

224. In your opinion what is the best fire-preventive ?— In the first place, to get rid of the enormous areas of highly inflammable scrub. In the summer it is liable to take fire and go off like a packet of crackers.

225. What would be your remedy ? To settle the country, and get it ploughed. Then every settler would look after his own land.

226. You tell us that the timber is of such rapid growth that you have built an outhouse with timber from trees planted only fourteen years ago ?— I do not pretend that that can be done in plantations.

227. The thinnings from the plantations are useful ?—Yes, certainly.

228. They can be used for mining-props and many other purposes ?—Yes.

229. As to the motor-lorries on the Rotorua-Taupo Road, do they carry the whole of the timber traffic ? Yes. The principal traffic is in sleepers for the railway, but there are also sawn timber and posts and battens.

230. Do they take all the timber ? No ; they use only the first-class heart of totara.

231. If there were a railway other classes could be economically carried ?—Yes.

232. Would the railway be of any use for the great sulphur deposits around Waiotapu and elsewhere ? The reply of the Minister when that question was raised in the House was that the Department had obtained very favourable reports, but that the deposits could not be developed owing to the lack of means of communication.

233. What is the amount of country in afforestation over the whole block ?—Actually planted there will be about 180,000 acres. Assigned for planting there are altogether, public and private, 300,000 acres.

234. How long does it take from the time of planting for timber to become millable ?—There is a difference of opinion on the point, but in my judgment it would take about thirty years.

235. Then trees planted to-day would not be millable for thirty years ?—No.

236. Tree planting was begun about thirty years ago ?—It was begun in 1898, but they put in very small areas at first. About 1902 the Department got more into its stride, and the planting has been continuous ever since.

237. If the railway were built now it would take some considerable time to complete, and as soon as it was completed there would be millable timber to take out to the mills ?—Yes.

238. And as the planting is continuous there would be an inexhaustible supply, provided that planting goes on ?—That is so.

239. As to wood-pulp, how long would it take to set up a wood pulp plant ?—I have no idea.

240. Supposing that a company wanted railway facilities to get stuff out for that purpose, would it take twenty years ?—No. I know that a pulping plant on a sufficient scale is an expensive thing. Probably it would take a couple of years to get it going.

241. How long would it take to get the machinery ?—I should say that two years would be quite an outside estimate.

242. Would the railway serve the land on the western side of Lake Taupo ?—The whole of the lake is navigable, with deep water right to the shore.

243. Then the output could be water-borne to the railway at Taupo ?—Yes.

244. Could telegraph-poles and power-poles be grown in New Zealand ?—I know no reason why they should not.

245. Are you aware that the poles coming from Australia, of hardwood, are not as satisfactory as they might be ?—Yes ; but how much of that is due to want of skill in choosing the timber I do not know. There are two hundred varieties of Eucalyptus, and in the past the Department has merely said " Australian hardwoods " which is very vague.

246. Do you know that in some parts of New Zealand Power Boards are growing their own poles ?—Yes.

247. If that is so, could you not grow them in your country ?—Yes. The eucalypts grow better in New Zealand than in Australia.

248. Have you an idea of the estimated cost of the railway from Rotorua to Reporoa ?—No. The Public Works Department's estimate was £11,000 per mile from Rotorua to Taupo. The report of the Commission put it at £12,000. There was a good deal of discussion on the point, and the Public Works Department said they could do it for £11,000 a mile on a grade of 1 in 50, but if taken at 1 in 100 it would cost £225,000 more. What grade they adopted I cannot say.

249. The Government has stated that the work already done cost £35,000, including houses and that sort of thing ?—Most of the heavy cutting has been done for eight miles.

250. That has been completed ?—No. The cuttings made have been done with the shovel—without any machinery.

251. In your opinion the most difficult part of the earthwork has been done ?—A great deal of it.

252. It has been stated that if this railway is built it will not pay. Do you know of anywhere in the world where a new railway is paying ?—No ; and I do say that at the time the railway to Rotorua was built—and that is one of our most payable lines—there was not anything like the justification for it that there is for this one. The Rotorua land was then declared to be worth nothing, and the tourist traffic was inconsiderable. Now, the land is valuable, timber is valuable, and the tourist traffic amounts to 40,000 fares a year.

253. If this railway were built the additions from the settlement point of view would more than compensate for the loss sustained on the railway ?—That is so ; and there is no reason why the cost of the railway should not be assessed on the land ; it would easily bear it.

254. You told us you had taken prizes at agricultural and pastoral shows ?—Yes.

255. Have you not taken prizes for all classes of produce ?—For fat lambs, apples, roots, hay and oats, grass-seed—in fact, for all classes of farm-produce. I have never exhibited cattle, but I have taken prizes for fat lambs and fat sheep.