

119. You do not think it would be a sound proposition?—I do not think the influence would be anything but small.

120. You would not be prepared to spend £700,000 and to buy a £30,000 farm: you think there is nothing in that?—No, nothing at all.

121. You say that you are one of the pioneers of this country?—Yes, I was the second white man in that area.

122. When you went there the possibilities of failure were greater than the chances of success?—Yes; all my friends said I would be in the Official Assignee's hands soon, or that two doctors would have me.

123. But you are still alive?—Yes, I am still alive, and I am still out of the asylum, and I am not even bankrupt.

124. We are all convinced that you are quite a long way from the threshold of that place. So that the railway did not appeal to you as a means of making a fortune quickly. What was it that influenced you in going into the wilderness?—When I took up that country, I must confess, I did not think it would be necessary for me to live there. I thought I would be able to work the place with managers; but I found that I had mismanagers; and having put my hand to the plough I did not want to turn back. What took me there was the same thing that brought my grandfather to Auckland in 1843—the same thing that brought him, a much braver man, to a country where he and his family did not know whether they were not going to be eaten alive.

125. That spirit has been responsible for the settlement of Australia and this country; men in those days left an assured livelihood to settle down in a strange country at great risk?—That is so.

126. *Mr. Makitanara.*] He was a land-agent?—If any one can show me that I have “done” anybody in business for a shilling I am quite prepared to give him back a pound. There are thieves in every business, but there are honest people available if you want to do honest business with them.

127. *Mr. Semple.*] Are you satisfied that the group-settlement system is the proper system to apply to most of that land?—I think it would apply better there than in any other district. Of course, group settlement depends upon management. Like every other business, if you have the proper man it will be all right. But if you have a man who gets up against his men it will fail.

128. How would you break this land in—what system would you adopt? Supposing the Government decided to settle several thousands of acres there—up to 100,000 acres—what system would you suggest to the Government for bringing it into cultivation at the quickest and cheapest possible rate?—There is no doubt that if that country were first surveyed into reasonable farms, and then some development work done on each farm upon systematic lines, that might be done very economically. Of course, as soon as a man can struggle along I would be in favour of assigning a particular section to that man and letting him work it for himself.

129. But you would not put him there with a limited amount of capital and obsolete machinery?—That would be highly undesirable; but I think that once access is provided this country will settle itself.

130. Do you not think it would be wise for the Government to adopt the principle that they have adopted on the prison farms?—Yes, I think it would be, but I do not think that would be absolutely necessary, though that could be done.

131. Would not that be killing two birds with one stone—providing employment and putting land into cultivation—also training young men to do the job: it would have a threefold advantage?—Yes.

132. To pay them a wage for bringing the land into cultivation—land which they would be called upon to take over later?—Yes; and it would be well if some of their wages could be put aside for them as a nest-egg for the time when they go on a section of their own: that would be a good scheme.

133. I am looking at the report of the Agricultural Department which has been put into my hands, and which proves that the scientific use of fertilizers produces wonderful results. Do you not think that in those camps educational lectures should be given on the business and scientific sides of the job?—Yes; as one witness said, it would be necessary to run work and instruction side by side, provided that a man should not go to lectures when he was exhausted.

134. But you admit that there is the scientific side to be learned?—Yes.

135. Many soldier settlers have failed through lack of knowledge and guidance?—Yes.

136. There is a scientific side of farming to be learned as well as the labour side?—Yes, no doubt. Of course, there is some country that is fool-proof, but this country requires to be worked properly.

137. A good deal has been said about noxious weeds and rabbit pests: in your opinion is closer settlement the only real remedy for overcoming these pests?—The only real remedy—especially for dealing with the noxious weeds.

138. In regard to the question of fertilizers, the extensive use of fertilizers is really the secret of success as far as this class of land is concerned?—Quite true—the use of the right fertilizers.

139. And plenty of it?—I think that within fairly wide limits the more you use the better.

140. You submit that failure upon the land is impossible if it is treated with sufficient and the right class of fertilizers?—I do not know that I would go as far as to say “impossible,” but I would say that success is highly probable.

141. Some farmers have made a success with a limited amount of fertilizer but at tremendous cost: would not the possibility of success be much greater if fertilizers were cheaper?—Much greater.

142. One reason why you advocate the construction of this railway is because you believe it would bring down the cost of fertilizers to farmers in the district, and give the farmers a greater chance of success?—That is my main idea, and my main object in advocating the construction of the railway is that the country may be settled. I think it is easily possible.