

120. *Mr. Semple.*] You say a road would not be sufficient to develop the pumice area as it should be developed: do you mean that it would not create the same amount of settlement?—I do not think it would.

121. Do you mean that ultimately we would be compelled to build the railway as well as the road?—I think it would have to come sooner or later.

122. And you think the sooner the better?—I should say, the sooner the better.

123. *Mr. Kyle.*] Speaking of the noxious weeds, is there much evidence of the Californian thistle taking possession of the area?—There are patches of it here and there, but it is mostly on Native land that I have seen it.

124. Is there any piripiri?—There is none. There is a little ragwort getting about.

WILLIAM GEORGE BUTCHER examined. (No. 7.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am farm-manager at "Strathmore," Reporoa.

2. *Mr. Vaile.*] When did you come to the pumice area?—About thirty-five years ago.

3. Were you not the first settler there?—Yes.

4. I think you were there for about twelve or thirteen years before I came there?—Yes.

5. How far away were you from any other white man?—Thirty miles.

6. Was there any road to the district?—We had to use packhorses.

7. Prior to coming to the district where did you live?—In Canterbury.

8. You were manager for your father on the Strathmore Estate?—Yes.

9. You were not on your own?—I have about 2,000 acres of pumice land.

10. You are the local Justice of the Peace, and president and vice-president of innumerable local activities?—Yes.

11. You are well acquainted with the whole pumice area, right down to Tokaanu?—Yes.

12. What is your estimate of the proportion of the land that would be readily ploughable?—About three-fourths of the total area.

13. What do you consider is the cost of bringing this land into such a condition that it will carry a cow to 3 acres?—You can bring it into fair pasture for about £5 an acre, sowing swedes and grass.

14. You believe in sowing the turnips with the grass on the first furrow?—Yes; that is the cheapest way.

15. They are sown at the same time?—Yes, in one hit.

16. Do you think the Taupo country will grow as good swede turnips as Canterbury?—It will grow the best swedes I have seen anywhere—better than in Canterbury.

17. And as to turnips?—I would say the same.

18. What area do you think would be within reach of the railway, and could be settled in small areas of, say, 200 acres?—The area between the Rotorua-Taupo-Atiamuri Road and the Rotorua-Waiotapu-Taupo Road—that is, about ten miles by fifty miles, making 500 square miles. Three-quarters of that would be suitable.

19. That is on the west side of the railway?—Yes.

20. And what on the east side of the railway?—There is the Waiotapu Valley, and a certain amount of Native land. There are over 1,000,000 acres in the whole area that would be served by the railway.

21. As to the climate of the area: have you ever experienced snow there?—About twice in thirty years.

22. How deep did it lie upon the ground?—You had to scrape it up under the window to get any.

23. And as regards rain?—We have a very even rainfall.

24. Heavier than in Canterbury?—I have not seen a real drought all the time I have been there.

25. How do you find the country for animals?—The only thing we have had trouble with is lamb-sickness. All the other stock does well.

26. With regard to the human race, I suppose you have not noticed that the men there fade away to shadows?—I am a pretty good illustration of the condition of the men on the land.

27. Have you ever noticed that boys coming there refuse their food, or anything of that kind?—It is a very good country for the human being. That is the only thing the soldier settlers are satisfied about—the way their children come on.

28. Joking apart, do you consider that it is an area which will raise a vigorous type of men?—Certainly.

29. Do you not find that the climate is one which induces work—that it is an invigorating climate?—Very invigorating.

30. Do you think that a change from the sea-coast to this area would be a good form of recreation and holiday for people in the coastal portions of New Zealand?—It improves every one.

31. What has been your experience with ploughing: have you to wait for the weather, or can you plough at any time?—On the pumice soil, if it rains to-day you can plough to-morrow. You can plough all the time, practically.

32. Do you know any useless land in the area?—Practically none.

33. Land that cannot be worked as a farm can be put under trees?—Yes.

34. What is the quality of the water you find?—There is plenty of water everywhere, except on the Kaingaroa Plains.

35. But as to its quality?—It is first class.

36. Do you find that the streams flood, or are they regular?—There are practically no floods at all.

37. Have you any knowledge of the effect of the area on tuberculosis?—There is no one sick there.