

had in this country a Department that was specially trained to examine and report upon land that would give a good return for investment, land that could be cheaply settled, I say that they would have pointed out that land fifteen or twenty years ago. But I have examined this vast extent of country, and you cannot find that during the past twenty years there was any little block of land there available for settlement anywhere. There was one block that was open for lease for some years, and it has been settled by men who were desperately hungry for land.

81. Are you in any way specially interested? Are you the holder of any land that would be served by the railway?—To be frank, I have an area of some 6 acres some little distance out of Rotorua, and I would be glad to sell it.

82. I want to see all the cards placed on the table, Mr. Rollett; I do not want to keep anything in the back of my mind. It has been suggested to me that certain relatives of yours are holding large areas of land where the proposed railway would run—two brothers-in-law?—It is absolutely correct to say that this block of land [indicated]—Macklow brothers', 6,500 acres—is owned at the present time by a nephew of mine—my wife's people. I would like to explain that when that railway was started my nephew and his father, who is seventy years of age, set forth from Auckland with a motor-lorry, farm implements, and a motor-car, carrying their household goods and hundreds of pounds' worth of material. They set forth to break in that block of land. But since the railway was stopped they have taken everything away, and they are leaving it; they have abandoned it. It is hopeless to try to work that area without a railway.

83. Then it is quite correct to say that apart from that 6,000 acres neither you nor any members of your family are interested in any other areas of land there?—Absolutely.

84. Then why are you a specially strong advocate of this railway?—I do not mind telling you that I am in charge of the agricultural section of the largest paper in New Zealand, the *Weekly News*, and as agricultural editor of that paper I am in constant demand everywhere to find land for settlement. If we get one letter we get several hundreds per year from all parts of the world asking, "Where can we get land for settlement in New Zealand?" and you can see that for a paper like the *Weekly News* a man must get to know something about that question; and that is why I have travelled through New Zealand at the expense of the paper for many years.

85. What method of settlement, do you think, would be the best—group settlement of some kind?—Group settlement, strongly supported by the State. I have been strongly in favour of that. There is the difficulty of the individual farmer struggling upon his land to improve it. In this class of land the biggest expense comes during the first year, and if a man has not the capital to do it he is hampered from the start.

86. *Mr. Semple.*] You said that 50 acres of this pumice land would produce sufficient to maintain a family in an ordinary standard of comfort?—Yes.

87. How many acres of that class of land would be opened up by this railway? There are two classes of pumice land—inferior land, and land which it is possible to farm with success. Roughly, what area of land is there to be opened up through this railway?—I should certainly think that there are 700,000 or 800,000 acres. Land, much of what I have always regarded as small-farm country, is at present handed over to the Forestry Department and forestry companies, which have used some of this country. That is a great mistake—that should have been made available for farmers.

88. I understand you to say that it would be necessary that a farmer who took up 50 acres there should be given the opportunity to start producing "from the jump," instead of struggling on desperately?—Yes.

89. How would you suggest a start should be made to put that land in order—to put teams of unemployed on, to put it in order, so that the farmer would have a chance?—I think that would be an excellent idea. I know from my travels through this country that there are a very large number of men in various forms of occupation—navvying, digging trenches for tram-rails, &c.—who would be very glad to get out of town on to the land, and if the Government made a call, "We are going to offer 50-acre sections for close settlement, and we are going to improve that land, and we call upon any men who want to become settlers, and we will employ these men in bringing this land to a wage-earning point," I say you would get a very good class of men; and that is one of the best ways I know of giving employment to men who would begin to improve the land, and they would have a chance to become farmers. I would support it with money, if necessary. If the Government asked me to provide so-much capital as a loan I would willingly put as much as I could into any system that would give a worker a chance to get on to the land under those conditions. It is for the Government to employ men to improve the land, so that when a farmer takes up the land he can pay his way "from the jump." He should have a decent home, and I hold that from a humanitarian point of view it would pay the State to put a little more money into the homes of these men, and let people be comfortable.

90. We have heard the idea that the best way to handle the area would be to cut it up and put teams of men on it, and then give them the opportunity to get on to it and farm it?—I think that is a thoroughly sensible idea.

91. Do you know anything about the Matamata country before it was settled?—Yes; I was on Matamata before it was cut up for small settlement.

92. Do you know anything about the Waihi Plains?—Yes.

93. Would you say that this pumice country is as good or better than the Waihi Plains country was before it was settled?—It is infinitely better than the Waihi Plains.

94. Do you know that the men who have made a success of the settlement of the Waihi Plains were miners?—Yes, I have had the pleasure of talking with them. When Lord Lovatt was in New Zealand, and was making a plea for our miner friends in the Old Country to come and settle here, and to be helped by the Imperial Government, some Auckland city men pooh-poohed the idea, and wanted