

42. My reason for asking the question is that on portion of the pumice country that I have been on there is a scarcity of water, and I am wondering whether you could get good water by boring?—I can only speak from my experience. I have bored 160 ft. and have got very good water, and there is plenty of it.

43. *The Chairman.*] With regard to Waiotapu and Kahuroa, do you know anything about cattle-sickness there?—I have heard there is, to a limited extent, but when the country is brought in it does not hurt if there is a little cattle-sickness.

44. Have you read the report of Mr. B. C. Aston, made in 1927, in which he classes quite a portion of that district as cattle-sick country?—I do not think I read that particular portion.

45. Would you think that a fair statement?—If he said that, I think so.

46. *Mr. Massey.*] I forgot to ask you about the Hautu Prison Camp farm. How does that land compare with the land in the Taupo area?—I have not been in that district, so I could not say.

47. *Mr. Kyle.*] What is the rainfall in the Taupo area? I want that information in connection with the water-supply. In the early days of Canterbury they had no water-races, and the stock got their drink off the grass as they walked along?—I think the average rainfall is about 46 in. I may be wrong.

*The Chairman:* I am not sure what the Commission's report showed, but I think it was considerably below that.

*Mr. Vaile:* Might I ask whether Mr. Aston's evidence is going to be taken?

*The Chairman:* I am drawing attention to what appeared in the Agricultural Department's report by him.

48. *Mr. Vaile.*] I would like you, Mr. Martin, to give the Committee some information as to your career—say what you know about farming?—Yes. I am the son of a Lincolnshire farmer, who came out here and settled in the North Auckland district. I was trained under my father, and I went to Hawke's Bay. I was on the late J. N. William's station for six years, and on the Hatuma Estate, just prior to its being cut up by the Government, for one year. Both these estates were first-class sheep and cattle country. The experience which I gained on them has been very valuable to me ever since.

49. Now, as to your activities in the district: am I right in stating that you have been Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce?—The Rotorua Chamber of Commerce, yes.

50. For how long?—In 1911 and 1912.

51. And Chairman of the Rotorua County Council?—Yes, for about eight and a half years. I have been a member of the Council for about eleven years.

52. You are a member of the Rotorua Co-operative Dairy Co.?—Yes.

53. You were also a member of the Returned Soldiers Revaluation Committee?—Yes.

54. And you are the County Assessor?—Yes, the Rotorua County Assessor.

55. Tell me whether you started off in this district with a large capital?—No, I managed to save £150 while in Hawke's Bay, and I started with that in Mamaku in conjunction with my brother.

56. And in farming that country you have achieved an independent position?—Yes, I think so.

57. If the price of land increases from 2s. 6d. to £2 an acre following the construction of a railway, do you think that proves the utility of a railway?—It certainly has a bearing on it. If, owing to a railway going through, people are willing to give £1 10s. or £2 an acre, when they would give only 2s. 6d. prior to the railway going through, I should say the railway has an influence.

58. Have you known of any case in which, owing to the construction of a road, there has been a similar advance in the value of land from 2s. 6d. to £1 10s. or £2 an acre?—No; and I do not think that the construction of a road would affect the country to the same extent as the construction of a railway from an agricultural point of view.

59. Do you consider this country suitable for holding in large areas or in small areas?—I should suggest small areas.

60. About 200 acres?—About 200 acres, two-thirds of it ploughable. I think it is very necessary that that country, or the greater portion of it, should be ploughable, because you cannot get 100 per cent. return from land that you cannot plough.

61. How does the cost of working this land compare with the cost of working the land in other parts: is it cheaper or dearer?—Very much cheaper.

62. That applies not only to the ploughing, but also to subsequent operations?—Yes. Our Canterbury friends would be surprised if they saw the way we are working our land. I do not suppose they would get any crops at all if they did the same.

63. *Mr. Kyle.*] You only skim the surface?—Yes.

64. And one ploughing does it?—Yes. If we want to get good swedes we skim the ground, and plough deeply just before drilling-time.

65. *Mr. Vaile.*] How do you find the land for the growth of winter feed—turnips, clovers, and so forth?—Very favourable.

66. They can be produced more cheaply than in most other districts?—Yes.

67. Have you noticed any response to cultivation?—Yes. A curious thing about that class of country is that once you break it up it seems to develop plant-food itself. A wonderful change takes place once the ground is turned up to the air and sun. That is independent of fertilizers. Of course, we would not have the crops without the use of fertilizers; but no doubt the working of the land improves it immensely.

68. Do you find that the tramping of cattle on the ground has a good effect?—Yes, a very important bearing. The ground requires heavy tramping to consolidate it.

69. You have told us that the land will grow turnips, clover, and so on. Are the roots and hay of good quality?—Yes, I think they are of good quality. They fatten cattle, and store cattle do well. I have no reason to believe that the quality is not as good as in most other districts.