

27. Parliament has approved that, you say?—Yes, and the line is described as the Rotorua-Taupo Railway; it was evidently not intended to stop at Reporoa.

28. The railway has been authorized to somewhere—to where?—When it comes to a question of authorization you are up against something that is definite. I say that as far as I know the railway was authorized as far as Reporoa—that is, in the technical language of Parliament.

29. That is the only language we can look at, because no railway can be constructed unless it is authorized. We have to consider what is the sphere of influence of that railway. We cannot take Taupo if it were only authorized to Reporoa. If we have to go back to Reporoa, that carries us back twenty-five or thirty miles farther away?—Undoubtedly. Will you allow me to say that two Royal Commissions were appointed, and I attended both, and in each case not only was the railway described as the Rotorua-Taupo Railway, but evidence was taken from all classes of people to show the class of country not only as far as Taupo Township but round the lake, and still farther afield; and I say that I am following a very good precedent when I am describing the line already described by the Royal Commissions.

30. I just wanted to get quite clearly what was in your mind as to the railway which had been authorized. Now, I understand that Parliament's authorization of the railway is from Rotorua to Reporoa, and that people are looking upon it as to be ultimately carried on to Taupo, but there is no authorization for that section?—As far as I know there is no authorization for the construction of the railway beyond Reporoa.

31. Therefore we should speak of it as the Rotorua-Reporoa Railway?—I think you should speak of the Rotorua-Taupo Railway, with authorization to Reporoa.

32. Have you any interest in any land along that line?—Yes, I have a very big interest in it.

33. I mean any personal interest?—I do not hold an acre of land on the route of that railway. I have not any interest that will personally benefit myself, but I am interested in the development of that country from a national point of view, because I am convinced that that country offers the greatest possibilities of any part of New Zealand for further development and settlement. If a New-Zealander cannot be firmly convinced that he is doing a big thing, I say he is not worthy to be called a citizen.

34. Is there a high range of hills running from the north of Taupo in a northerly direction? You pointed out some hills over to the left on the map?—Yes, they are in the Mokai country. The country there is not so much a range of hills as isolated groups of hills, with passages between them.

35. About water: are you satisfied that all that area could be well watered?—Yes, it is naturally a very finely watered country. All through this pumice area there are permanent creeks containing the finest drinking-water on earth. There are areas on the Kaingaroa Plains where you might have to go some distance to get running water, but I am convinced that by boring to no great depth you would get a permanent supply almost anywhere in that country, and the same would apply in the pumice area generally, where water at present is not near the surface. It is wonderfully well watered all through by creeks and rivulets.

36. *Hon. Mr. Ransom.*] When you were giving your evidence yesterday you said that the bulk of this country belongs to the Crown. Have you any maps showing the amount of land that could be used for settlement, eliminating Native land, forest reserves, and privately owned land? It would be interesting to know how much Crown land there is suitable for settlement. Some people say that the Crown does not own anything like the area of land which forms the bulk of the land?—Probably you are right, but still they own a large area of land. I have not a map. It should be the duty of the State to provide such a map, so that a Committee like this—which is dealing with a very important question—should know all about the ownership of the land. But personally I can say that you will find in the reports of the Lands Department a statement that the land held by the Crown between Rotorua and Taupo represents an area of 700,000 acres. That is in print, and that area has been added to since that date by purchases, and by the obtaining of options over Native land, and by Maori sales. But what those areas amount to I could not tell you. It would require a considerable amount of searching of sources which I have not at my disposal.

37. Do you not consider that good roads would open up this country for settlement equally as well as a railway?—Roads would open it up for settlement, but they cannot open it up as well as a railway would. If you were raising fat lambs, for instance, you would find that the cost of sending fat lambs by motor-lorry would be much greater than the cost of railing them. The average freight on fat lambs per motor-lorry would be about 1s. 6d. per head for from forty to fifty miles. It is a good way of carrying them, I admit, but it is a very expensive way. I want you to ask the Railway officers what it costs to send fat lambs or sheep by rail; I think it costs about 7d. per head per hundred miles to send lambs or sheep by rail, as against 1s. 6d. for forty miles by motor-lorry; and you have only to realize that on a train, with the attention of two or three men, there can be carried 500 tons of stock, whereas to carry 500 tons by motor-lorry it would take one hundred trucks and one hundred men. So I do not see how it is possible to convey heavy traffic over country by motors as against State-owned railways.

38. You said that 50 acres could carry a family in comfort: do you not think that that would be a low standard?—If I were asked how much land I would allow to each settler there I would say 100 acres or more; but ultimately, when that settler has improved his 100 acres, he could put his married son on to 50 or 60 acres of it, and by top-dressing he could make that land produce enough to carry their children in comfort with 50 or 60 acres, provided it is well worked and kept up to the standard of the same class of land in other parts. You will have to use fertilizers, but then a 50- or 60-acre farm would be capable of carrying a family in a high state of comfort.

39. But in your point made yesterday you suggested that all that country affected by the Tarawera eruption had been improved by the ash deposits. I have been informed by people in the district