

59. The proposals of the Government are to develop the undeveloped portions of the Dominion at the present time?—Yes.

60. Now, you made a comparison between the climate of your country and that of Canterbury?—Yes.

61. Is not your climate very windy?—No, our climate, for New Zealand, is a very calm climate. I have often been waiting for wind to have a burn.

62. Would you call it a colder climate than Canterbury?—I am not familiar with the Canterbury climate. The minimum registered temperature is 12°—that is, 20° of frost. That is the lowest temperature recorded; and generally, about 9 o'clock, the sun comes out very brightly, and you have a beautiful day until 4 or 5 p.m., when it begins to get cold again. There is a great deal of sunshine in our district—I suppose a larger proportion of sunshine than any other place in New Zealand.

63. As regards hay and chaff, you said you could get £11 per ton for your hay?—No; I wish it were so; but the price of good hay in Auckland is about £8, but the market is limited. I could grow on a portion of my farm easily all the hay that Auckland could consume. I have considered putting it on the Auckland market, but I am advised that to put that quantity on the market would knock the bottom out of the market.

64. You consider that you could produce it more cheaply than we can in Canterbury?—Yes, than anywhere in New Zealand.

65. As regards noxious weeds and rabbits, do you consider that unless this country is settled and developed it will be overrun?—I am very much alarmed at the spread of noxious weeds. When I went there there were only two blackberry-bushes between me and Rotorua, and one was on the roadside, and I cut that out. The other was on private land, the owner of which would not let me cut it because his children liked to eat the berries. With regard to rabbits, they have been increasing alarmingly on the back portions of the area, but on my own country there are very few, due to trapping there. The back country is very seriously threatened.

66. Granting that you assessed the value of the railway on to the timber, what timber is there to pay for it—do you remember?—If we accept the evidence given by the Forestry Department that there are 4,000,000,000 ft. of timber, I think you will find that 4½d. per 100 ft. on that would pay for the railway. Of course, the saving on bringing it out would amount to many shillings. I have worked it out in regard to the Mokai bushes, and the saving in taking that timber out by this railway as compared with taking it out by the Taupo Totara Timber Co.'s tram-line would amount to £1,000,000 and would pay the whole of the cost of this railway to Taupo—that one bush. Then, there is the Paeroa bush, estimated to contain 110,000,000 ft., and the bushes round the lake, and the whole of the planted forest, to be taken into account. All round, about 3d. per 100 ft. of timber would pay for the railway and save on an average 3s. or 4s. per 100 ft. in getting it out.

67. You also said that the poles could be used for telephone-poles: do you know of any instance where they have been so used?—Yes, they have been used in the district. My own line was put up about twenty years ago, and I used totara; but Mr. Butcher, my neighbour, has used these poles, footed on to totara in the ground, and those poles are perfectly good to-day.

68. And compare favourably with the Australian poles?—I noticed in a Rotorua paper just the other day some reference to that. I cut it out—here it is: it is from the *Rotorua Chronicle* of the 18th of this month, and it says: "It is not necessary to be an expert to see that many of the imported so-called hardwood telegraph-poles are mere punk wood. They are costly, and the money expended on them is sent out of the country. Recently a great deal of replacement work has been done, and poles that, if ironbark lived up to its reputation, should last twenty-five years have been scrapped after seven years' service. If an imported pole has a life of only ten years it would be far more economical to use larch with a totara base. Such poles were erected seventeen years ago in this district by private persons, and stand absolutely sound to-day. Larch rails harden and toughen with the years—rails from the Government plantation, taken out when thinning was done thirteen years ago, are quite sound. If any need exists of proving this statement as to the condition of imported hardwood poles, the inquiring mind can find confirmation on Whaka Road any time he cares to walk along it."

69. We have had a similar experience in Canterbury, especially in the Waimairi County, where the imported poles have not lasted more than ten years. I wanted to make that comparison?—All the farmers in our district now use these larch poles for rails for stockyards and for fences, and wherever they want rails, and they have stood well.

70. *Mr. Jenkins.*] It has been suggested that bias has been shown in this Committee. As a member of the Government I want to state that I treat the witness as one of the pioneers of this country—one who went out there and sacrificed what could have been a comfortable life and made the wilderness into a garden. I cannot be accepted as hostile towards the witness, because I take my hat off to the type of man which I believe the witness represents. I am not opposed to him, but I want to be convinced that this railway is right. You own something like 10,000 acres of land there?—Yes.

71. Of which 1,700 acres have been ploughed?—Yes.

72. How many years have you been there?—About twenty; I went there in 1908 to live there.

73. Well, that is not a great amount of cultivation—that is not 100 acres per year. It seems to me that if you had the confidence in the country which you express you would have brought in a greater area than 1,700 acres in twenty years, when you have 50,000 acres altogether. I wish to ask you why?—My good uncle, the Bank of New Zealand, has not been unkind to me, but funds are limited. I have had to put up forty-two miles of fences—equal to the distance from Mercer to Auckland. When I went there there was no road to my place, and we had to swim the river. I had