

35. Will you kindly tell the Committee what you meant? Will you tell the Committee where those five million acres are which you say are there?—I cannot, because I did not say it.

36. I took this down in the most careful way, word for word, and you will be given a chance of seeing your evidence, and if this is not correct what I am saying you can make another statement. Do you deny that there are five million acres there?—Certainly.

37. Then another statement you made was this: "In connection with this matter we have never had anything to offer—we have no votes, no money; we have no influence; and I am afraid that Governments have looked at the matter from that point of view—that here was £700,000 to be spent and no vote to be gained by that expenditure." Can you tell the Committee what you meant by all that?—I think the meaning of that is perfectly plain: that is what I meant.

38. What do you mean by "no votes"?—The whole of the population between Rotorua and Taupo is about one hundred votes.

39. But you said "no votes"?—Let it go at that.

40. And "no money"?—And no money.

41. I took it that the people of Reporoa were disfranchised. Did you mean that there were not enough votes to influence the Government? Then you said, "I have a confession to make in connection with this matter. I am the owner of 10,000 acres of land, not on the route of the railway from Rotorua to Reporoa, but on the extension to Taupo." I tried to get from you whether you were dealing with the railway to Taupo or to Reporoa, but I think I understand that you were considering the railway from Rotorua to Taupo?—Our petition is to carry out the vote of Parliament to carry the railway to Reporoa, but I consider the extension to Taupo to be inevitable.

42. My point is this: you say that you have no interest there, and that "I have a confession to make—I am the owner of 10,000 acres but not on the route of the railway." I ask you whether your big interest is on that route?—It is.

43. You have stated that it is not?—But I say, "on the extension that I say is inevitable."

44. Do you deny that you said "I have a confession to make—I am the owner of 10,000 acres, but not on the route of the railway but on the extension to Taupo"?—Perfectly true.

45. When it is convenient it appears that the evidence is on a railway from Rotorua to Reporoa, but when it suits better the evidence is given as if dealing with a railway from Rotorua to Taupo. Now, is this 10,000 acres all the possessions you have there?—Yes.

46. But since you have been agitating for this railway have you not had considerably more?—I purchased there originally 53,000 acres.

47. How long have you been agitating for this railway?—About twenty years.

48. Now, you have 10,000 acres: what is the value of it?—About £3 10s. an acre.

49. So that you have somewhere in the vicinity of £40,000 worth of property on the proposed railway?—£35,000.

50. You stated, "I will hand to you an offer in writing to sell to the Government my land at its present value, and not the value after the railway is constructed." Now, you have handed in that offer, and I just want to cross-examine you upon it. It is as follows:—

DEAR SIR,—

Should the prayer of the Rotorua-Taupo Railway League Commission be granted, I am prepared, at any time within six months of this date, to sell to the Government my estate at Waiotapu, known as "Broadlands," and comprising 10,000 acres, at its present value. The value to be fixed, if we cannot otherwise agree, by an Assessment Court, as if the land were taken compulsorily. Improvements effected after this date, and manuring done, also crops growing and harvested, are to be added to the price. The terms of sale are: 20 per cent. deposit, and the balance in three months when possession is given and taken. This offer is not to interfere with my right to sell to any other buyer until such time as the Government has actually bought and paid the deposit.

Now, I want you to listen to what I have to say, that this is a worthless thing. You admit this is an offer?—Yes, it is an offer to sell.

51. Do you admit that it is an offer conditional upon the railway being put through?—Yes.

52. Yet you say that you do not want to get anything out of it, but that you will sell the land at this offer, but you must know that the railway is going through?—Otherwise there is no call upon me.

53. But I submit that this is an attempt on your part to induce the Government to construct this railway, because you will sell your property to them if they do, at its present valuation?—Yes.

54. Or, if they do not construct it, you will not sell the property?—Yes.

55. I want to get out of you what the meaning of this offer is?—The meaning is that if the Government, within six months of this date, agrees to take my land, they get it at the present value. You say this railway is going to increase the value of my land in the ratio of from 2s. 6d. to £2—I would get the 2s. 6d., and the Government would get £1 17s. 6d.; but if Smith comes to me before the Government buys, and says, "I will give you so-much," I am not going to turn that down.

56. Coming to my question of price to be asked, the price to be asked is not the Government valuation, but it is your valuation?—Not at all. The price to be asked is mine, but the price to be paid is to be fixed by an Assessment Court.

57. But that is your price and not the Government valuation, and you are willing to have an Assessment Court to fix the price. If I tell you that the Government has had hundreds of similar offers, not connected with railways at all, on such terms without any consideration of a railway, would you consider that means anything?—I certainly think it means everything. If the railway is not put through I do not care whether the Government buys my country, but if the Government considers that to be a valuable concession I am prepared to stand the loss for the benefit of the district.