

from the cost of clearing. Now, the Royal Commission which inquired into this question in 1921 was given evidence by the Forestry Department to the effect that tributary to this railway were 161,769 acres of native forest, all Crown-owned except 34,064 acres. The Department's estimate of the yield of these bushes was 4,000,000,000 ft. — it is quickly said, but it is the largest block of timber in New Zealand to-day. The Forestry Department has stated repeatedly that the centre of afforestation exploitation is moving towards the heart of the Island. In the Forestry Department's report for 1921 they say that the spread of fire, due in a great measure to the occupied land, is a great danger. That is quite true, but if the land is occupied and put into grass the risk of fire is vastly reduced. That is all I propose to say on the forestry question. With regard to my own efforts in that country, I took up my land there in June, 1907, and immediately proceeded to work it. At first I attempted to work it with "mismanagers," but I soon found that would not do, and I had to go up myself, and I have been there ever since. I cannot profess to have made a fortune there, but I have fought a very good battle against all sorts of difficulties, and almost opposition. I can honestly say that I have never received one farthing of assistance or encouragement from the Government. When I wanted to put in a telephone there, the opposition I had from the Public Works Department would make a man cry. I carried on a great deal of experimental work, and I think that the knowledge I have acquired is very valuable. I can say with a fair amount of certainty in what manner the various classes of soil should be treated. I have ploughed 1,700 acres of land: all that land has been ploughed at least twice and put into grass. I have built fences which would extend from Auckland to Mercer, enclosing 15,000 acres. I have sold 5,000 acres, and I have now 10,000 acres, fenced into forty subdivisions—nearly all eight-wire fences. I have found that the grass in this area naturally thickens. Of course, if you over-stock it with sheep and do not top-dress, they have a tendency to eat out the better grass and leave the less valuable grass. Cattle are very much better for bringing in that country. But the land can be quickly brought in. We put in turnips and got good crops every time. Scrub country, of course, looks uninviting. The natural condition of scrub country does not encourage a man to tackle it, but I can remember a good deal of the Waikato before it was touched. I remember the Pukerimu district—that was covered with fern 1 ft. high. The first ploughing turned up practically nothing but sand—some white and some yellow. But owing to good farming and manuring that is now one of the richest districts in the Waikato. The bulk of the Waikato is not rich soil. The great bulk of the Waikato soil is derived from the pumice area farther up the Waikato River. I want to confirm the evidence given by the previous witnesses as to the suitability of this country for close settlement and small holdings. It is a great mistake to have this land in large areas. The Government has cut the country into areas of from 10,000 to 60,000 acres, and attempted to let it for twenty-one years, but subject to resumption at a year's notice without compensation. Will any one take up such country under those conditions? There are no small areas to be obtained there. There are some large blocks of private land, although the total area of privately-owned land is comparatively small. Perhaps it would interest the Committee to have some actual figures of the cost of breaking in this country, and I have here, from my books, the figures for two paddocks. One was on heavier land, and was the roughest piece of land I have broken in. This was broken in in August, 1922. The clearing of the land of scrub cost me 8s. 9d. an acre, ploughing down banks 6s. 11d. an acre, burning and stumping 4s. 2d. an acre: that is, 19s. 10d. an acre for preliminary preparation. The ploughing cost 8s. 1½d., double discing 3s. 11½d., harrowing, 1s. 3½d., rolling, 1s. 6d., or a total of 14s. 10d.

14. Was that done by contract or with your own teams?—With my own teams. For manure it cost £1 11s. 3d., seed 2s. 3d., drilling 2s., rolling 1s. 1d.: that is, £3 11s. 3d. for my crop of swedes. Now, here is another paddock, put down in March, 1922. This is a paddock of very light pumice land, consisting of 53 acres ploughed after turnips. The ploughing cost 5s. 3d., discing 1s. 10d., harrowing twice 1s. 10d., rolling twice 2s. 2d., mixing seed and manure 2s. 6d.; total, 13s. 7d. Manure at two hundredweight to the acre cost £1 1s. 4d.; the seed, including a bushel of rye-corn, £1 18s. 6d.: total cost, £3 13s. 5d. per acre for the new grass. This last year my crop of swedes, 81 acres with 3 cwt. manure—two thirds superphosphate and one-third blood-and-bone—cost me £2 15s. an acre. That land was ploughed out of grass. This is the most cheaply worked land in New Zealand, and you can work it when you like. It is an enormous economy to a farmer if he knows he can work his land whenever he wishes to. If you have country which gets too hard or too sticky for ploughing it is a serious drawback. I would like to instance my experience of other despised areas. I was for twenty-two years in the land-agency business. It was in 1887 that I entered my father's business, and at that time and for long after the Waikato was considered to be quite worthless, and if you offered Waikato land to a southern buyer he would eat you alive. You could not induce a man to take it. But take the land upon which the great Matangi Factory stands: I sold it, fenced and in grass, but without grass, at £2 an acre. The Brierley Estate—541 acres, with a house that cost £1,000 to build, and 270 acres fenced and in grass—I sold at £2 10s., 5s. down and the rest at 5 per cent.; and another area alongside comprising 340 acres partly improved at £2 5s. per acre. That was about twenty-seven years ago. There was also the Karaka district. I have sold land there for 1s. an acre, and Mr. Williams bought land there for 10s. per acre. He spent about £1 an acre on it and sold it to the Friedlanders for £4. It was thought that they were "caught," but they spent about £2 an acre on it and sold the bulk of it for £20 an acre. That shows that simply because land is not esteemed it is not proved that it is not worth anything. At Karaka there was a man who had 3,300 acres valued at 10s. He wanted a loan of £3,000, and everybody turned him down. He came to me for a loan, and personally I had not much respect for the Government valuations. I think I know more about it than they do. I went up and looked at the country and lent him the money. He asked for another £300, and I gave it to him. Shortly afterwards I sold the land for him for £9,000. Gentlemen, we court inquiry in regard to this district. We want you to come to see it. We have