

196. To come back to the question of a road: a good road would be of no benefit as regards driving stock?—No; in fact, it would be a drawback, because it would induce motorists to speed up more.

197. The road would be really no benefit to the settlers as far as stock are concerned?—No.

198. Have you any idea of the capital cost of the road?—Only what I have stated in answer to Mr. Massey.

199. Have there been conflicting opinions between Captain Ellis, of the Forestry Department, and the Engineer of the Public Works Department?—No. Captain Ellis did not express any opinion about the cost; he merely said the traffic would be in a continuous stream of trucks carrying 9 and 10 tons. Mr. Dyson was then asked what would be the cost, and he answered that it would be much more than that of a railway.

200. If a road alone were to be constructed, it would have to be of such strength as to carry 10-ton loads?—Yes.

201. What is the charge per mile of road for motor-lorry carriage of timber?—I obtained a report from the Government Statistician. He said he could not quote an absolutely definite figure as in the case of the railways, but it would not be less than 1s. per ton-mile. In our district we can get our stuff taken out, seeing that there is a return load, at about 9d. a ton per mile, but before the timber traffic began we were giving £3 10s. for the journey: that would be about 2s. 6d. per ton per mile.

202. Have you any idea of the cost of taking goods on the railway?—On stuff brought from Auckland, the additional cost of taking it from Rotorua to our district is from 1s. to 1s. 6d.

203. And how many miles is that?—From twenty-five to thirty-five miles.

204. Then it would cost you less than 2d. per ton per mile to carry it on the railway?—Yes, less than 1d.

205. It would be less than 2d. per ton per mile on the railway as against 1s. per mile on the road?—Yes.

206. It is almost needless to ask about the economic difference to the settler. In your opinion would it make the difference between success and failure?—It means a considerable margin. It has cost as much to use 2 cwt. of manure in the past as it cost in the Waikato to use about 3 cwt. That makes a very big difference.

207. I want to get at the difference it is going to cost the settler for fertilizer carriage as between motor-transport carriage and carriage by railway?—The difference is about 18s. per ton.

208. Of course, money spent on railway work remains in the country, while money spent for motor transport goes out of the country?—That is a very serious question, to my mind. The benzine we use here is imported, and costs about three times as much as in the United States. The motor-vehicles are imported, and cost about double what they cost in the United States. All spares are imported, and cost about four times as much. The material for the road itself is imported, and all these things are imported from a country which will not accept our produce in return. Everything is imported from a country which takes nothing from us.

209. Then the money spent on motor-transport is an absolute economic loss to the country?—In my judgment it is.

210. While the money spent on a railway remains in the country?—Yes.

211. You are the owner of 10,000 acres of land in the district?—Yes.

212. What value do you put on that land?—I think it is worth £3 10s. an acre, which is not very different from what it has cost me.

213. What is your object in offering to sell it to the Government at its present value?—To divest myself of any suggestion that I am advocating this railway for my own personal gain.

214. Then you are prompted by motives of public-spiritedness in advocating the railway; at the same time you consider that having been a pioneer of the district you are entitled to some consideration?—I think so, but I would put that on one side. I want to emphasize the fact that my personal interest in the matter should not weigh by so much as a farthing with anybody. If I cannot prove that it is in the public interest, well, gentlemen, bring in an adverse verdict.

215. You were one of the first settlers in the district?—I was the second to go there. Mr. Butcher was the only man there before me.

216. You went there to prove the possibilities of the district? You had faith in the district?—Yes.

217. How much of the 10,000 acres is broken in?—It is all fenced and divided into about forty-five subdivisions. I have formed twelve miles of drains, about the same length of roads, and numerous bridges, erected buildings, and built cattle-yards and sheep-yards, and have ploughed 1,700 acres at least twice, and put it down in permanent pasture.

218. That is, you have cultivated 1,700 acres?—Yes.

219. At least a quarter of your country has been brought into productivity?—Yes. There is stock running over the whole area. There is a little surface grass everywhere.

220. What would you estimate to be the value of this land that you have ploughed twice and cropped, and put into permanent pasture?—Of course it varies. Some of the best of my paddocks, if they were in any other district, would sell at from £30 to £40 an acre. In my district I could not say it is worth that. I should say the grass land, on the average, is worth more than it cost—say, £7 an acre.

221. If you were in an area where you could get your produce out or commodities in, you would value the land at anything up to £30 an acre?—Yes.

222. You consider the whole of the land in this district useful?—There is no useless land at all.

223. With respect to the risk of fire: we all know that with timber plantations there is great risk of fire—that is provided for by fire-breaks?—Yes.