

Rotorua Borough Council, the Rotorua-Taupo Railway League, the Rotorua Progress League, the Rotorua Chamber of Commerce, the Ngongotaha Branch of the Farmers' Union, and other public bodies. It was put in my name merely so that I should support it myself and not have to engage counsel, which we could not afford. We did not seek numerous signatures to the petition. As you know, you can get as many signatures as you want by the expenditure of money. I want also to emphasize the point that we are not petitioning for a new railway; we are asking you to recommend the resumption of the construction of a railway which has been authorized by Parliament, and for which money has been voted by Parliament. I want to know why the money voted for this railway has been taken and spent upon another line. We claim that that money should be expended where Parliament authorized it to be spent. We want to know upon what authority and upon what grounds this has been done. We have no evidence whatever. Explanations have been given as to why the Palmerston North deviation was stopped, but there has been no explanation as to why the Rotorua-Taupo Railway was stopped. We also want to show that for the development of that area a railway is required and not a road. The evidence that I propose to lead will show you that there is a vast area of country which is habitable and cultivable and productive, and that it is a national crime to keep it locked up. The first evidence I wish to place before you is silent but none the less eloquent. I would like to draw your attention to these exhibits we have brought down. These [referring to exhibits] roots were grown at Reporoa with 2 cwt. of manure. These turnips were all grown on pumice land with 3 cwt. of manure. These swedes are from three farms. The potatoes were grown in pumice soil with stable manure; also the onions. This hay is from my own farm. That is first-class clover hay, and that was grown with a top dressing of 2 cwt. to the acre—the first cut in the second year. Any one who understands roots will know that these roots are very fine, both from size and quality. I may say that they are not the first lot that were reserved by us for this inquiry. We had better roots reserved, but owing to the delay the ones we first reserved did not keep.

3. *Mr. Lye.*] Were they grown on the ridge or on the flat? On the flat.

4. *Mr. Kyle.*] Are they a fair average? They are not the worst, of course, but they are a fair average of the crop. I saw the crop from which these [soft turnips] came, and it was a magnificent crop; naturally we have not brought you the worst.

5. *Mr. Lye.*] But it is generally understood that on that land the first crop is always a good crop? Yes, but afterwards good crops are grown too. Mr. Chairman, I would like to place before you some photographs showing what this land will produce [photographs submitted and described]; also prize tickets from Palmerston North, Waikato, and other shows [produced]. I have never sent exhibits to a show without taking prizes, and I can assure you that I have never cultivated any crop for show purposes—the exhibits have always been taken out of the ordinary field crop, and never more than 2½ cwt. of manure to the acre has been used.

6. *The Chairman.*] You are showing us these prize tickets to indicate the capabilities for production of the land which will be opened up by this railway?—Yes, and to show the value of developing the area. Then this [produced] is a pamphlet which our league issued. We claim that the only way in which our railway can be opposed is by misrepresentation and by ignorance. Copies of this pamphlet have been sent to all newspapers, and there has never been an effective criticism of it, except that we had not stated in the book the cost of the railway, but that is now stated in this edition. It has been stated that there are photographs of two or three turnips where an animal has died. That is not true, because there are acres and acres of crops there. As regards calves, which were represented as being as high as the top of a 6 ft. fence, the photographs show that they are up to the second rail. I want to draw your attention particularly to the map in the middle of the book. Here [pointing out the pumice area] is the only area in the Dominion which has no access by land or by sea. It strikes the eye at once that there is a great vacant space there, and we say that it is a national disaster that that area has not been opened up for settlement. If that land were of no use it would be all right, but we can show that there is no useless land in that area, that the whole of the land is useful, and that such of the land as may not be available for cultivation, amounting perhaps to 25 per cent., is the finest timber-growing country in the world. Now, gentlemen, this concludes my opening remarks. May I suggest that I be allowed to give my evidence last.

7. *The Chairman.*] I take it that you are giving it now?—I thought I was giving an address.

Mr. Kyle: May I suggest that those witnesses who wish to get away be taken now. I for one do not want to be sitting here during the sittings of the House.

Mr. Samuel: I suggest that Mr. Vaile be allowed to break off his evidence now and resume later on.

The Chairman: That can be done.

HALBERT ALEXANDER GOUDIE examined. (No. 2.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are a Conservator of Forests?—I used to occupy that position in the Department. I am still carrying on my occupation as a forester. I had been in the Department for twenty-five years. My interests in coming before you to advocate the construction of this railway are really largely due to the fact that I was in charge of the State Forest operations, practically from their initiation, and I am naturally very anxious to see that these plantations, on which the Government spent so much money, should get a fair deal, and I am satisfied that you cannot get a full and profitable realization from these plantations without the construction of the railway. I may say that in addition to the area owned by the Government, and which is largely planted, there are altogether about 300,000 acres of land tributary to that proposed line, including the Government land reserved for forestry purposes by the Government, and by private enterprise, which are tributary to the proposed line. I do not include in that 300,000 acres the land which is planted or held by