions of the timber country already dealt with by the company?—Yes, on the bush country at Mokai.

4. Do you think the grass would keep a hold on that country when the effects of the burning passed away?—Yes, I feel pretty sure about that in the bush country. I am confident that the bush country, if properly handled—that is, fenced into reasonably small paddocks and stocked heavily in proper seasons when the grass should be kept down—will hold and carry grass, because the soil is really fairly good right through.

5. You do not know whether there is any sign of bush-sickness out in that quarter, do you?—I have asked so far as Mokai is concerned, and have been told that there is no trouble with bush-sickness there. I have also been on Vaile's property and Butcher's property, also Stead and Watt's, where they are carrying a lot of sheep and cattle, and they seem to be fairly healthy. The only thing stock seem to suffer from is the lack of feed at times.

6. Do you notice as to the lambs in the district whether they develop into strong healthy sheep?—I did not see very many lambs, but I know that on Watt and Stead's place they fatten them.

7. Have you known any flocks of sheep where the lambs developed into good sheep without any artificial help?—There are no flocks of sheep in there except at those two places, as far as I know. The Maoris have a few sheep here and there.

8. You have not had any personal experience in cultivating pumice land?—Not personal experience.