

turn to farming; if given the opportunity of settling on land with the hope of success, they would forsake the precarious classes of work as labourers and so on and take to the land. This pumice land is the only portion of New Zealand that offers settlement under what I would call reasonably cheap conditions. The greater portion of it belongs to the Crown. From what I can gather, there are 700,000 acres of Crown land between Rotorua and Taupo, all more or less adjacent to or within a reasonable distance of the proposed railway. Under the Homestead Act a small portion of this land has been offered to prospective settlers, the land itself free, and the only conditions are residence and, I think, improvements to the extent of £1 17s. 6d. per acre in seven or eight years. I say this: that if this proposed railway were put forward in stages, and, at the same time as it was being put forward, all the Crown lands and as many of the other lands as possible were settled in small areas, you would create there a population of very great importance. It would help to carry our burden of public debt. I imagine that you could, along the route of that proposed railway, create a thousand new farms, giving a larger area than Mr. Parsons mentioned, under intensive cultivation. One thousand farms, on the average of our New Zealand farm population, would carry five thousand people. That would carry a corresponding population of six thousand in the cities and boroughs. You can imagine what the creation of that population would mean, especially in view of the trade, commerce, and industries that would be carried on. A thousand new farmers with, say, 100 acres each would farm 100,000 acres, and yield from £3 to £5 an acre per year. Under intensive farming the yield would possibly be up to £15 per acre. But if you put it down at only £3 to £5 an acre you can get an idea of what it would mean to New Zealand as a whole. I do not doubt for a moment that the ideal of Mr. Parsons could be realized—that when you come right back 50 acres would carry a family in comfort. If we can do anything on a large scale like that it will create new wealth for the nation and new industries for the people, and put on to our soil a contented population, and we will be doing a very big thing. I am sure you would all further that with all your power, because you could not help doing it. I have heard some questions with regard to different parts of the country, and I might be excused if I give you just a little of what I call topography. [Mr. Rollett, with the aid of a map, gave the Committee a detailed description of the country that he thought would benefit from the proposed railway]. After leaving Waiotapu Flats, you come on to the private lands of the Butcher family and Mr. Vaile's property—all on the same side of the Kaingaroa Plains. I have examined these plains from various angles.

1. *Mr. Lye.*] There is some good country there?—Yes, is is somewhat better than much of Mr. Vaile's farm. It is finer soil. The soil is more decomposed, and the loam is deeper than in the Waikato Valley.

2. Is there much of it Crown land?—On one side there is an area of 300,000 acres. Of course, it has largely been handed over to the Forestry Department.

3. *The Chairman.*] I think it has all been handed over to the Forestry Department?—Practically all.

*Mr. Vaile:* There is one section of 56,000 acres not forestry land: that is Crown land.

*Witness:* You have been asking about water. That is a very important question. The plains should be described a plateau. The water comes from the plains into the Waikato valley. Mr. Vaile will bear me out in this. You will see here the most wonderful springs in New Zealand, right down to the Kaimanawas. I have seen a deep stream, as wide as this room, of the clearest and finest water in the world. Wherever you go you will find big springs. The upper part of the plains is possibly 300 ft. or 400 ft. high. There is no pressure. The water percolates through the strata and accumulates at a certain depth.

4. *The Chairman.*] What is that depth?—I should say, not more than 200 ft.—less in places—possibly 150 ft. Where the land rises the water-table is lower. At Lichfield, which is in the Putaruru district, they have driven very often to a depth of 200 ft. or 300 ft., and the water rises up to, I think, 150 ft. from the surface. They get a magnificent supply of water by small windmills, and as far south as Tokoroa. I do not anticipate any difficulty, so long as the trouble is taken to put down bores. Then there is the magnificent, clear Waikato River, with all its tributaries, on one side of the Kaingaroa Plains, and on the other side the Rangitaiki River, continuing right down the great valley to Taupo itself, and extending to the Urewera country. The northern portion of this is too rugged and does not lend itself to farming. In the south-western part of the Urewera country down to the Kaingaroa Plains you get a different class of country—a better class of soil and a much better class of forest. If I had Mr. Goudie here he would bear me out that, fringing this, is some of the finest land in the Urewera country.

5. How far is that from the proposed railway?—I suppose you would go on to the edge possibly fifteen or twenty miles away. Some of the best timber in the Urewera country comes from this part. Continuing further, you have Lake Taupo, the largest area of navigable fresh water in New Zealand. All round this lake, although it looks rough as you hurry past in a motor-car, you find quite large valleys of the finest land.