

valuable place for invalids. There is no finer air in the world than Taupo air, and there would be a large traffic of people going there for the air.

97. But that is the wealthy American tourist; do you not think they would pay for the cost of transporting their wardrobes by motor-lorry?—They like to have them with them. Many of them send their wardrobes in the train and travel in the car.

98. You gave figures in regard to the cost of freight: the price you quoted is the freight on goods delivered to the railway-station, but the motor would deliver the goods to the farm?—Yes, but it would make very little difference.

99. In making up these comparisons did you take into consideration the fact that the motor freight provides for the goods being taken from the warehouse on the motor-lorry—one handling; from motor-lorry to goods-shed—two handlings; from goods-shed to railway-truck—three handlings; from railway-truck at the other end—four handlings; on to the motor-lorry—five handlings; and off the lorry at its destination—six handlings?—These handlings cost a very small sum of money. I forget what they charge for shifting manure into the shed. The carrier handles it without charge. The Government makes a charge of about 6d. a ton. The difference in the 2·41d. would be very small; it might bring it up to 2·5d.

100. Did you not take into consideration the cost of motor carriage to the farm from the station?—I have not taken into consideration anything in connection with those figures, for they are the Government figures.

101. Then I suggest to you they are inaccurate?—I do not know.

102. If the motor freight is the freight from the warehouse to the farm, and the railway is not, do you not think the comparison is inaccurate?—Those figures are freights part by road and part by rail, as against all the way by the rail. They allow for £1 per ton on the lorries on the road.

103. *Mr. Semple.*] It has been stated that the influence behind the construction of this railway was purely political: you know that that statement has been made?—Yes, sir.

104. I want to ask you some questions in regard to that. Are there sufficient votes in the area of country which this railway will serve to warrant any Government spending £700,000 on the construction of this railway? I take it that political influence usually means the strength of the people in the area in question to determine the destinies of Governments?—I should judge that is right. Well, now, between Rotorua and Taupo, I should estimate there would be about one hundred votes.

105. Then, from the point of view of voting-power the political influence there is practically nil?—Absolutely nothing.

106. It has been said that you are a big supporter of the Reform party, and that you contribute very liberally to their funds. Have you been a constant contributor to the Reform party's funds during recent years?—Since I left Auckland in 1908 the sum total of my contributions has been nil; I have not given them a penny.

107. Then from the point of view of votes there is nothing in that statement, and from the point of view of your contributions they have been nil?—That is so.

108. Are there any other people, supporters of the Reform party, who might have contributed liberally to their funds?—There are no people there able to give.

109. I want to get at the facts; I want to take all the statements that have been made. It has been suggested that this is purely a political railway: you know that?—Yes.

110. I want to get at the fundamental rights of the thing, and ascertain whether there is any political influence at all behind this railway or not. There are two influences that sometimes prompt public men or Governments to shape their policy to suit certain ends: one is the numerical strength of voting-power, and the other is financial support to the party. I want to know whether there is any money coming from wealthy farmers there, or whether there might be a large number of votes at stake?—Well, in the area in question there are some supporters of the Reform party, and some supporters of the United party, and some supporters of the Labour party.

111. Have we got a stray soul up there?—Well, yes. I may say that on the last occasion, in the voting at Reporoa the Reform party was in the minority. Of course I do not know the people's private affairs, but I am sure that there is no one there who gives more than a nominal sum to any fund.

112. There are no wealthy people there to influence the Government?—There is no one who does not need to ask the bank-manager how he is to spend his money.

113. Then you say definitely that there is nothing in the statement that this railway is a political railway?—Absolutely nothing; it is a pure invention.

114. You offered to sell your farm to the Government for £30,000, approximately—between £30,000 and £40,000; you say you made that offer to the Government because you have been a long time advocating the railway—for twenty years—and you wanted to remove the impression that you were trying to get the railway put there for the purpose of enhancing the value of your property, and getting a rake-off?—That was my idea.

115. You thought it would prevent the construction of the railway if it were thought that you would get a big rake-off?—That was my idea. Of course, I have not fixed a price for it, but offered it on valuation: that is my estimate.

116. When you made that offer you had in mind this statement that has been made—you were making an offer to the Government as an inducement to the Government to build the railway?—Of course I would regard it as having no weight in that direction, but I want by every honest means to induce the Government to do so.

117. Are you aware that the statement has been made?—Yes, it has been made here.

118. Do you think it would be an inducement to offer to sell a farm—no matter whether the United party or the Reform party or the Labour party were in power—if it were offered for £30,000, would that be an inducement for them to spend £700,000?—I should not think so.