

125. Are you aware that the Department of Agriculture made a soil survey, from which it was learned that there is one distinct type of pumice land at Tarawera, and another slightly inferior soil down to the Reporoa Settlement, and that there is a third type of soil, the poorest, extending in a general way from Mamaku and skirting Lake Rotorua, and going into the plantations, and following the belt over to the Urewera country: that is the poorest type of pumice land on the belt?—Yes, I am prepared to admit that there are variations in the pumice land, but I would like to ask you how the trees are doing on that poor belt.

126. The trees are doing all right?—Then does not that show that there is something in the soil to produce growth?

127. Yes. I would like to ask you whether you are aware that we have drilled for water in this particular common belt, but we have not been able to locate any water except in one spot?—May I ask you to what depth you went?

128. I cannot say now, but I could let you know?—I would like to know, because water is a very important thing.

129. *Mr. Makitanara.*] Yesterday, in your evidence-in-chief, you mentioned that the distance from Hautu to Tokaanu was about fifteen miles?—Yes, and I said that the Hautu Valley ran about fourteen or fifteen miles back towards the Kaimanawa Ranges.

130. But the fact is that the distance between Hautu and Taupo Township is about forty miles?—About thirty-five miles.

131. The soil at Hautu and the place where the Government has its experimental farm is a kind of swamp?—In the floor of the valley close to the lake there is a considerable area of swamp, and in the floor of the valley near the old homestead there was a small swamp and very good land indeed, but on the fringe of the lake there is a large area of swamp.

132. Are you comparing this land at Hautu with those other portions where you could get a 50-acre farm to carry a family?—I say that in the Hautu Valley, 50 acres there of the land that has been worked would carry a family. If I were a working-man I would sooner take up 50 acres of this land than land in many other places. This has an important bearing upon the subject as to whether this Hautu Valley would carry a family to 50 acres. If I were out of work and a young man, I would be glad to try to make a living in the Hautu Valley.

133. In reply to Mr. Semple you mentioned 700,000 or 800,000 acres where you could settle one family to each 50 acres. Can you point out that area on the map?—Let me explain. When I said 50 acres, I said that ultimately, when this land is worked up to its best condition, it would carry a family in comfort on 50 acres. That applies generally to all the lands.

134. *Mr. Semple.*] In view of the fact that the great bulk of this country is Crown land, do you think it would be better for the Government to take up the land and settle men on this land rather than pay a high price for other lands for settlement purposes?—Undoubtedly I do. I am convinced that it would pay them better to take up this land.

135. *Mr. Vaile.*] Whereabouts is the 6-acre property you own?—In what is known as the Kohuta Block.

136. Do the proprietors of the *New Zealand Herald* and the *Auckland Weekly News* own any land which will be benefited by this railway?—No. I know their position, and I have their absolute authority to state that they do not own a single acre in the district.

137. Does the editor, or do any of the senior members of the staffs of the *Herald* and *Auckland Weekly News* own any land there?—No.

138. Have you any knowledge of the growth of tobacco in the pumice area?—Yes. On this particular block of pumice land that I am interested in there was grown last year a very fine crop of tobacco. In conversation with Mr. Lowe, a tobacco expert, he informed me that the tobacco grown in the pumice country was some of the finest leaf he had seen in New Zealand, and that he believed it would produce the highest class of cigarette-tobacco, which, as you know, is in great demand.

139. *Mr. Semple.*] What would you consider this land most suitable for?—The pumice land is suitable for many purposes. Its purposes have to be governed to a certain extent by the market for its products. At the present time its chief product is butterfat, but I have seen at the Auckland and Waikato exhibitions and the Palmerston North Show a great variety of products—vegetables, roots, grass-seed, clover-seed, a little tobacco, strawberries, gooseberries, red currants, black currants, and other fruits. I am an old orchardist, having grown fruit for nearly thirty years. I have seen some of the best fruit on the pumice land that I have seen in any part of New Zealand.

140. Would there not be a great market for strawberries, raspberries, and gooseberries?—Yes. With regard to fruit-pulp, Messrs. Thomson and Hills, of Auckland, tell me that they are importing from Nelson and from Australia large quantities of what they call berry-pulp. That could be produced on the pumice land.

WILLIAM ATHERTON PARNHAM examined. (No. 6.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I am manager of a farm at Wharepaina. I have broken in about 1,250 acres of pumice country in about five years.

2. The question before the Committee is the construction or otherwise of the railway from Rotorua to Taupo. We will be glad to receive any information you can give us on that subject?—I have found the Taupo land is very easily cultivated and easily broken in. It cost me about £5 an acre to break it in.

3. *Mr. Vaile.*] Will you tell the Committee where you were farming before you went to the pumice area?—In North Canterbury. I have had about thirty years' experience in farming.

4. How long have you been farming in the pumice area?—Five years.